

Stanford in the Vale Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123159
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314519
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Karl Wright
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Walters
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	High Street Stanford in the Vale Faringdon SN7 8LH
Telephone number	01367 710474
Fax number	01367 718429

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The vast majority of pupils have White British backgrounds. A below average proportion is eligible for free school meals. The proportion identified with learning difficulties is above average with a wide range of needs. A very small number speak English as an additional language. More pupils join or leave during the school year than is typically found. There are well established links with other schools, including a number in Europe fostered through the Comenius project. The school has achieved the Football Charter award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stanford in the Vale is a good school. It has a warm, caring Christian ethos and this underpins pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Consistently good teaching, their excellent behaviour, regular attendance and very good attitudes to learning all contribute to this. Standards are above average overall but vary due to the changing number of pupils with learning difficulties and those who join or leave the school in any one year. For example, standards are average in Year 2 but pupils have made good progress from starting points which were lower than normal. However, there is still room for improvement in reading in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 where standards remain a little lower than those in writing. Standards are currently above average in Year 6. Standards were broadly average when these pupils started. They have made good progress in English and science but rapid progress in mathematics where standards are very high.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. This is considerably helped by excellent pastoral care and first class enrichment of the curriculum. Pupils really enjoy school. They like their teachers, the friendly atmosphere and the fact they know every person. Pupils develop into confident, resourceful and responsible young people. They have a good work ethic. Many help in the development of the school and contribute to the many strong links with the village community. For example, the splendid 'Environmental Watch group' is very popular and helps pupils appreciate local traditions and the need to look after the environment. The school has excellent links with other schools in the area and abroad, local groups, and support agencies.

The curriculum is good and caters for different pupils' needs well. For example, pupils with language or behavioural needs and more acute difficulties or disabilities are guided very well in their learning. This is because their individual education plans are very precise and backed up with very good support from external agencies and their skilled teaching assistants. Each teacher has an accurate view of their pupils' standards, progress and learning needs. This information is used particularly well to support pupils with learning difficulties and those who join part way through the school year. This means that over time these pupils make good progress too. It also helps teachers provide challenging activities to most pupils although on occasions they could be sharper for some individuals. However, the information is not consistently used to identify pupils' next steps in learning and the monitoring of pupils' long-term progress is not as precise as it might be.

The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the education provided. 'My children look forward to going to school' and 'There is a real sense of community' are typical of many comments. Communication with parents has been greatly improved since the last inspection. The headteacher and governors have good plans to further improve two-way communications to resolve a small number of current queries.

