

# Stifford Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114885
<b>Local Authority</b>	Thurrock
<b>Inspection number</b>	326082
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Beale

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)	501
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>	Mr Den Goodyear
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 September 2005
<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>	Parker Road Grays Essex RM17 5YN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01375373601
<b>Fax number</b>	01375390675

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large school, which sees a large number of pupils leaving or joining it at various points during the year. The community it serves is becoming more diverse. Nearly a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, although a relatively small but rising number are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most other primary schools, as is the number with a statement for their special educational needs. Provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is through three Reception classes. The school offers additional before and after school care for children from Nursery age and upwards. It has received the Activemark, Artsmark and Bronzemark Singing awards in recognition of its success in sport and both the creative and performing arts. The new headship team of the headteacher and deputy head has been operating since January 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors are accurate in their view that this is a good school. Everyone associated with it says how much the school has moved forward over the last year. Its emergence from a period of declining performance is largely due to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and deputy head. They have worked tirelessly to halt the decline in the pupils' achievement and standards. Parents recognise this. The comments of one parent summed up the views of many when she wrote, 'At meetings they are inspiring. They don't just have ideas but work hard with parents, teachers and pupils to see them through to the end result.'

The key to this success lies in the immediate action taken by the headteacher and deputy head to improve pupils' learning. They have raised expectations and made teachers accountable for achievement in their classrooms by checking the progress of pupils rigorously and setting challenging targets. The return to single age classes and the better use of assessment to guide teachers' planning have resulted in lessons that focus more sharply on the next steps in each pupil's learning. Changing the deployment and role of teaching assistants has made a considerable difference to the progress of pupils needing additional help with their learning or language development, some of whom had been underachieving.

The headship team has also worked closely with teachers to improve their classroom performance. Teaching is now good, but not good enough for the headteacher and deputy, who are striving for it to be more creative and stimulating. Teachers share this aim and are keen to support each other with new ideas. These actions have led to a dramatic improvement in the progress of pupils, particularly in English but to a lesser extent in mathematics. From their below average starting points achievement is good and standards are average by the end of Year 6. The decline in test results has also been reversed with Year 2 and Year 6 results both rising this year.

Throughout this period of change, the welfare of the pupils has remained of paramount importance to everyone. Personal development and behaviour are good and pupils say that they enjoy school, particularly the additional activities provided such as music and sport. They are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through sporting activities and learn how to cope with everyday risks through assemblies focusing on how to stay safe on the internet as well as what to do if the victim of 'cyber' bullying. They also contribute much to school life such as through membership of the 'Healthy School Steering Group'.

In spite of the very significant improvement this year, there is no complacency but a constant drive to become better. Through thorough self-evaluation, the school knows itself well and understands the action needed to bring about further improvement. Teamwork is strong and developing at pace. Previous weaknesses in provision have been eliminated, but the target remains for everyone to become even better, placing the school in a very strong position to achieve its goals.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Parents are pleased with their children's start in Reception. One wrote, 'It is a joy to see her so happy. She always goes with a smile.' Children are cared for well. They make satisfactory and improving progress from skills well below those expected for their age on entry as the many initiatives put in place by the headship team begin to take effect. One example is that members

of staff now confidently check progress, identifying what children know and need to learn next. The quality of teaching varies. In the best lessons, teachers provide interesting activities that motivate the children and promote learning. For example, children in one class enjoyed experimenting with torches in the dark to investigate reflections. In other classes, children are left too long at times without adult intervention and opportunities for learning are missed. By the time they transfer to Year 1, several have reached the goals set for them nationally and many others are well on the way. Children become increasingly independent, taking responsibility, for example, for placing their photo beside their chosen activity and following routines well. There is an appropriate balance of activities led by adults and those developed by the children themselves, although some of these lack sufficient focus to encourage children to develop their skills further. The shared outdoor area is not an inviting and stimulating space for playing and learning. The school has identified this as a priority for improvement. The leader of the EYFS is new to the post and recognises where improvements are needed but her role in ensuring consistency in all Reception classes is only just developing.

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

- Raise achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 2 by providing greater challenge for pupils, particularly the more able.
- Bring greater consistency to the children's learning across the Reception classes.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

By setting challenging targets, the headteacher has significantly raised the pupils' achievement in a relatively short period. A legacy of previous underachievement remains for some older pupils, but school data shows clearly that pupils in all year groups are now making good progress. Standards are not yet quite where they should be for some of the older pupils, but they are improving rapidly. The results of assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2008 were in line with the national average in mathematics and below average in reading and writing. Year 6 test results improved sharply from a very low position in 2007. These Year 6 pupils made better progress in English and science than in mathematics. This pattern was also reflected in other year groups at Key Stage 2 where sometimes the more able pupils have made slightly slower progress than others. This is certainly the case in mathematics. In contrast, pupils' writing has improved considerably. The progress made by pupils who need additional help, either with their learning or to develop English language skills, has also improved because teaching assistants are deployed effectively.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school and many say it is fun. They understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. By regularly revisiting school values, pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. They understand the customs of others, learn about diversity within modern society and treat each other with respect. They are keen to be involved in projects such as 'Operation Christmas Child' and to act as 'buddies' for newly arrived pupils. These factors contribute to their good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Attendance is satisfactory and behaviour throughout the school is good. It is only where they need to work independently that some do not fully concentrate. They are proud of the difference they make to school life through their pupil council. Pupils

speak confidently about matters that they feel passionate about, such as safer parking outside the school. The pupils' personal skills and good basic skill development give a sound platform for success in the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Improving teaching has been a major focus this year and expectations are now generally high. Much has also been done to improve assessment so that lessons build more progressively on what pupils can do already. Pupils have become more involved in judging their own learning because teachers share the aims of the lesson and help them evaluate whether they have been met. Good relationships mean that pupils are willing to ask questions and their behaviour is managed well. Teachers use questions effectively to extend learning and include all pupils, and are ready to challenge pupils, such as when Year 2 children used 'super sentence openers' and 'clever connectives' because the teacher encouraged them to use more interesting vocabulary. The careful deployment of teaching assistants contributes much to the progress of pupils who find it hard to learn or for whom English is an additional language. Teachers try to move learning forward at a brisk pace but not all are successful and a small number of lessons remain which, whilst satisfactory, do not sufficiently excite or inspire a real love of learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Programmes are adapted carefully to meet the wide range of pupils' needs from those who find learning difficult to those who need extra challenge. Activities support well both the pupils' academic and personal development, and balance the need to teach key skills with the use of additional creative elements that enhance their experiences. Pupils greatly enjoy the wide range of clubs and other activities, all of which are well attended. Themed weeks such as those for anti-bullying or developing multi-cultural awareness add much to the pupils' personal development. The school also extends their awareness of other cultures by focusing on the different nationalities within the school by means of assemblies, displays and a bilingual library. The teaching of Spanish adds much to the pupils' enjoyment and learning is consolidated by signs in Spanish throughout all areas of the school. Recent improvements to provision for information and communication technology (ICT) still leave the school behind most others and limit the pupils' opportunity to use computers in all areas of their learning.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

The staff team works closely to ensure that pupils are well cared for and kept safe. The school reaches out to support the local community well, such as by having 'Buddy Parents' to support those parents who are new to the English language. The breakfast club and after-school provision are valued by parents and much enjoyed by the pupils who attend. Academic support and guidance are effective but remain a continuing focus for improvement. New systems to monitor progress are being used well to help teachers identify pupils who are not making enough progress so that they can put suitable measures in place to help them. Pupils who need extra help with literacy and numeracy and those who speak English as an additional language receive good support. The school has worked hard to improve provision for these pupils and

to involve their parents more. Pupils are shown what they need to do to improve through effective marking with comments related to their individual and group targets and the lesson aims.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has high expectations for his staff and has already seen these turned into significant improvements. Along with the deputy head, he recognised urgent action was needed to reverse the school's declining performance. They have tackled this head on, supported by an increasingly effective senior team. Not only does everyone share this drive but also show a collective commitment to improving the achievement of all pupils. Middle leaders are playing a crucial role in supporting the school's improvement and in ensuring the consistent implementation of recently introduced initiatives. The rigorous procedures introduced by the headship team to evaluate data and monitor lessons are helping to improve teachers' performance. Individual targets are challenging, but every support is given to help them to be met. Governors have supported the school well during this period, making particularly astute decisions in their appointment of the headteacher and deputy head. They are developing the way they scrutinise the work of the school, but are not sufficiently involved in framing its longer-term direction.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

<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	3
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	3

## 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?	2
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>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

19 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stifford Primary School, Grays, RM17 5YN

You will probably remember that we visited your school recently and I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would just like to say thank you for making us feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts about your school. We had a chance to talk to quite a lot of you and we have told your teachers how you were very helpful and polite. Through our discussions with you, it was great to hear how much you enjoy school. It was also good to hear about how safe you feel and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried.

Stifford Primary is a good school. It is improving rapidly under the leadership of your new headteacher and deputy head as you and your parents pointed out to us. Teachers and support staff care for you well and make learning enjoyable through the wide range of clubs and other activities. The school is good at helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. We were impressed with the way you involve yourselves in helping the school to improve through your school council and the Healthy School Steering Group. Your teachers and other staff make learning interesting. They are also good at helping those of you who find learning difficult. Most of you reach the standards expected of you by the time you leave and some of you do better than this.

Even a good school like yours can improve. We have asked your teachers to help you to do better in mathematics by the time you leave school. We have also asked them to find ways for the youngest children in the Reception classes to receive a more consistent experience.

The staff and governors want the school to continue to be successful and we know you will play your part by continuing to behave well, attending regularly and working hard. We wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector