

Standens Barn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121935
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314154
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Dickens
Headteacher	Robyn Wisbey
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
School address	Flaxwell Court Standens Barn Northampton NN3 9EH
Telephone number	01604 413151
Fax number	01604 413156

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Standens Barn is a large primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Major building work to accommodate the increasing number of pupils has just been completed. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff over the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Standens Barn provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection a year ago. This is because leadership has acted quickly to address the main areas of concern. As a result of well directed support, guidance and intervention, unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6 and the improved teaching lower down the school is ensuring pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

Children's skills when they enter the Reception classes are below those expected for their age, particularly so in their literacy skills. Although progress throughout the school is satisfactory overall, it accelerates significantly in Years 5 and 6. Apart from a dip in mathematics in 2006, standards in national tests have been similar to those seen nationally in both English and mathematics and have been better in science. However, the school rightly recognises it needs to accelerate progress and challenge all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, to do as well as they should in Years 1 to 4 in English and mathematics.

The good personal development of the pupils is a reflection of the effective pastoral support provided. Pupils behave well around the school and, apart from a small number who become fidgety where activities are not sufficiently challenging, they behave well in lessons. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is getting better and is matched by an improvement in attendance. When given the opportunity, pupils are keen to take on responsibility. Older pupils look after younger pupils well, both in the dining room and at play during lunchtimes. Pupils feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy through eating well, and take advantage of the very good range of sporting activities to help them keep fit.

Teaching is improving. In Years 5 and 6, the good and occasionally outstanding teaching ensures pupils make rapid progress. Although the inadequate teaching has been eradicated in Years 1 to 4, there is too little that is consistently good. Teachers generally manage pupils well and make good use of interactive whiteboards to make lessons more stimulating for pupils. The marking of pupils' work has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is now consistently good, providing pupils with a very clear steer as to how they might improve. However, where teaching is not as strong in Years 1 to 4, the teachers do not pitch the work sufficiently closely to the pupils' abilities and this results in some, particularly the more able, not making the progress of which they are capable.

The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met effectively through well targeted support. The school's learning mentor helps those pupils who enter school later in the year to settle well and make progress in line with their peers. Children in the Reception classes are provided with an interesting curriculum and, throughout the rest of the school, there is an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. Visits and visitors add interest to the curriculum and links made between subjects to enhance literacy and numeracy skills are improving.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and rightly identifies what needs to be improved. Under the effective guidance of the headteacher, subject leaders have undertaken systematic monitoring of their subjects. The school has gathered a wealth of assessment and tracking information as to how pupils are performing. However, as yet, the information is not in a format

that is easily interrogated to identify individuals and groups of pupils who are not doing as well as they should. Based on the significant improvement since the previous inspection, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving. Children are looked after well and quickly settle to school. This was reflected in the views of a parent who commented, 'My child loves coming to school because she enjoys the lovely things they do.' The teachers plan an improving range of activities for the children, with a good balance of teacher directed work and that which the children can choose themselves. These chosen activities provide the children with a good foundation for developing their independence and the opportunity to work with others. When children enter the Reception classes, their skills are lower than those expected for their age and, whilst they make satisfactory progress, a significant minority do not attain the goals expected for their age on entry to Year 1. The assessment of children's progress has not been sufficiently accurate to enable teachers to ensure all make the progress of which they are capable. Whilst improving, there is still a little way to go, particularly to accelerate the children's progress in the basic skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the pupils' progress in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 4.
- Ensure teachers challenge all groups of pupils in Years 1 to 4, particularly the more able to achieve as well as they should.
- Refine the systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress to enable the information to be more easily available to staff.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and achievement is satisfactory. Considering their starting points, children make satisfactory progress throughout the Foundation Stage. A significant minority have weak communication skills and this has a negative impact on their spelling. A rigorous programme of teaching phonics has been extended to more classes and the benefits of this are beginning to take effect. The average standards seen at the end of Year 6 over the past three years in national tests is the result of the particularly good teaching in Years 5 and 6. The above average standards in science are because of good investigative activities. However, these standards have masked the uneven progress made in other classes throughout the school in English and mathematics with too few of the more able pupils attaining their potential. Whilst this is being addressed, there is still a little way to go. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their classmates because of the effective guidance and support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strong relationships seen throughout the school help to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Pupils say that they enjoy school and this is reflected in an improvement in attendance and their enjoyment of lessons. They do comment on how they enjoy the visits and visitors that support learning and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. They eat healthy food and know that the high quality provision for physical exercise is good for them. Pupils enjoy school dinners and understand the importance of their healthy snacks. The school council confidently expresses its opinions and suggestions for improvements.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils support a range of charitable activities, although their involvement in their community is not well developed. However, they do have a good understanding and awareness of the multicultural society in which they live and they celebrate the variety of cultural backgrounds of pupils in the school. The good behaviour, developing social awareness and improving basic skills prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

At the start of most sessions, teachers make sure that the pupils understand what they are to learn and help them to evaluate their own progress at the end of the lesson. The use of interactive whiteboards makes lessons more interesting. Carefully constructed questioning by the teachers help the pupils to develop their speaking skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively by classroom assistants enabling them to take a full part in lessons. The marking of pupils' work is good and is linked well to pupils' individual learning targets. As a result, it is beginning to have a good impact on pupils' achievement in all classes. Whilst teaching is improving, there is still some way to go to ensure it is consistently good. Teaching is less effective where it does not challenge all pupils sufficiently, particularly the more able who do not do as well as they should in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

All subjects are covered in sufficient depth and the school has rightly focused on raising standards in English and mathematics. Links between literacy and other subjects are beginning, although the school rightly recognises it needs to make the curriculum more exciting and vibrant to engage the interest of all pupils. The pupils' personal, social and health education is promoted well and the curriculum effectively encourages healthy lifestyles with good opportunities for pupils to take part in sport. There is a satisfactory range of activities that enrich the curriculum, including instrumental tuition. The pupils appreciate the residential visits which make a good contribution to their personal and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and support pupils receive are particularly strong. The very positive relationships enable pupils to develop confidence, self esteem and respect for one another. The extra difficulties for pupils entering the school after the usual joining date are recognised and they are given additional support by the learning mentor to help them settle well. Attendance is closely monitored and, where there is concern, early contact is made with families. Good procedures ensure the safety of children. Effective links with outside agencies ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the support they require. Academic guidance is improving, although it is not tight enough to ensure the most able always make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils have a good knowledge of their targets and of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and governors reacted quickly and positively to address the issues identified in the last report. The formation of a task group enabled governors to keep a close eye on the progress being made towards the school's targets. This, together with an accurate assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and effective support from the local authority, has helped the school to make good improvements. Senior staff have rightly and effectively focused on addressing the inadequate progress made in Years 1 to 4. Support for less inexperienced staff has been put in place and has enabled the issue of inadequate teaching to be addressed. However, the school recognises that there is not enough that is consistently good. There has been a very good improvement in the amount of information gathered by the school to track the pupils' progress and monitor how well they are doing. However, the format of this information does not make it easy to use to identify and address the underachievement of individuals and groups of pupils and to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable. Governors are supportive and keen to improve the rate of pupils' achievement. With guidance from the local authority, they have begun to monitor progress more robustly.

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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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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	3

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	2
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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Standens Barn Primary School, Standens Barn NN3 9EH

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. We think that some of you could make better progress particularly in English and mathematics. The teaching, together with all the subjects you learn about, enable you to make satisfactory progress during your time at school.

These are some of the good things we found about your school.

- You behave well and enjoy the clubs, visits and visitors. Your attendance is getting better.
- You understand the importance of keeping safe, try to eat healthy foods and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the range of sporting activities.
- Staff look after you well and give you good support.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make subjects more interesting for you.

This is what the school needs to do to make it better.

- Help you to make better progress in English and mathematics.
- Ensure teachers challenge all of you to do your best work.
- Make better use of the information teachers gather from tests to help you all do as well as you can.

You can do your bit by working really hard with your English and mathematics. I wish you all the best for the future.

Thank you again for helping me with my work.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards Lead inspector