The school is well led and managed. Areas for development have been prioritised well. The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Teachers work hard and lessons are monitored frequently which helps them to develop their expertise, roles and responsibilities. The school is well placed to build upon past successes and its track record of good achievement and the high quality personal development of its pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills on entry vary from year to year but are currently as expected for their age in most years. Children make a good start to their education. Good links with parents enables children to start school feeling happy and safe. The outdoor accommodation has been developed well and this adds to the varied learning inside the classroom. The curriculum provides a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Activities such as role play in the doctor's consulting room and making chocolate Easter cakes are some of the activities that contribute to children's good progress. The teacher and other adults know the learning needs of the children well and are strengthening early approaches to reading. By the end of Reception most achieve or exceed the goals expected of them and make a confident start to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 to match those in writing.
- Use the information on pupils' standards and progress more effectively to sharpen teaching and make the next steps in learning clearer for pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are generally above average but vary year by year reflecting the changing numbers of pupils with particular learning needs. Rising standards in writing and mathematics and falling standards in reading have meant that overall standards have remained average at the end of Year 2. Current standards are average but this represents good achievement from a low starting points for these particular pupils. The stronger focus given to linking letters to sounds and a better reading programme is starting to improve standards in reading. However, more needs to be done to bring them closer to the above average standards in writing. Standards dipped last year at the end of Year 6 and were average. They reflected the larger than usual numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and the loss of some able pupils who left during the school year. The more able group of pupils in the current Year 6 have made good progress in English and science where standards are above average. Their standards in mathematics are exceptionally high. The very rapid progress is due to the strong focus given to developing their skills in mental calculations and problem solving. Pupils with language or behavioural needs are well supported and consequently make consistently good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have a very well developed sense of Christian values and a good appreciation of other faiths and beliefs. Pupils say, 'We are all one team and get on extremely well with each other'. Every lunch time the whole school exercises with 'Wake up, Shake up' and as one pupil said, 'It's terrific and really keeps us fit!'. Instances of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep safe and the importance of being careful when using the Internet. Pupils' good enterprise skills and capabilities in English, mathematics and information and communication technology prepare them well for secondary school. Attendance is good and truancy is unheard of. The very active school council initiates a wide range of activities including events such as the successful 'Easter Tea party' for parents which raised money for sports relief.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils say, 'We love our lessons because the teachers give us lots of variety'. If you walk around the school you will see pupils concentrating hard, listening carefully to their teachers and learning at a good pace in every class. Teaching assistants are well deployed and offer pupils with learning difficulties good support because they know their needs well. A strength in teaching is the way in which careful questioning helps pupils understand difficult ideas. Marking is positive and constructive. Teachers know their pupils well and provide different tasks matched well to their needs. However, on occasions some pupils find the work too easy because the activities are insufficiently challenging or too hard because they have gaps in their learning which limits their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well planned and interesting curriculum in English, mathematics and science helps pupils make good progress. Good opportunities are included for drama such as 'The Viking Invasion' in Year 3, French in Year 3 and 4 and role play in Years 1 and 2 which help enliven the curriculum. Throughout the year many special days and events are organised to enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils benefit from days set aside to mathematics, science, art and music to learn in exciting ways. Pupils also work with children from other local primary schools such as very popular 'Get Active' themed week. For a school of this size, there are many after-school activities such as tag rugby and the gardening club which are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'When our children started school they were made very welcome and given plenty of advice and support', typifies the views of many parents. Pupils have close contact with their teachers and know there is always someone they can quickly turn to if needed. Good links with outside agencies ensures the few pupils with a statement of special educational need receive good specialist support. Occasionally pupils join from abroad with little or no English. Their personal and academic needs are quickly identified. The good support they receive enables them to quickly become integrated into all that the school offers. Teachers have accurate information on what their pupils can and cannot do. However, this information is inconsistently used to help them target pupils' next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed at all levels. All staff are involved in helping to identify the small number of areas for development which are carefully implemented. Standards in mathematics and writing have improved because of the priority given to these in the last two years. The more recent focus on reading is starting to bear fruit and standards are beginning to rise also. The school has made strenuous efforts to improve communication with parents through governors' surgeries and shared assemblies. Many parents appreciate the efforts that

have been made. However, a few remain concerned they are not always kept in touch with school developments nor that their views are fairly represented. Governors have a good impact on the work of the school through their streamlined committee structure and regular visits they make to check on how improvements are proceeding.

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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?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

02 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stanford in the Vale Church of England Primary School, Faringdon, SN7 8LH

As you know we visited your school recently to find out how well you were doing. We enjoyed speaking to you and seeing all the interesting things you do. Our report says that your school is a good school. This is what we liked the most.

- Your teachers and support staff help you reach above average standards.
- Your behaviour is exemplary and we can see that you enjoy school very much.
- We saw you working hard in lessons and making good progress.
- Teaching is good and an effective curriculum in English, mathematics and science also help you to achieve well.
- Your teachers and other staff look after you extremely well.
- You have many interesting things to do, in addition to your lessons, such as the bell ringers and the splendid Environmental Watch group.
- Your headteacher and governors run the school well.

Your headteacher, teachers and governors are working hard to make your school better. I have asked them to look at these two things to improve the school further.

- Help pupils in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 do even better in reading.
- Use the good information about how well you are doing to sharpen their teaching and make sure you understand what you have to do to improve your work.

The younger children can help by really learning your letters and sounds and doing some extra reading at home each day. All of you need to talk carefully with your teachers so that you have a clear idea exactly what you have to learn next.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector