

Stafford Junior School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 114469 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 326016 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Helen Hutchings |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 388 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Caroline Cosham |
| Headteacher | John Sargent |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 February 2006 |
| School address | Ringwood Road Eastbourne BN22 8UA |
| Telephone number | 01323 733434 |
| Fax number | 01323 430341 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stafford Junior School is larger than most primary schools. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There has been a high turnover of staff with almost half of the teachers having joined the school within the last two years. At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent. An experienced headteacher from another school took over the leadership on a temporary basis two days before the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Most pupils enjoy their activities in school, but they do not achieve as well as they should. This is because there is a lack of rigour in checking on the school's performance and the actions needed to bring about improvements have not been identified and taken. The school has lost the confidence of parents, with over a third of those responding to the inspection questionnaire expressing concerns about leadership and management.

Pupils' attainment in Year 3, when they join the school, is consistently above average. However, pupils do not make the progress that they should and standards by the end of Year 6 are below average. This is evident in the results in national tests that have been below average overall for the last four years. There is some variation in how well pupils do in different subjects. Standards in science are in line with or above national averages and higher than those in English and mathematics.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat a balanced diet and to take regular exercise. They are friendly and polite and generally behave well in lessons. Pupils confirmed the parents' view that there is an element of bullying which is usually, but not always, dealt with effectively. A few parents expressed concern about the school's systems for ensuring the safety of pupils. The inspection team judges that individual staff take good care of pupils, but the school's systems for care, guidance and support are inadequate overall. Statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding are not fully met and there are weaknesses in academic guidance. There is a lack of rigour in systems for tracking pupils' progress and marking does not give clear advice on how pupils can improve their work.

The key reason for pupils' limited progress is the inadequate curriculum. An emphasis has been placed on linking all learning under themes to be taught in a fully integrated manner. Although this approach makes learning enjoyable, it neglects the requirements of the National Curriculum. Whole-school planning does not take account of the need to develop pupils' key skills systematically, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The school improvement plan is not based on an accurate analysis of current provision and planned actions are not focused sufficiently on developing strategies to raise attainment. The curriculum is not planned carefully enough, and many staff are inexperienced in assessing the standards attained by pupils. Consequently, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory because teachers' expectations are not high enough. They often set work which is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs to enable them to make satisfactory progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards substantially, particularly in English and mathematics, by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Implement a curriculum which meets National Curriculum requirements and builds learning systematically throughout the school.

- Improve teachers' skills in assessing pupils' attainment so that they can use this information to plan work more closely matched to what pupils already know and can do.
- Strengthen the capacity of leaders and managers to prioritise and implement strategies for improvement and check their effectiveness in raising attainment.
- Ensure that statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are met in full.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils do not make the progress that they should and standards in the end of Year 6 tests are below national averages. This is partly due to the adverse effect of many changes in teaching staff, but also to weaknesses in the curriculum which does not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their basic skills. School data indicate that pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making less progress than should reasonably be expected given their starting points. Pupils do not learn to transfer skills gained in one subject to other situations. For example, although pupils had practised drawing people in art, they did not use this new skill when illustrating people in their topic work. Pupils' books and folders contain limited amounts of recorded work, with few examples of extended written work in subjects other than English. Performance has regularly fallen short of the targets set for Year 6 pupils in the national tests. Targets for 2009 are considerably lower than previous years. The latest tracking data show that many pupils will need to make very rapid progress to ensure that they meet even these modest targets and gain the necessary skills in literacy and numeracy to give them an effective start to secondary education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils generally enjoy school, which is reflected in their regular attendance, and the positive relationships that they have with adults. Pupils have satisfactory social skills and greet visitors very politely. Most behave well, and respect one another and the adults who work directly with them. Pupils feel safe due to the care that teachers and teaching assistants provide. In discussion with inspectors they agreed that, 'Teachers are really protective of you'. They have a good understanding of right and wrong. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, although many have a limited understanding of our culturally diverse society. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to lead healthy lifestyles, partly as a result of the work undertaken to achieve a Healthy School award. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss issues relevant to the school community within their class groups. These discussions have helped the school council to identify areas for improvement, such as introducing a healthy eating tuck shop. However, pupils' views are not regularly canvassed and the school has not taken up any of the council's suggestions during this year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teachers manage behaviour well and make sure that classrooms have lively displays to promote interest and enthusiasm. During the inspection, teachers were using new planning formats, based on national guidance, and provided pupils with a satisfactory range of tasks focused on the development of basic skills. However, teachers do not have a good enough awareness of

pupils' prior learning and achievements. As a result, they do not match work closely enough to their needs. Whole class inputs are overly long and too much time is spent on consolidating the most basic level of understanding within the whole class. As a result, some pupils become bored and are allowed to 'coast' instead of moving on to more challenging tasks. Some teachers are trialling new approaches to marking and assessment, but in the main, work is not marked frequently enough to identify underachievement and correct misunderstandings at a sufficiently early stage.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum does not meet pupils' needs and does not lead to adequate progress. It has not been audited and there are gaps in relation to National Curriculum requirements. For example, information and communication technology (ICT) is not covered sufficiently to ensure that pupils experience all aspects of the subject. Planning has placed insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The lack of detailed whole-school planning leads to superficial links across subjects and a lack of depth in pupils' study. This was identified by the local authority and a programme of support agreed with the school in 2007. However, plans made by subject co-ordinators have not been implemented consistently on a whole school basis and hence the support has had limited impact. After-school activities, many involving external agencies, are popular and well attended, but many parents commented that their children are unable to attend because few are offered free of charge. Residential visits and shorter stays for younger pupils, such as the recent 'sleepover' to record weather measurements over a 24 hour period, help pupils to develop independence and personal qualities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The arrangements for securing pupils' safety and well-being are not sufficiently robust. Concerns raised by parents are well founded. The required checks on adults working within the school are not up-to-date and risk assessments are not carried out routinely. While individual staff are conscientious about the areas that they oversee, the lack of rigorous whole school systems means that practice is inconsistent and supervision is too limited.

Information about pupils' progress is collected regularly. However, teachers' assessment of pupils' work is unreliable, and often overly generous, because they have not had enough opportunities to develop their understanding of National Curriculum levels. This means that senior leaders are basing their monitoring of performance on inaccurate data and underachievement is not always picked up quickly enough. Target setting, at an individual or group level, has been introduced very recently and pupils have only a limited understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. However, there is no systematic approach to checking that the support they receive helps them to make the progress that they should.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school's evaluation of how well it is doing is unrealistic so that weaknesses, particularly in pupils' achievements, have not been tackled. The acting headteacher is working closely with the local authority and senior school staff to gain an accurate understanding of the current position. Plans are already in place to bring about some immediate changes. This is helping to address low staff morale brought about because previous initiatives have not been fully implemented. Individuals have not been able to develop their skills and practice through appropriate professional development. Staff are now committed to playing a full part in taking the school forward. They understand that the school has not had high enough expectations of pupils or set challenging targets for their achievement. However, given the interim nature of some senior leadership posts and the relative inexperience of many staff, the school does not currently have the capacity to bring about improvements at the rate needed to stem pupils' underachievement. Governors have an awareness and understanding of the school's weaknesses. They have tried to hold the school to account and have taken difficult decisions to try to improve the situation. However, their systems for checking that school policies and statutory guidance are implemented have not proved effective.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 4 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 4 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 4 |

¹Grade 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

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 4 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 4 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 4 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 4 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 4 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 4 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | No |
| Does this school require special measures? | Yes |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

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

2 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Stafford Junior School, Eastbourne, BN22 8UA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. Your comments helped us to find out a lot about the school.

We know that you enjoy school and some of the things you do in lessons, but at the moment, you do not make enough progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Some of you do not do as well as you should in the Year 6 national tests. This is because the work you are given is not always hard enough and often you are not expected to do enough in lessons. You do not use the skills you learn in literacy well enough in your topics. When teachers mark your work they do not always tell you how to improve it.

Mostly you get along with each other well. Most of you said that if there is any bullying you can tell an adult and it is sorted out quickly, but this is not always the case. You understand how important it is to eat healthily and to take regular exercise.

Your school will receive more support over the coming months and will have regular visits from inspectors to check out how well it is improving.

- These are the key things we have asked the staff to do to make the school better.
- Expect you to reach higher standards, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Change the curriculum so that it builds more carefully on what you have done before and covers all the aspects that it should.
- Help teachers to get better at checking on how well you are doing so that they can set work that is at the right level for you.
- Draw up a plan to make the necessary improvements and check regularly on how well things are going.
- Make sure that all the systems are in place for taking care of you all the time you are in school. You can help by making sure that you concentrate hard in lessons and really take a pride in all your work.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. It was really helpful to hear their views. We wish everyone at Stafford Junior well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector