

# Stower Provost Community School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 113674          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Dorset          |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 325859          |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 13 May 2009     |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Deborah Zachary |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 87   |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0  |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years                                     | 0  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body                               |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Sara Vaughan                                     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Julie Sanderson                                  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 9 May 2006                                       |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                         |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                         |
| <b>School address</b>  | Woodville Stour Provost<br>Gillingham<br>SP8 5LX |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01747 838370                                     |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01747 838083                                     |

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|--------------------------|-------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Stower Provost is a small school whose roll has dropped since the previous inspection. Most pupils are taught in classes that contain two year groups. For example, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) are taught in a class with Year 1. Most of the pupils come from a range of small dispersed villages and rural communities. All are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Stour Vale Pre-school shares the school site, but is managed separately so has a separate inspection report.

There has been an acting headteacher since June 2008 because of the ill health of the substantive headteacher; the deputy headteacher, having been on maternity leave, left in February 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Stower Provost provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has been through a particularly turbulent period with staff illness and change, and the acting headteacher has achieved a great deal since her appointment just under a year ago. Achievement is satisfactory and standards broadly average, but the school has many good features. These include pupils' personal development and the care, support and guidance they receive. One parent most aptly summed up Stower Provost as 'a small school with a large heart and big ambitions'. A range of strategies has been introduced to improve teaching and to improve progress in writing. Teaching is now good, and there has been a positive impact on progress in writing. As a result of the good teaching, progress is now good in many lessons. However, there has been insufficient time for lost ground to be made up in some subject areas; progress varies significantly between subjects and is satisfactory overall.

Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1 progress is satisfactory overall, but slow in reading. Progress is also satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Here, though progress in English is now good, and the achievement of last year's Year 6 was good in mathematics, the progress of the current year groups in mathematics has been too slow. The school's tracking system shows that the slowest progress has often occurred when pupils are in the older year group in a mixed-age class. However, teaching seen during the inspection, though occasionally less effective for older pupils in a class, largely challenged pupils well in lessons. Though the curriculum has good features, the slower progress of the older year groups indicates that there are some adjustments to be made in the planned programme of work.

Pupils enjoy being at school. They feel very safe and say they all get along well. They feel well cared for, and certainly have a very clear idea of how well they are doing and how to improve. They have a good all-round knowledge of how to stay healthy and are proud to have achieved the Healthy Schools Award. They are reflective and inclusive, well informed about different world-wide faiths and keen that everyone should be valued. They demonstrate their care for others through taking responsibility well, for example in their roles as play mediators. Though very tolerant of others and interested in other people's lives, they do lack some background knowledge about their own country and its people; for example, how different life might be like in the North or in a large city with a multi-ethnic population.

Once appointed, the acting headteacher moved quickly and with exactly the right priorities to support staff and restore their confidence. The school's sound self-evaluation identified the right key areas to improve and the strategies implemented were very productive. Constrained by circumstances outside their control, the governors have progressed as rapidly as possible towards making a permanent headteacher appointment; however, at the time of the inspection this had not been completed. Taking this and the satisfactory self-evaluation into account, despite the examples of good leadership and management under the temporary arrangements, the school's capacity to improve is currently not more than satisfactory.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

As year groups are very small, the attainment on entry of the children varies from year to year. In the last complete year, 2007/8, children's skills on entry were below national expectations but they made good progress to finish the year with broadly average attainment. The current

children are also making good progress. The teacher has good, in-depth knowledge of them and gathers extensive pre-school information on each child. Tracking of attainment is comprehensive, and this has given the acting headteacher a clear picture of the rate of progress of the children. The provision is organised and managed well, and some imaginative approaches are used. For example, the children have a visual list of activities for each day so they can anticipate what is coming next. This particularly helps eliminate any anxieties for children who may struggle with change.

Lessons are well planned to ensure a good mix of child-initiated activities and those led by the teacher or teaching assistant, and the outdoor area is used well to encourage role play and imaginative play. Lessons meet the needs of most pupils well, but occasionally the more able are not fully challenged.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Speed up the progress pupils make in reading in Key Stage 1, and in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that pupils in the older year group in mixed-age classes are given work that enables them to make the progress they should.
- Give pupils a better knowledge of different communities in Britain.

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.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The 2007 Year 6 results showed broadly satisfactory progress. The 2008 Year 6 results showed very good progress in mathematics but satisfactory progress in English because writing was significantly weaker. Standards were also lowest in writing in relation to other subjects in Key Stage 1. Identifying this, the acting headteacher took rapid and effective action and, as a result, writing has improved at both key stages. Progress in writing is now satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and is good in Key Stage 2. Progress in reading is also good in Key Stage 2 but progress in mathematics has been too slow in year groups where pupils are the oldest in the class. In Key Stage 1, standards for the 2008 Year 2 reflected very good progress in mathematics but slow progress in reading and writing. The current Year 2 pupils have made satisfactory progress in mathematics but significantly slower progress in reading. Again, progress was slow where they were the oldest in the class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively, and they too make appropriate progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils of all ages greet each other as they move around the school, and there is a happy atmosphere. One parent commented, 'It's great to see the enthusiasm the children have,' and this is reflected in the school's good attendance. Behaviour is also good, both in class and in the playground, and the pupils who gave their views said there was no bullying, one remarking, 'It's a small school – we all get along.' The pupils value their physical education and wake and shake sessions, and are looking forward to starting swimming again in the school pool. They make a good contribution to the

