

Stonham Aspal CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124772
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315051
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Howson
Headteacher	Mr Paul Hesketh
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	The Street Stonham Aspal Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 6AF
Telephone number	01449 711346
Fax number	01449 711078

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 6, and the effectiveness of teaching, leadership and management in raising standards. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons and sampling of pupils' work. Discussions were held with pupils, the staff and chair of governors and a scrutiny of school documentation was undertaken. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is a similar size to most primary schools. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The proportions of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Similarly, the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is also below the national average. Compared with most schools, fewer pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school where pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted effectively. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and staying safe. They enjoy school and their attendance is above average. When asked how they would encourage others to come to the school, several mentioned the friendliness of the pupils and said, 'They would be made welcome'. The vast majority behave well in the classrooms and around the school because teachers manage the pupils' behaviour effectively and adopt good behaviour management approaches.

Most pupils enter Year 1 with levels of attainment above those expected nationally. They make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Standards in the 2007 teacher assessments and national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 were above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Standards in the current Year 2 are slightly higher than previously, and particularly in writing. The school has put in place good measures to bring about improvements, thus successfully reversing the five-year downward trend in standards. Standards at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated over the years. The underlying trend is one of improvement, with the boys performing better than the girls. Pupils are on track to achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Reading is a strength throughout the school, but standards in mathematics and science are more variable. This is partly attributable to the lack of rigorous systems for tracking, analysing and interpreting pupils' attainment and progress by staff.

Teaching is satisfactory. A survey of pupils' work shows that they are making satisfactory progress overall, but progress is uneven. Evidence from lesson observations and discussions with pupils shows that there is not enough effective teaching to enable all pupils to make good progress. The more able pupils are capable of attaining higher standards.

Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and, as a result, pupils want to do well. Lessons are generally well planned and make effective use of time and of the recently installed electronic whiteboards. There are examples of good questioning techniques that challenge and consolidate pupils' learning, but this is inconsistent throughout the school. Teaching assistants provide good support to groups and individuals, particularly for pupils with learning needs, enabling them to make good progress. There are some good examples of informative marking, particularly in English books, but this is not consistent in all classes or as evident in other subjects, such as mathematics. As a result, some pupils are not clear about what they have to do to meet their individual targets. This also contributes to the variable progress made in mathematics and science, particularly in Key Stage 2. The half-termly writing assessment books provide clear evidence of satisfactory progress and accurate assessments. The school is planning to extend this approach to include more regular assessments in mathematics.

Overall, the curriculum is good. The school is successfully preparing pupils for their future lives by offering them a broad curriculum, which promotes their enjoyment of learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and contributes much to the pupils' good personal development. Recent changes to the organisation for teaching mathematics in Years 5 and 6 have yet to show in pupils' results but strategies to improve writing in Year 2 are having a good impact on standards in the classroom. The use of a good range of additional support materials effectively enables pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress and reach national standards.

The leadership and management of the school, at all levels, are satisfactory. The strength is in the care provided for the pupils. The school operates calmly on a day-to-day basis, complying with the latest safeguarding and health and safety requirements. The leadership team is aware of the need to improve information and communication technology (ICT) provision for recording and analysing pupils' levels of attainment and progress, but external delays in putting in place new software have held staff initiatives back. However, given the strong emphasis placed on care for pupils, care guidance and support are good overall.

Governors are supportive of the school. They have contributed much to promoting the school within the community and to the development of the school buildings. This has enhanced the learning environment and opportunities for pupils. The school development plan clearly identifies priorities but their impact on standards and pupils' achievement is not yet evident because success is not evaluated against measurable targets. Nevertheless, the school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. With the assistance of the local authority, reasonably challenging statutory targets in English and mathematics have been set and there is a sound understanding of the areas for development. Links with outside agencies and other schools are good and are used to promote pupils' learning and their personal development well. Parents are supportive of the school and make a significant financial contribution to improving provision. The school provides sound value for money and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with levels of attainment broadly similar to those expected of children of their age. They settle quickly and make good progress in their learning because the relationships with adults are good. There is a clear focus on developing their personal and social skills and their skills in communication, language and literacy. The curriculum is well organised and is suitably matched to meet the children's needs. Teaching is mostly good and there are many opportunities for the children to develop their independence. As a result, by the end of the Reception class, the vast majority are working above the standards expected nationally. Effective improvements have been made to the outdoor area since the last inspection. The small outdoor area is used well to promote enjoyment of learning, their physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure assessment systems and procedures are firmly embedded in the work of the school and contribute effectively to ensuring all pupils make good progress.
- Develop the role of leaders and managers at all levels in rigorously monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- Refine the school development plan to include targets that are clearly linked to making an impact on the rate of pupils' progress, and set out precise measures for evaluating success.

A small proportion of the 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.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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?	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	3
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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stonham Aspal C of E VA Primary, Stowmarket, IP14 6AF

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and talking to you. I was very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and to see your attendance is above average. Throughout the day, you behaved well and demonstrated that you are keen to take responsibility. You have a good understanding of healthy living and know about being safe. Overall, your personal development is good.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are above those found in most schools. You get off to a good start in the Reception class and make good progress. By the time you start in Year 1, most of you are already attaining levels above those expected for your age. Progress as you move through the school is satisfactory.

Several of you told me how much you enjoyed your work and the range of subjects you are taught. Some of the older pupils mentioned learning French, others the after-schools clubs. All these things mean that the school offers you a good curriculum.

The adults look after you well and they make certain you are safe. Some of your lessons are very interesting. The teaching is satisfactory overall. Although you have targets in English and mathematics, the school does not check on your progress enough. To help with this, I have asked the school to get some new systems up and running as soon as possible, that the headteacher and senior staff check carefully to see if you are making good progress and, if you are not making enough progress, to find other ways to help you improve. I have also suggested that they look carefully at how to improve your standards of work further.

I hope that you will continue to enjoy your education at Stonham Aspal Primary.

With best wishes for the future.

David Wynford Jones

Lead Inspector