

Stisted Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115162
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311861
Inspection date	19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Adams
Headteacher	Mr Martin Hawrylak
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
School address	The Street Stisted Braintree Essex CM77 8AN
Telephone number	01376 325116
Fax number	01376 326810

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspection focused on:

- the effectiveness of the action to improve writing.
- how well pupils develop and use their skills of information and communication technology.
- the role all members of staff play in improving the school.

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 the self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils travel from outside the village to attend this small primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and free school meal eligibility is low. The school experiences much less pupil mobility than other primary schools. There are fewer pupils on roll needing support with their learning than most other schools. There is one class for Reception children, and pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in three mixed-age classes.

The school has gained 'Healthy Schools' status and the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Staff, governors, parents and pupils are right in their judgement that Stisted Primary is an outstanding school. It is highly thought of in the community and many parents bring their children from well beyond the village because as one wrote, 'We feel privileged to have got our children into Stisted. They are encouraged to do their best and achieve the highest possible standards. Self-motivation is nurtured'

Innovative and hugely effective teaching that inspires pupils is the foundation for their outstanding achievement and very high standards in all areas by the time they move on to secondary school. The teaching team consists of creative and highly skilled practitioners who generate an enthusiasm for learning that captures the pupils' imagination so that lessons fly and leave them wanting more. Techniques, such as using drama to stimulate ideas for writing have pupils completely immersed in lessons. One result is that the pupils' writing has improved considerably. Skilled questioning and very high expectations are used to bring out the best in the pupils. They are challenged to think and to 'use what you know to work out what you do not know.'

Parents are very pleased with the school's commitment to the welfare of their children. This, they believe, is the reason why pupils feel safe and well cared for, say there is always someone to turn to and that any problems are sorted out quickly. They thoroughly enjoy school and relish helping newcomers settle in and, as one pupil put it, like 'the very friendly children, who make the school one big, happy family.' Each pupil is valued and knows it, whether they have particular talent or need additional help with learning. Teachers are clear about how well each pupil is doing and when extra attention is needed, and regularly make effective use of additional expertise from outside sources to support pupils with specific problems with their learning.

The headteacher is admired and respected by all. He sets challenging targets for everyone, and makes sure they have the resources and guidance to achieve them. He has high expectations but is flexible in his relentless drive for improvement. This is recognised by everyone, and as one parent wrote, 'We feel that the leadership and direction to the school are outstanding. Mr Hawrylak has done a superlative job since becoming headteacher.' His insistence that teachers base their lessons on a clear understanding of how children learn, and on the need to evaluate and adapt their plans if something does not quite work as intended, has enabled him to make already good teaching even better. One particularly effective example was the introduction of 'philosophy for children' to stimulate the pupils' speaking and listening. This has improved thinking but not had quite the desired effect on speaking, hence the introduction of more drama and role-play activities.

The curriculum is excellent. Pupils not only learn new skills quickly but also apply these in a wide variety of situations because learning is linked through themes to make it more relevant and prepare them well for the future. Pupils write at length in all subjects and in many styles, giving their work more meaning and benefiting their achievement considerably. Their 'Mr Men' books and animations are prime examples of the application of their sharply refined computer skills, which are utilised to support learning in most subjects. A feature of both mathematics and science is learning through investigation. Personal development is deemed as important as academic development. As a parent wrote, 'We are very pleased with the depth and balance of the education our child receives - we feel the development of the whole child is at the heart

of the process, with high academic success following.' Subjects such as physical education, art and music play an important part in the rich experiences provided for the pupils.

Pupils make a major contribution to the life and harmony of the school. They reflect on the implication of their actions on others and show great respect for all. This leads them to becoming thoughtful young people whose excellent behaviour gives the school its happy atmosphere. They undertake responsibilities such as 'playground leaders' conscientiously and with pride. They have a real voice through the school council, with one example being the clock installed in the playground as a reminder of the previous headteacher. They eat healthily and fully understand the value of the exercise they take. Pupils show great consideration for each other and respect people of different backgrounds. UNICEF day was a prime example of this. While raising money for cleaner water in Ghana, they saw positive images of African people and African life through a wide variety of activities including drumming and art, all splendidly captured in a video created by a small group of Year 6 pupils.

Professional development is sharply focussed and teachers' personal targets are appropriately challenging. The headteacher is determined to get the highest quality teachers who are both dedicated and committed to improving their performance. The staff team pulls strongly together, and all contribute to leading improvement. All staff and governors are determined that the school should become even better. Their checking of how well it is doing, gives a very clear picture of the school's qualities from which a few, but sharply defined priorities, are identified. This drive to improve and its leaders' high expectations of what can be achieved, place the school in a very strong position to meet its goals and to become even more successful.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in Reception. The close links with the village pre-school give the children confidence and ensure their smooth introduction to the routines of the class. They enter with skills at least as expected for their age and often better. Effective teaching in a secure environment where the needs of all children are carefully identified, results in good progress so that virtually all reach and many exceed national goals by the end of Reception. Although the adults work well as team, there are times when they do not stand back sufficiently to enable the children to take the initiative. Under the headteacher's guidance, much work has been undertaken to make the classroom more stimulating for children of this age. The outside area is slightly restricted but its improvement is part of the imminent building programme. The key target now is for the children to become more independent within the class and to learn how to make choices and take responsibility for their learning, so smoothing their move up into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give Reception children more opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their learning.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stisted CE VA Primary School, Braintree, Essex, CM77 8AN

You will probably remember that I visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. Before I do, I would just like to say thank you for making me feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts about your school. I had a chance to talk to quite a lot of you and I have told your teachers how you were very helpful and polite. Through my discussions with you, it was great to hear how much you enjoy school. It was also good to hear about how safe you feel in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried. You, your parents and teachers are right in thinking that your school is outstanding.

You make excellent progress during your time at school. Nearly all of you reach the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school and very many of you do better than this. You attend very regularly, work extremely hard and behave sensibly. Your teachers make learning interesting and you clearly enjoy extra activities such as trips and visits. All members of staff help to make sure you are safe and cared for very well. You take your responsibilities seriously and make a huge contribution to the life of the school. You have an excellent understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. I think that there is one thing in particular they could do, so I have asked your teachers to help children in Reception to take more responsibility for their learning by showing how they can take the initiative and make sensible choices about their work.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make this improvement.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector