

# Staplecross Methodist Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114531
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311636
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry Elston

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Hollamby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liz Avard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 June 2002
<b>School address</b>	Bodiam Road Staplecross Robertsbridge TN32 5QD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01580 830256
<b>Fax number</b>	01580 830256

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievements; the effectiveness of the school's assessment of their progress; the planning of the curriculum to meet the needs of different groups of pupils; and, how well the school's leadership promotes high standards. Evidence was gathered from a detailed analysis of pupils' work, discussion with pupils, staff and governors and a scrutiny of school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a very small school with a Methodist foundation that admits pupils mostly from the local rural area. Compared with other schools, few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Although there is significant variation from year to year, because of the small numbers, attainment on entry is broadly typical of children nationally. In 2005 to 2006 the school suffered from some extended staff absences.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and parents are unanimous that it cares for their children well. They make comments such as, 'fantastic atmosphere' and 'wonderful family feeling' to show how important this is to their children's well-being. This environment has been successfully created because the staff take good advantage of the small numbers of pupils to support them and make them feel safe. Pupils appreciate this and many echoed the comments of one who remarked, 'It's great here because you know everybody and make really good friends.' Systems for safeguarding children are robust and reviewed regularly. Relationships throughout the school are very good and acts of bullying are rare. In class and around the school, pupils behave impeccably because that is what is expected. They develop their personal skills very well and leave Year 6 as mature youngsters well prepared for the future. They are keen to take on responsibilities and are rightly proud of the way the school council works to improve the school. Pupils are an important part of the local community and take part enthusiastically in events involving the church and residents of the village. They like the individual attention they get in the small teaching groups and value the way their teachers always show patience and help them when they find things difficult. A strength of the school is the excellent way it develops pupils' spirituality by encouraging them to think deeply about issues. Consequently, their stories and poems are rich with real concern for people less fortunate than themselves and pupils have the confidence to express their feelings. The depth of their spirituality was summed up very well before the Christmas lunch when one pupil stood up, thought of just the right words, and said a prayer of thanks before a hushed audience.

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievements and progress through the school are satisfactory. Long term staff absences meant disrupted teaching for some classes in the past, and parents are justified in feeling these had an impact on pupils' progress. Now, with a settled staff and good teaching and learning in the upper Key Stage 2 class, standards are starting to rise again. From the Reception onwards, pupils achieve well in reading because teachers give them a real love of books. However, in writing at Key Stage 1 and mathematics and science at Key Stage 2, not enough of the more able pupils attain the high standards of which they are capable. This is because some teachers do not aim high enough when setting work, and pupils are not always extended to the full. According to the pupils, the best thing about their lessons is the way teachers make learning fun. They particularly like it when teachers use the large interactive whiteboards to illustrate their lessons. Teachers and skilled teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties who make good progress towards their targets.

Attendance is good and pupils say how much they enjoy the interesting curriculum provided. They achieve particularly well when subjects such as history, literacy and art and design are linked together, and their work on the victims of the Second World War is stunning. However, the curriculum planning provides too few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT), in subjects such as science, history and geography, and the school misses the chance to capitalise on pupils' enthusiasm for computers. Pupils enjoy the many clubs after school that enhance their skills in music, sport and drama. They develop a good awareness of the need to live healthy lives and the youngest pupils have embraced the fruit and vegetable scheme with gusto. Younger pupils, both in Reception and Key Stage 1, sometimes struggle when asked to work independently of the teacher, mainly because the

planning of the curriculum relies too much on set tasks rather than those that would give pupils more freedom to progress at their own level.

The headteacher provides effective leadership and parents speak highly of the impact she has made in a short time, particularly in the school's communication with home. She provides a clear direction by accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses gained from detailed tracking of pupils' progress. Consequently, the priorities in the school improvement plan are the right ones to move the school forward. The school recognises that other teachers need to be more involved in leadership and management, particularly in the monitoring of pupils' progress as part of their subject responsibilities and the setting of challenging targets. This is rightly a current priority for improvement. The school takes good account of the concerns of pupils and parents by regular canvassing of their views and swift action to make improvements. This has led to important improvements in the quality of communication with parents and more after school clubs.

The governors support the school enthusiastically and have a sound view of its strengths and weaknesses. They have managed the staff absences effectively over recent years and the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and is soundly placed to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

The provision in the Reception classes is satisfactory. By the end of their Reception year, achievements are typical of children of this age, although independent learning is not as well developed as other areas. This is because, whilst curriculum planning is detailed, it lacks sufficient opportunities for children to discover things for themselves. This particularly affects the more able children who could achieve much better if they had the scope to do so. Parents value the way the staff make their children feel welcome and ensure they make a smooth transition to school. The regular assessments provide accurate measures of children's strengths and weaknesses and adults generally use them effectively to plan activities at the right level. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that children enjoy their work and parents say how much they love coming to school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure teachers have higher expectations of more able pupils so that they can attain the high standards of which they are capable.
- Involve subject leaders more in the monitoring of standards and the setting of challenging targets.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use ICT in all subjects.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Staplecross Methodist Primary School, Robertsbridge, TN32 5QD

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school. I really enjoyed looking through your work and watching you play so energetically in the playground. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to me told me a lot about your school. It is clear you like being part of a small school and making such good friends. Joining you for the Christmas lunch was a special treat for me. You all behaved brilliantly. Your school is satisfactory, which means it does most things right but could do even better in some areas.

What I liked most about your school

- You are very friendly and helpful to each other.
- You like school, think deeply about important issues, and your behaviour is excellent.
- All staff at your school take good care of you and keep you safe.
- You make satisfactory progress, and the standard of your work is similar to that of most schools.
- Teaching is satisfactory and teachers are good at making learning fun for you.
- The activities in the curriculum are interesting, especially when subjects are joined together, such as when older pupils did that outstanding project on the Second World War.
- You know a lot about how to stay safe and live healthy lives.
- Those in charge of your school know how to improve things and make sure it runs smoothly.

What the school should do now

- Make sure that all of you, particularly those who find learning easy, make the best possible progress (and you can help by working as hard as you can).
- Get teachers in charge of subjects to help other staff more.
- Give you more opportunities to use ICT in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston Lead inspector