

Stowting Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118682
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313045
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	97
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Stratton
Headteacher	A L Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2003
School address	Stowting Ashford TN25 6BE
Telephone number	01303 862375
Fax number	01303 862375

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stowting Church of England Primary School is much smaller than average. In addition to the Reception class, the pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. There is an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but no pupils with a statement of special educational need. Children's attainment on entry to the school varies year on year but is average overall. The school has the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where all the staff share a passion for teaching and learning and for the personal development of each and every child. In this school, every child is known and matters. The school achieves high standards and the pupils make excellent progress but the school leaders do not rest in a self-satisfied state of repose, but constantly strive to be even better. This is why they modestly only view themselves to be good. Parents and pupils, however, are much more generous in their praise. One set of parents summed up the views of many in stating, 'We believe that the tenacious drive and limitless enthusiasm of the headteacher are the key to the school's success.' This is an accurate observation as the headteacher provides exemplary and inspirational leadership.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is evident from their laughter, the frequent smiles on their faces in lessons, their eagerness to learn and their excellent behaviour that the pupils very much enjoy coming to school. They are enthusiastic in lessons and are highly appreciative of the wide range of activities offered to them during and beyond the school day, which means the curriculum is also excellent. The school very successfully broadens their horizons and seeks to open up for them new worlds of music, modern foreign languages and sport. This begins in the Reception Year, where a rich mix of experiences across all areas of learning lays a solid foundation for future learning. Consistently high expectations motivate pupils very well and ensure the pupils continue to build on what they know and can do. A brisk pace, lively manner and changes of activity enable the pupils to sustain their interest and concentration on what they are learning. Consequently, teaching and learning are excellent.

Care, guidance and support are exemplary. As a small school, there are mixed-age classes but the school leaders see this not as a barrier to learning but as an opportunity, and so ensure that there is a high staff-pupil ratio and that all pupils are taught English and mathematics in their separate year groups. This action in creating small classes, along with highly effective teaching and precise and refined systems for tracking progress, enables the pupils to do so well in literacy and numeracy. A further factor is that each pupil is very well known to their teachers and to the school leaders. As a result, any that begin to fall behind are swiftly supported, caringly guided and swept along to achieve their very best. The teachers treat the pupils with considerable concern and respect and this is reciprocated in turn by the pupils who willingly respond to what is asked of them.

There is a very strong rapport between the pupils and the staff, and the boys and girls get on extremely well with each other. They are confident speakers and behave with courtesy towards visitors. They are often commended for their good manners by visitors and when on trips. The school is justly proud of its Christian roots and inheritance and maintains close links with the Church and local people which results in a highly inclusive and harmonious community.

Leadership and management are excellent. Staff work together very effectively and share a commitment to provide the very best possible education for the children in their care. Monitoring is extensive but lacks sufficient rigour to lead to sharp targets for improvement. Governors are knowledgeable, highly capable and much involved in the life of the school which enables them to provide the appropriate support and challenge in helping the school to run smoothly, and in planning for the future. An energetic parent teacher association has very successfully raised considerable sums of money to extend the school's resources and enrich its work. Given its

impressive track record of continuing improvement the school has an exceedingly good capacity to improve further

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce greater rigour in monitoring the quality of teaching, planning and pupils' work so as to develop sharper targets for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By the time they leave, the school enables its pupils to achieve very high standards and to make excellent progress. Most children start the school with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. They go on to achieve well in the Reception Year. By the end of Year 2, standards are slightly above average. The results of national tests in Year 6 are exceptionally high and there is a clear upwards trend of rising standards. In 2006, all pupils reached or exceeded national expectations and a significant number of pupils reached the higher levels. The school regularly exceeds its targets, often by a great deal. Older pupils also develop very well their skills in singing. Children with particular talents in music, drama and sport are provided with very good opportunities to shine in after-school activities and inter-school competitions.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy school very much. The strongly nurturing atmosphere helps them to feel very safe, enjoy their learning and to behave in an exemplary manner. They know that there is a trusted adult to turn to if they have a problem. The children are considerate to one another and take care to make sure that no-one feels left out. Older pupils look out for and get on very well with the younger ones. The strong focus on the well-being of each individual makes all pupils feel valued. One pupil summed this up in the words, 'Everyone is kind and caring'. The pupils show an impressive commitment to the school community through the school council, whose suggestions have brought about improvements to the school. Pupils appreciate the needs of others and make a very effective contribution to the outside community by raising considerable sums of money for a wide range of good causes, for example, education projects in India. These actions, along with the high standards in basic skills in literacy, numeracy and the extensive opportunities to use computers, help them to understand the wider world and prepare them very well for their future role in society. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong indeed. Attendance is above average but is affected adversely by parents who take their children on holiday during term-time. Pupils appreciate the way the school encourages them to lead a healthy lifestyle, especially the opportunities to eat healthy food and to take up sport in lunchtime and after-school clubs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The teachers use their extensive knowledge of the pupils' past achievements and current learning needs to plan very effectively to meet those needs. Lessons are lively, challenging and enjoyable. They move at a brisk but not a rushed pace. Teachers possess very good subject

knowledge and use national guidance and internet resources with the interactive whiteboards to very good effect. Pupils are consistently highly responsive, eager to learn and often excited by the work. In English, for example, when studying the story from the musical *Oliver*, pupils in Years 5 and 6 relished the opportunity to trawl their imaginations for words and ideas in preparing a piece of persuasive writing to a judge, seeking leniency for a crime committed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's very well planned curriculum fully meets pupils' needs, both in terms of their personal development and their academic achievement. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the wide range of enrichment activities available to them, including opportunities to learn musical instruments, sing in the school choir and to participate in drama productions. Music is a particular strength of the school of which it is justly proud, and the school choir has performed at Canterbury Cathedral. The curriculum is further enriched through visits and outings. Highly worthwhile links with local secondary schools, for example, to further enhance the provision for mathematics and music, are very beneficial as the pupils gain much from the subject specialist expertise the staff are able to offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school has fully embraced the principles of 'Every Child Matters'. Relationships are excellent. The school is vigilant about health and safety matters, and the relevant policy procedures are in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support which enables them to make very good progress. The school promotes well the development of safe and healthy lifestyles. Academic guidance, through the tracking of pupils' progress and target-setting, is of a very high standard. Marking is very regular and clearly identifies how well a pupil has achieved particular objectives

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides first-rate leadership with a clear view of the direction the school should take and well conceived plans to bring about improvements. She enables staff to share her vision and to work together to successfully achieve common goals, and the actions to bring about improvements have yielded the desired results. However, some staff undertaking monitoring are still developing their expertise and monitoring is not as rigorous as it could be because it does not always lead to sharply focused points for improvement. The school evaluates its work very accurately but is unduly modest about its achievements. Good management systems, staff training and strong links with advisers and other agencies have supported the improvements taking place. The work with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well managed.

Governors ensure the school meets all its legal responsibilities and play an active and effective role in improving the work of the school and holding it to account. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and clearly indicate that their children very much enjoy school, make good progress and are well cared for.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	2
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

16 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stowting Church of England Primary School, Stowting, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6BE

I am writing to you following my recent visit to let you know what I think about your school. Thank you for your help in talking to me about your work.

I think your school is an exceptionally good school which is always trying to be even better. It provides you with an excellent education. I saw for myself, you told me and your parents told me, that everyone in your school takes very good care of you and you get on very well with each other. I could see how much you enjoy coming to school, and that the teachers make lessons lively and interesting so that you can learn more easily. You told me that you feel safe and that there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem. Your school council has helped to bring about changes. The school prepares you extremely well for the next stage of your education.

You show enthusiasm, behave very well and work hard in lessons and, as a result, do outstandingly well, especially in the tests you take in your last year at the school. Your parents are very happy with all the school provides for you. Your headteacher is a first-rate leader and knows what to do to make the school even better. I could not find many things that the school needs to make it better but I have asked the headteacher and governors to help teachers to make better checks on the areas for which they have added responsibilities. You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your very best.

May I wish you all the very best for the future.

Ian Hartland Her Majesty's Inspector