

# Sturton CE Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	122808
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327801
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Payton–Greene
Headteacher	Mr Mark Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2006
School address	Church Street Sturton-le-Steeple Retford DN22 9HQ
Telephone number	01427 880342
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector saw teaching in all classes at least once, held meetings with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. He observed assemblies, the school's work and looked at documentation relating to pupils' assessment, progress and standards. He observed the quality of teaching and assessed the school's own evaluation of its work and performance. Work in pupils' books was scrutinised in depth and an analysis was undertaken of the 24 responses to the parental questionnaire.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following areas.

- Given the variations in attainment from year to year, are all groups of pupils, particularly boys, making good progress from their different starting points?
- What is the school doing to improve standards, particularly for boys, in writing and problem solving, and what is the impact of any initiatives put in place?
- How successfully is the school promoting and evaluating community cohesion, particularly in developing pupils' awareness of their position in a global society?
- How involved are pupils in their own learning, such as the degrees of initiative they show, the levels of their independent working skills and knowledge of their individual targets?
- The role played by leaders at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the work and performance of the school.

## Information about the school

Sturton is much smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including pupils with a statement of special educational needs, is below the picture found nationally. These pupils have, for example, specific learning or speech and communication difficulties. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. Teaching and learning for the youngest children in school is provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. There is a high level of pupil mobility, with many pupils starting at the school later in their educational lives, including in Years 5 and 6. The headteacher had been in post for four weeks at the time of the inspection.

The school has gained Healthy Schools Gold status, Activemark for its commitment to physical education, Investors in People and a prestigious Eco School award.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

Sturton Primary School is a good school that enjoys tremendous support and appreciation from parents. The comment of one parent sums up the responses, 'The school makes each and every child feel special and valued.' The individuality of pupils is recognised and celebrated and pupils thrive in a caring and supportive environment. Whatever their starting points or whenever pupils start at the school, good teaching and learning ensure that all pupils make good progress. Standards when pupils leave vary because of the very small number in each year group. More often they are above average and some years significantly so. If dips do occur, as for example in 2008, the school provides compelling evidence to explain why and data clearly indicates that pupils have achieved well.

At the core of pupils' good progress lies good teaching and curriculum provision. Lessons are mostly challenging and engaging with work more often than not matched closely to pupils' individual abilities. Teachers and support staff go the extra mile to make lessons interesting. Just occasionally these strong factors are missing and work is a little too easy for the more able. From the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6, the range of activities on offer enthuses and motivates pupils. Literacy, numeracy and computer skills are developed well and, together with the wide range of enrichment activities, help to make a recipe for a successful curriculum. This is a school that does not stand still. It has accurately identified the need to develop pupils' problem solving, decision making and enquiry skills in a more creative manner, particularly to deepen pupils' understanding of global issues and dilemmas.

Pupils contribute much to Sturton School's success. They display an infectious enthusiasm and are keen to learn. Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils readily take on responsibilities around the school and are active participants in village events. They are also right when they say, 'We know we could do even more given the chance!' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They have a good awareness of how to follow safe and healthy lifestyles, fuelled by the school's commitment to providing strong pastoral care. When all these factors are put together with the academic strengths, it is easy to see why pupils leave the school as well rounded individuals who are more than ready to face the next challenges in their lives.

Although in post for only a short time, the headteacher has very quickly and

accurately identified the areas the school needs to address to take it on to the next level. All staff share a vision and commitment to sustained improvement. Challenging targets are set and a more rigorous system for assessing pupils' attainment is being introduced to provide a better overview of pupils' progress. There is a strong team spirit in school. Leaders at all levels, including governors, contribute well to the systems that drive effective school self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Staff with additional responsibilities have rightly identified that they can play a more influential role in raising standards by contributing more to data analyses and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. The school's good track record of improvement and its readiness to embrace innovation suggests that the vision to make this an outstanding school is an achievable aim.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and accelerate pupil progress further by:
  - embedding new assessment and tracking systems and ensuring all pupils make good progress
  - analysing information from assessments clearly and using this to tackle any underachievement.
- Develop an innovative and creative curriculum that enables the systematic development of pupils' problem solving, enquiry, decision making and enterprise skills through:
  - imaginative themes, projects, initiatives and cross curricular work
  - the study of issues, events and projects that have a more globally and culturally diverse perspective.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Pupils leave the school with standards in English, mathematics and science that are usually above average. This represents good progress from very differing starting points. From the quality of teaching observed during the inspection and detailed analyses of pupils' work, different groups of pupils make equally good progress. In lessons, higher attaining pupils typically have tasks that challenge, enthuse, and keep them on their toes. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified at an early stage. Well-targeted support in classrooms ensures that they have full access to the curriculum and achieve as well as their classmates. An ongoing issue has been the attainment and achievement of boys, particularly in writing. Initiatives introduced to spark boys' interests have had the required impact, because the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has closed significantly.

Strong pupil outcomes are helped by a number of other factors. Pupils enjoy school and lessons because staff make it an exciting journey that fires their enthusiasm. It is a fun place to learn where relationships are excellent. Pupils have a voice that is valued. Their roles as school councillors, eco warriors and play leaders, together with their contribution to conservation and safety projects in the village, are just some examples of pupils' maturity and readiness to contribute to a tangible sense of community cohesion. Pupils have a strong sense of fair play, reflect on their

experiences, enjoy learning about the world around them and genuinely look out for one another. Their awareness of differing world faiths is a little patchy because of a lack of first hand experiences. The broadly average attendance rates are due to the repeated illnesses in a small number of pupils.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## How effective is the provision?

