

Stebbing Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114888
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326084
Inspection date	17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Pangbourne

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	94
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	High Street Stebbing Great Dunmow Essex CM6 3SH
Telephone number	01371 856260
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how effectively new strategies are raising standards in English
- the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how effectively the school promotes community cohesion.

Inspectors gathered evidence from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation, records of pupils' achievement and progress and parents' questionnaires, as well as discussions with senior leaders, governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

This is a small primary school. Almost all the pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most of these pupils have speech and language difficulties. When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception their attainment is below that expected for their age, although this is not the case for all children. The school is increasing in size as more parents are attracted by the Maynard Montessori Nursery on site and the Montessori methods that continue in the school. Consequently, there are more pupils in year groups for younger pupils than in those for older ones. The Montessori Nursery is privately managed and it is inspected separately. The school has gained the ActiveMark, recognising its provision for physical activity, and National Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Parents are extremely positive about it. Typical of many, one wrote, 'The teaching is inspiring and exciting and my children love going to school.' The pupils agree saying, 'You get a good education and it is nice and cosy.'

The key to the school's success is the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and her deputy, extremely well supported by an excellent governing body. The governors hold the school to account very well and ask challenging questions. This high quality of leadership also applies to the staff who take on many responsibilities in this small school. They fulfil their management roles very effectively. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and all show a very strong commitment to continual improvement. This is an outward looking school that seeks ways to raise standards still further. For example, staff identified that standards in writing were lower than those in reading and introduced many new initiatives to address this. Exciting ways of teaching spelling enthuse the pupils, who are keen to be tested to enable them to move on to more challenging words. Consequently, this year standards are much higher in writing. Everything that the school does is very closely monitored, evaluated and improved to ensure that it is of high quality.

Pupils' achievement is excellent from what, for many, is a low starting point when they join the school. Standards vary in the small year groups but have been at least above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 recently. This year, teacher assessments in Year 2 show that standards are exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. A well above average proportion exceed the level expected for their age in all three subjects. In Year 6, exceptionally high standards are evident, with all the pupils exceeding the level expected for their age in English and science and half of them doing so in mathematics. Pupils who find it hard to learn and the very few who speak English as an additional language also do exceptionally well because they are given plenty of very high quality support.

Other factors help pupils to do so well. The pupils show an enthusiasm for learning and want to succeed. It is not surprising that they enjoy their learning so much given the excellent quality of teaching and the outstanding curriculum. Teachers work hard to ensure that lessons are based on real situations, with many opportunities to develop their skills across different subjects. An excellent example was the 'forensic' afternoon for the older pupils. The classrooms were set up as 'scene of the crime' situations and pupils wrote crime reports, programmed robots to negotiate spilt chemicals, tested inks to discover who wrote a ransom note and took fingerprints. All the time, adults, often dressed as crime scene investigators, asked probing questions that challenged the pupils to think. An excellent range of visits and visitors also provide inspiration for exciting lessons. Following a visit to Colchester Zoo, pupils explored area and perimeter by designing gorilla enclosures to please a keeper who liked cleaning a large enclosure and for one who did not. This encouraged pupils to develop their understanding in a way that was interesting and meaningful. Interactive whiteboards are used very successfully to support learning. Excellent relationships and effective use of humour add to pupils' enjoyment. It is not only the basic skills that are promoted so well. The pupils spoke with enthusiasm about 'Mad Mondays' where they enjoy French lessons, music lessons from a visiting specialist, swimming lessons and a range of other small group activities. Art too has a high profile, with much high quality work on display.

This is a school where every pupil is valued. They receive outstanding pastoral support and academic guidance. All safeguarding requirements are fully met. Each pupil's progress is very closely assessed to make sure that appropriate help is provided for any who are falling behind or forging ahead. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they are learning because teachers tell them the purpose of the lesson and how they will know if they have been successful. Pupils have their own targets that they understand and strive to meet. They also have learning partners with whom to discuss their learning. These pairs often work together to help each other decide if they have met their targets. They are encouraged to work independently and do this very successfully.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, based firmly on the Montessori principles, which expect them to be responsible and independent from an early age. This, together with their outstanding literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, prepares them extremely well for their future education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, reflecting the very strong ethos of respect and care for others. In this small school, older pupils naturally look out for younger ones and take on responsibilities willingly. They enjoy being 'Eco Warriors', checking for lights and computers left on unnecessarily. Their behaviour is outstanding. Attendance is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, growing their own fruit and vegetables and swimming in the school pool. The school promotes community cohesion well by fostering a strong sense of community, both within school and outside it. It reaches out especially to the small number of families from a Traveller background to make sure they are fully included in all the school offers. Although pupils' understanding of global communities is developing through the curriculum, the many visits they make and the wide range of visitors who share their knowledge and skills, the school acknowledges that more should be done to improve this.

The school's accurate self-evaluation, the very effective leadership of the headteacher and the outstanding teaching indicates that the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Parents are delighted with the start their children make. One commented, 'I feel privileged that my child receives such a high level of care. When I drop my child in the morning I know she will have a wonderful day.' The outstanding provision is led by a very strong team; staff are passionate about helping each child to fulfil their potential and instilling a lifelong love of learning. Children join the school with skills and attributes that are below those typically found in each of the six areas of learning. They make excellent progress. Standards vary year by year in the small year groups and this year most children are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception. Their outstanding progress in their personal development and their excellent attitudes to learning prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education. Their behaviour is excellent. Independence is promoted extremely well because staff are very sensitive about when to intervene or not to help the children in their understanding. The exemplary provision for the children's welfare ensures they feel safe and well cared for.

Staff plan a wealth of stimulating activities to meet the needs of all children, including those who find it harder to learn. There is a structured approach to reading and writing and staff have developed imaginative ways to encourage children to write for a wide range of purposes. These strategies ensure that children start Year 1 with a solid foundation in English. Mathematics is taught mainly through the Montessori sensorial approach and children love using the equipment that helps them to develop good numeracy skills. Their progress is closely assessed

and recorded in 'observation booklets' to ensure that activities are closely matched to their needs and interests. There is an excellent balance between activities that are led by adults and those that children initiate for themselves and staff make imaginative use of the extensive grounds as a natural extension to the classroom. For example, children measured a boat in the grounds with their feet, made a sketch and then set about making a boat from cardboard, discussing, measuring and working together. A new area for outdoor learning is under construction to improve provision even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the planned links with other world organisations to improve pupils' understanding of global communities.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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

How good are 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	1
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

18 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stebbing Primary School, Stebbing, CM6 3SH

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would like to tell you what we found out.

You and your families know that you go to an excellent school where you learn lots of interesting things and make new friends. We agree with you. You make excellent progress because your teachers give you work that is just right for you and plan really interesting activities to help you learn. You do much better than many children of your age. It was very interesting to watch some of you being forensic scientists. You were having so much fun and learning such a lot. It was good to hear that you enjoy your 'Mad Mondays' so much. The teachers watch to see how well you are doing and give you extra help if you need it. You all work very hard and your behaviour is excellent. You are all very sensible when you work by yourselves. It was good to see how the older children look after the younger ones. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. You are lucky to have your own swimming pool and to be able to grow fruit and vegetables. Your headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the governors work very hard to make your school a lovely place to be.

We have asked Mrs Matthews to help you learn more about the culture and customs of people who live in other countries, perhaps by linking with a school in another country. You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at Stebbing Primary School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead inspector