community, including the wider community, through collecting for a wide range of charities. They are proud of their successful efforts to raise money for a water tank for their linked school in Ghana, recognising the difference it could make to children's lives there. Pupils show maturity in their understanding of relationships and the articulate way in which they can discuss people's need for mutual help and support. The pupils' social skills, their competence with information and communication technology and their sound basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for the future. From their earliest years in school they learn about the jobs people do, but there are limited opportunities to learn about business or enterprise. Cultural development is also satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's monitoring records and the observations made during the inspection demonstrate that teaching is good. Pupils are clear about what the objective of the lesson is and they are very effectively involved in suggesting how it might be achieved. In a Year 2/3 lesson, for example, pupils were able to suggest their own top tips, such as writing in the third person for a report about Anderson shelters used in the Second World War. Teachers draw teaching points from pupils' own work very effectively, in order to praise and set examples for others (using the pink highlighter) and also to suggest areas for everyone to improve (the blue highlighter). There is a high level of interest, sometimes generated by the content and sometimes simply by a high pace and liveliness in the teacher's style. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons so that they can access the work set. Higher ability pupils are challenged well by teachers' questions but occasionally not so well by the main work set.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is good, and staff and pupils earned the Rights Respecting School award two years ago. Parents appreciate the way the school helps their children to mature, and also praise the assemblies and whole-school music, drama and arts productions they are able to watch. The curriculum for writing has been extended and improved over the last year. Beyond dedicated literacy sessions, for example, writing is now developed better through other subjects such as history. In assessing how well it contributes to community cohesion, the school recognised that the curriculum does not develop pupils' understanding of their own country in a sufficiently structured way. The school also recognises that it will have to review its planning of the curriculum as the year groups in the different classes change from year to year. At the moment, given that teaching is good, the slower progress of some older pupils in the different classes indicates that the curriculum in some subjects is not rigorously progressive.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Staff know the backgrounds and needs of pupils very well and take good steps to ensure they are well cared for and supported. Financial support is available when required to fund things like residential trips, so that no-one feels excluded from the school community. Pupils whose

parents want childcare from early in the morning attend the breakfast club. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive specialist help through the school's good links with outside professionals. The targets on their individual education plans are focused well on their special needs, though these plans occasionally lack individual targets to drive up each pupil's academic standards. The school also has a good partnership with the local pre-school and toddler groups, and has suitable links with the secondary school to ease transition. Pupils benefit from good care, and safeguarding requirements are met. They also receive good guidance through marking and their individual targets, which are often stuck to the front of their books.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The acting headteacher has shown strong and effective leadership in raising morale, prioritising accurately and planning very well for the year's improvements. Prior to her arrival, however, there was a period of disruption, and until an appointment is confirmed there remains some uncertainty about the school's long-term management. Nevertheless, an atmosphere is now established in which there is clear direction for staff and good teaching and high quality care for pupils. The school's tracking of pupils' attainment provides comprehensive material from which to evaluate progress and set targets. It enabled the school to identify the key requirement to improve progress in writing. Finer tuning of self-evaluation to identify smaller areas of slow progress, such as those within particular year groups, was understandably less of a priority. Targets are used well and are challenging at Key Stage 2, but less demanding at Key Stage 1. Teaching is monitored well, and helpful points for improvement identified.

The chair of governors has been a pillar of support to the school, and leads the governing body with assurance and perceptiveness. Many of the governors are new, and there are good induction procedures for them. Governance is good, and like the headteacher, governors have prioritised effectively. They are aware of the school's duty to promote community cohesion and do so satisfactorily. They appreciate the school's context, and recognise that they promote cohesion within the school, where all are welcomed and included, and within the local area better than they promote cohesion nationally.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 3   |

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?              | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve?   | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?                     | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?                          | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?                                 | 2 |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress                           | 3 |

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 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 |
| The extent to which 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 2 |
| 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 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 eliminated   | 2   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 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  | 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  |

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

14 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stower Provost Community School, Gillingham, SP8 5LX.

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school. We think you are getting a sound education and you have done well to improve your writing over the last year. The idea of pink and blue pens to show what is good or needs more help is working well, and you take a good part in improving your learning. You behave well and care for each other, which is really good. The youngest children get a good start when they join the school. You told us about lots of things you enjoy, and we agree with you that you benefit from good teaching. You are also good at knowing how to keep healthy – well done for getting that award!

Your headteacher, staff and governors want to improve more areas and we have identified the following things to work on;

- Those of you in Years 1 and 2 now need to improve your reading, and those in Years 3 to 6 need to improve your mathematics.
- Where there are two year groups together in a class, we have asked the school to make sure that the teachers always provide the older pupils with work that helps them move on. You can help by telling teachers if you think you could do something harder.
- You know a lot about some parts of the world, for example through your links with the school in Ghana. We have asked the school to give you a broader knowledge about different people in Britain too.

With best wishes Yours faithfully

Deborah Zachary

Lead inspector