Good teaching is based on motivating and engaging the pupils. Questioning is open and gets pupils to justify their views and opinions. Teachers often set high expectations and recognise that differing learning styles are suited to different pupils. Across the school, teachers and support staff help to create calm but focused classrooms where class management is strong and where very effective use of interactive white boards help bring learning to life. Occasionally, new ideas are not explained clearly enough, or tasks for the more able ask too little. Here, the pace of learning drops. A strength lies in how teachers use ongoing assessment to gauge where pupils are at and then use the information to inform their teaching. The consistently good standard of marking and pupils' knowledge of their individual targets add to the quality of learning.

The school provides a rich curriculum. Basic skills are developed well and computers are an integral part of learning. Bringing in outside expertise in subjects such as music and physical education adds to pupils' enjoyment and skills. Provision for pupils of all abilities is good and meets their needs well. For a small school, a wide array of enrichment activities is provided and after school clubs including gardening, sports and a science club are very popular. The school's excellent links with other schools add much to the curriculum both within and outside the school day.

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Pastoral care and support is given a high priority and pupils know that help, support and guidance are always available. Transition arrangements into school and on to the high school are strong and the caring. The family ethos of the school means that pupils joining the school at other than the usual times make new friends easily. Pupils feel safe and secure, say bullying is rarely an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if they are concerned. All these factors create an environment where pupils flourish as individuals.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the school's focus on driving improvement continues apace. Staff morale is high and the headteacher and all the staff are committed to helping the school reach new heights. A more rigorous and better organised system for tracking pupils' progress has been rightly identified by the headteacher to help them on this journey. Teachers support one another well and those with additional responsibilities are keen to develop their roles further by playing a more influential role in the monitoring of teaching and by honing their data analysis skills. Governance of the school is good because governors are supportive and challenging in equal measure. They are influential partners in determining the strategic direction of the school and play their part in helping the school to be the hub and focal point of the village. Staff and governors reach out to many families and community groups to make them an integral part of school life. The school is a very cohesive community and pupils play their part to the full in helping to maintain this status. There is now the recognition that the school needs to extend links further afield so pupils become more aware of the diverse nature of society around the world. The school is effective at ensuring that equality of opportunity is promoted well, admirably demonstrated by the manner in which it has addressed the issue of boys' standards falling behind those of girls, particularly in writing. The school works well to ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective and the views of pupils and parents taken on board. The school empowers pupils to have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including internet safety. There is an energy to move forward in a creative manner and evidence suggests that the quest for further success is in safe hands.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

All children achieve equally well in this vibrant learning environment. Standards by the end of the Reception Year vary because of children's diverse starting points, but progress for all is consistently good. Children behave well, readily share resources and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. Adults work together well, continually making on-going assessments of children's learning and recording them into detailed profiles and 'learning journeys'. These are used well to plan the next steps but are also shared with parents to help them become true partners in their child's learning. Consistently good teaching allows children to explore and to develop independence while at the same time balancing this with the direct teaching of key skills. Just occasionally, some free choice activities do not have a sharp enough focus to stretch learning even more. Children are encouraged to play safely and have confidence in adults to solve any problems. They already have a good awareness of keeping healthy through good hygiene practices and making good choices in what they eat and drink. Good use is made of the attractive outdoor area throughout the day. Good leadership and management ensure that robust steps are taken to safeguard children and that strong links are forged with parents. Leadership is also effective in ensuring all children achieve well and constantly reflecting on practice to make it even better.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires indicated tremendous support for the school and a great appreciation for the quality of education provided. A number of parents made additional comments and there was much consistency in what was said. In summary, many parents that commented found the school to be a very happy and caring community; a school where parents are very happy with the standards reached and the great strides in progress, both academically and socially, that their children make. Parents spoke glowingly about the friendliness and approachability of the staff and how they fill children with a great enthusiasm for learning. A few parents would



like more information about how their children are progressing. The information the school provides is similar to that in other schools but the school is already looking at ways in which this can be expanded further or made more regular.

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Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sturton CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 24 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 43 families registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	2	1	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Sturton CE Primary School, Retford, DN22 9HQ

You may remember that I came to visit your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. But before I do, I would just like to say a big thank you to you all for helping to make my visit such an enjoyable experience and one that I will remember for some time to come! It was good to hear how much you enjoy school, how safe and secure you feel and how all the staff are always there for you if you have any concerns whatsoever. I was impressed by the way that you help out in school and beyond through the school council, the eco council, conserving electricity and even helping to keep the speed of traffic down in the village. The performances in assembly were also great fun.

Having looked at all the different features of school life at Sturton, I have come to the conclusion that you go to a good school. The good teaching and wide range of learning activities on offer, both during and after the school day, all help you to make good progress and achieve well. The school cares for you well and gives you lots of opportunities to have your say in how to make the school even better. The school works hard at helping you to follow a healthy lifestyle and in knowing what is needed to keep safe. All the staff and governors play their part in making sure that the school runs well and is an exciting place to learn. Mr Elliott has some good ideas to help Sturton become even better! There is one other strength of the school that I have not mentioned yet and that is you - the children. Your behaviour is never less than good and your enthusiasm, positive attitudes and ability to make everybody feel like a member of the Sturton family was just great to see and experience. Well done!

Even good schools can improve. I have asked Mr Elliott, the staff and governors to provide more exciting opportunities in the curriculum to help develop your problem solving, thinking and enquiry skills, particularly through looking at events and cultures around the world. I have also asked that how well you are doing is checked more regularly by teachers observing each others' lessons, checking your books and recording your progress more clearly. I know that you will want to play your part by continuing to work and behave as well as you do now. It was a real pleasure to meet you all and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Newell  
Lead inspector

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