

Stamford St Gilbert's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120543
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327304
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	316
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	Mrs Catherine Hammond
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Thorley
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Foundry Road Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 2PP
Telephone number	01780762400

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large Church of England primary school serves the local community of Stamford. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those whose first language is not English, is well below that in schools nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. On entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), children's attainments are generally in line with those normally expected of four-year-olds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is relatively low, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is in line with other schools of this size. The school has experienced an exceptionally high and frequent turnover of staff in recent years. It holds the National Healthy Schools Award and has a second Eco Flag for its work on the environment and sustainability.

A privately managed Nursery and an out-of-school club operate on the school premises. These settings were inspected separately at the same time as the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stamford St Gilbert's Church of England Primary is a good school. Under the enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, it has come through a turbulent phase in its development, when pupils' achievement faltered and standards fell. The school is once again moving forward strongly and is well placed to make further improvements. It has the strong support and confidence of the parents. One parent summed up the views of many when commenting: 'This school not only prepares our children for the academic challenges ahead but also for the broader challenges of life.'

In recent years, an unusually high turnover amongst the school's most capable and experienced teachers has been followed by a decline in standards and achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2. This extremely unsettled period is now over and the school has successfully rebuilt its teaching and leadership teams. Consequently, standards are rising rapidly and most of the school's current pupils are making good progress. Overall standards are above the national average at the end of both key stages. The majority of pupils, including those who find learning difficult, achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. However, not all of the pupils who are capable of above average scores actually attain them, particularly at the end of Year 6. Even though the 2008 results saw a marked improvement in Level 5 scores, the achievement of some pupils in writing was less than that in other core subjects.

Pupils learn well because teaching and the curriculum are good. Effective planning of individual lessons and of the curriculum as a whole ensures that teaching meets the needs of almost all pupils in the school's mixed-age classes. Lively teaching, high expectations and effective pupil management draw a positive response from pupils in most lessons. Only occasionally, when the pace of learning slackens, do rates of progress fall. In most lessons, pupils rise to the challenge to do their best because learning is fun and enrichment activities, such as the highly popular 'Creative Tuesday', promote enjoyment and effective learning in equal measure.

A good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education and an effective overall quality of care, guidance and support result in good levels of personal development and well-being. Most pupils behave well because staff have high expectations and manage occasional behavioural issues well. Pupils know the importance of safe and healthy lifestyles and their good standards of basic skills and positive attitudes to learning equip them well for future economic well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are sensitive to things of beauty and act on an understanding of what is right. The school works hard to promote community cohesion and pupils' contributions to the school community are strong. Pupils are well integrated with the community beyond the school and are developing the wider perspectives needed for life in a multiethnic society.

The school's Christian ethos underpins effective pastoral care for all pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet current government requirements. Arrangements for academic guidance to pupils are developing but inconsistencies in teachers' marking and in their use of targets for individuals mean that pupils do not always understand how to improve their work.

Leadership and management function effectively at all levels, although some recently appointed staff are still finding their feet as leaders. Nevertheless, the impact of effective leadership, management and governance is evident in improving provision, accelerating pupil progress and rapidly rising standards. The vision and determination of the headteacher, who is ably supported

by the senior leadership team, have paved the way for a return to stability, consistency and improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS provision is good. There is effective induction to support children and ensure their welfare as they start school. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through the 'I am unique' books which are shared between home and school. They are very happy with what the school provides. One parent wrote, 'We are just delighted with the teaching and care that our daughter has had since she started in September.'

When they enter Reception, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Children make good progress and achieve well. Consequently, most move into Key Stage 1 exceeding the goals normally expected by the end of the Reception year. Those who find learning difficult also progress well and receive good support from teaching assistants. Personal development and well-being are good. As a result of the good teaching, children generally behave well, develop good relationships with each other, and enjoy the wide range of activities available to them. This was particularly evident in the information and communication technology (ICT) suite, where pairs of children worked closely together using a drawing program with confidence. Children also work well in the outside area, which is an inviting and stimulating space for play and independent learning.

Effective leadership and management result in thorough planning that covers all areas of learning. Staff ensure that there is a good balance of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to follow their own interests and to initiate their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils who are capable of attaining above average standards in writing make the progress that they should, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that individual targets and teachers' marking show pupils clearly how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. Most attain the standards expected of them at the end of Year 2 and a considerable number exceed them. Overall, standards are well above average, although fewer pupils attain the above average standard in writing than in other core subjects.

Standards at the end of Year 6 rose dramatically in 2008. Almost all pupils attained the nationally expected levels for their age and there was a marked rise in the number attaining the above average Level 5. However, while most pupils made at least the progress that they should, some pupils who attained above average scores in Year 2 fell short of their expected levels in Year 6, particularly in writing. The school has tackled this shortfall vigorously by introducing new strategies to improve writing and by pursuing challenging targets in all core subjects. The school's thorough tracking shows that in the current Year 6, most have attained their target level or are close to it. As a result, standards are set to rise again in 2009 and represent a return to good achievement for this cohort.

In both key stages, pupils with additional learning needs receive good support and progress at a similar rate to most others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Because pupils thoroughly enjoy school, attendance is well above average. Pupils feel safe in school because they display a strong sense of respect for each other and there is virtually no bullying or harassment. There is a consistently good standard of behaviour in most classrooms and around school, although a small number of pupils continue to need careful management. Groups such as the school council, play leaders, junior road safety officers, the green group and the charity group enable pupils to make a strong contribution to school life and to the wider community. The Healthy Schools Award reflects pupils' good understanding of healthy living. Good standards in basic skills, team working and co-operation, along with activities such as Business Club, prepare pupils well for later life. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are polite, friendly and delight in their school experiences. They respond sensitively to moments of reflection and prayer and the high quality of their singing is truly uplifting. Pupils respect those with different beliefs and lifestyles and are well prepared for life in an ethnically diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are taught with pace and enthusiasm, which inspire pupils and motivate them to succeed. The best teaching also makes good use of detailed questioning to involve all pupils, encourage discussion and extend their learning. Planning in the mixed-age classes is effective in promoting progress across the ability range. Lessons generally have a clear focus and are interesting. Consequently, pupils believe that learning is fun. In most lessons, classroom management is effective in creating a purposeful learning environment with mutual respect evident between pupils and staff. Occasionally, however, teachers do not bring the best out of pupils and the pace of learning falters. Pupils' books show good progression but there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback to pupils, particularly where 'next-step' targets are not included.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well organized and meets the needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes. The provision for pupils who find learning more difficult is good. Planning throughout the school is detailed, although staff agree that they still have a way to go with developing themes and linking learning across subjects. The use of ICT features quite prominently in a number of subjects, with pupils beginning to develop key skills at an early age. However, current resources do not allow pupils to have ready access to computers as an aid to learning in the majority of lessons. A strength of the curriculum is 'Creative Tuesday' when all Key Stage 2 pupils take part in an excellent range of enrichment activities. These include sports, modern languages, thinking skills, eco projects, cookery, ICT activities and dance, led by teachers, support staff, external coaches, staff from the local secondary school and parents. This initiative is strengthened by the school's constructive links with others. These arrangements, along with an extensive range of educational visits and special events, bring learning to life and add considerably to pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure and fully meet statutory requirements. Pupils feel well protected, and trusting pupil-adult relationships minimise the risk of bullying or harassment. Staff provide good pastoral care and personal guidance to all pupils and generate a thoroughly welcoming, caring atmosphere in school. Teaching assistants, including those who are tasked to support individuals and groups identified for additional help, work in effective partnership with teachers. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainments and for tracking their progress enable teachers to identify accurately what pupils should be aiming for and they give leaders a clear view of year group and school performance. They also result in challenging targets for individuals and groups that have successfully raised teachers' expectations. However, their use in classrooms remains inconsistent. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about how to make the next steps in their learning or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Throughout an extremely challenging phase in the school's development, the headteacher has been relentless in rebuilding the best possible staff team and in supporting them when falling standards have shaken their confidence. Governors have given their full support which is now paying off as the team gels and standards rise in response to improvements in teaching, learning and the curriculum. A strong focus on raising achievement permeates the management of the performance of all staff. Setting challenging targets has been effective in the drive to raise standards. This approach results in both accountability and a strong sense of teamwork that ensures all are pulling in the same direction. The creation of curriculum teams spreads the leadership role effectively, develops the leadership potential of all staff and gives the school a good capacity to improve further. However, some middle leaders are still developing their roles and so the full impact of their work is yet to be felt. Self-evaluation is accurate and governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for the targets that it sets for itself. The school provides good value for money and promotes good community cohesion through its effective strategies.

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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?	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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**

21 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stamford St Gilbert's Church of England Primary School, Stamford, PE9 2PP

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago with my colleagues, Mrs Watts and Mr Perkins. Thank you for making us welcome and for taking time to talk to us and to answer our questions. We really enjoyed hearing about, and seeing, your 'Creative Tuesday' activities. We know now why you enjoy them so much. I thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school.

There are many good things happening in your school.

- Almost all of you make good progress and overall standards are above average.
- The school is good at bringing in outside help to make learning more interesting and enjoyable, for example on 'Creative Tuesday'.
- You get on well with one another and most of you behave well.
- Groups such as the school council, the play leaders, junior road safety officers, the green group and the charity group enable you to improve school life and to help the wider community.
- Your teachers and other adults care for you when you have problems, make sure that you are safe and help you grow into confident, independent learners.
- Mrs Thorley, the staff, governors and you, the pupils, work hard to make your school a better place.

There is not much that needs to be improved at St Gilbert's but Mrs Thorley would like the very best for you. Therefore, we have suggested that your teachers should do everything they can to help you to make even better progress in writing, especially when pupils are capable of attaining above average standards. We have also asked teachers to make sure that you really understand the targets they set and that the tips they give you when they mark your work help you to improve, not only in writing but in other subjects too. You can help by trying really hard to follow their advice in your next pieces of work.

I hope that you will all continue to work hard and enjoy your time at Stamford St Gilbert's Church of England Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector