

Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126361
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	328484
Inspection date	13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

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)	144
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	Penny Larcombe
Headteacher	Kay Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Beech Walk Stratford-sub-Castle Salisbury SP1 3LL
Telephone number	01722 327227
Fax number	01722 327227

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Stratford-sub-Castle is a small popular village school situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty on the outskirts of Salisbury. Many of the pupils attend from the surrounding area and most come from a White British background. There is an above average number of pupils with challenging learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and Active Mark and the Bristol Standard for Early Years Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stratford-sub-Castle is a satisfactory school. The school is working very effectively to raise achievement and standards, particularly for pupils with significant barriers to learning. There is a really good team spirit among the headteacher, staff and governors, who are all wholly committed to improvement. The strengths of the school lie in its inclusive and supportive nature and the hardworking and caring headteacher who has a clear vision for future development. As a result, there is satisfactory capacity for improvement. The school is a calm, safe and happy place in which to learn. Pupils are very well cared for and their personal development is nurtured so that they become confident young people by the time they leave the school. There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on personal development and social skills. This, coupled with very good relationships between adults and pupils, is creating positive attitudes and a good climate for learning. The Christian ethos of the school is very evident and a parent comments that 'the school creates a warm, family atmosphere which helps children feel they belong.'

Children join the school with skills below, and sometimes well below, those expected and make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most reach standards that are broadly within the Early Learning Goals. Children make good progress in personal and social development so that by the time they leave the Reception class, they have good attitudes to learning. Teaching is satisfactory but the planning of child-chosen activities is insufficiently detailed to fully support the learning and development of young children.

Satisfactory progress is maintained throughout the school and, although there was a dip in standards last year, they rose for several years previously and are currently broadly average in Year 6. Since the last inspection, strategies to improve reading and writing have been successful but there is still more to do, especially to ensure that pupils' spelling is accurate. The school analysed reasons for the sharp dip in mathematics last year and know that pupils find quick mental processes particularly difficult. There are plans in place to address this.

Although teaching overall is satisfactory, it is variable, with strengths in the older age range. Expectations of what pupils can do and the planning for mixed age classes, especially at the lower end of the school, is sometimes insufficiently detailed so that in some lessons, pupils do not make the progress of which they might be capable. The revised creative curriculum to give pupils more first-hand experiences and to develop cross-curricular links is beginning to be effective in helping to raise standards.

Pupils' good cultural development and their understanding of different cultures make an effective contribution to community cohesion. The school serves several diverse communities very well and is itself a strong community. A comprehensive audit has been undertaken and a clear plan is being implemented for further development in this area of its work. As a result, community cohesion is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Although children join Reception with skills below, and sometimes well below, expectations, this is variable. This year, skills were slightly higher and most children are on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals in each area of learning by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children make a settled start because of the good induction procedures and continuing communication

between home and school. Parents are encouraged to be partners in their child's learning and development through regular reading at home, days to come into school and see the children working and through contributing to individual Learning Journey books with 'wow' certificates from home. Relationships in the classroom are warm and calm and all children quickly become confident in school. They work and play well together, learning to take turns through the good organisation of a wide variety of activities on offer. The curriculum is entirely appropriate to the needs of young children. They enjoyed making large ladybirds and counting the spots to enhance their number skills and were helped especially well by skilled teaching assistants. Teaching is satisfactory and the balance between activities directed by the teacher and those chosen by children is good. However, because planning is not always sufficiently detailed, occasionally children do not learn as effectively as they might when engaged in activities they have chosen themselves. The outside area is freely available to children and allows them to develop well their curiosity about the world around them. However, there is no cover for inclement weather, and space for wheeled toys is limited. Continuous careful observations by adults ensure that they have a good knowledge of what individual children can do and this makes a significant contribution to planning the next steps in teacher-directed learning. Young children are very well cared for and the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactorily led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematics by helping pupils to improve the agility of their mental calculation skills and in writing by improving spelling.
- Ensure that teachers plan more effectively, particularly in Years 1 to 3, so that pupils' progress is maximised.
- Improve planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that child-chosen activities support the learning and development of young children more effectively.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

High mobility and an even larger number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is usual in both Year 2 and Year 6 last year caused a dip in standards. Only three pupils in Year 6 had joined the school in Reception. Small year groups at the school affect percentages, therefore statistics are not wholly reliable. Comprehensive school tracking and inspection evidence shows that the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory progress. Standards in Year 2 are below average but standards in Year 6 have risen and are broadly average. Year 6 are on course to meet the challenging targets set. This is due to consistently good teaching at the upper end of the school. The introduction of new strategies for teaching letters and sounds is having a successful impact in Reception and Year 1. The school knows its pupils very well and understands that they do not work quickly under pressure. This affects their ability to recall number facts under time constraints. The school has begun to use strategies to improve mental maths but it is too early to gauge their success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and the great majority attend very well. Attendance overall is in line with national averages but it is affected by a few with very poor attendance. This is rigorously dealt with. Pupils behave politely in and around the school and get on well with each other, saying they feel very safe and that if they have a problem, they know that the adults will help them. They have a good knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and they enjoy the healthy lunches provided at school. Pupils feel proud at taking responsibility in some aspects of school life, as school council members, librarians, monitors and playground leaders, and have been instrumental in helping to provide more playground equipment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have particularly strong links with the local church, where several performances take place throughout the year and they support national charities such as Red Nose Day. Their satisfactory achievement in basic skills and good personal skills prepares them appropriately for the next stage of schooling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory across the school but strongest at the upper end, where there are significant strengths. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils establish a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Pupils say 'one of the best things about school is the teachers'. Pupils' behaviour is well managed; they enjoy lessons, work hard and are almost always fully engaged in their learning. Teaching assistants are very well used and are exceptionally skilled, particularly at supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Marking is of a high quality and helps pupils understand what they can do to improve their work. Although pupils usually know what they are expected to learn in the lesson, this is not always clearly shared with them at the outset and in some lessons, expectations are not high enough. Planning at the lower end of the school is not always sufficiently detailed and the match of work in mixed age classes does not always meet the needs of all pupils. This means that sometimes they do not make the progress of which they are capable or as quickly as they might.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes French. There is a wide range of extra activities that enrich pupils learning, including working with Salisbury Cathedral School and Salisbury Playhouse to raise standards in the expressive arts, and using coaches to develop sporting skills. Learning is extended well by numerous visits, including a residential trip, and by involving pupils in first-hand experience through exploring the local area. Although a more creative curriculum has been put in place and cross-curricular links have been developed, there are some inconsistencies in planning and the curriculum is more secure at the upper end of the school. Provision for information and communication technology is good. There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills, especially on helping them to build their learning power through sustaining concentration. This was particularly noticeable in the way in which pupils approached learning tasks in the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The safeguarding of pupils and child protection procedures fully meet requirements. Care for pupils in this safe and supportive environment is exemplary. Staff know the children really well and parents are very appreciative of this. In the words of one parent, 'The teachers have been hugely supportive and caring towards both my children.' Pupils with specific social and emotional or educational needs receive sensitive support, with external agencies appropriately consulted where necessary. Another parent comments, 'The school is very good at developing the psychological well-being of children...on an emotional, self-esteem and confidence level.'

Pupils do have targets to help them improve their work, but there are too many and, as a result, because they cannot remember them all, they do not use or apply them when doing their work. The headteacher has recently introduced progress meetings with older pupils as a form of self-assessment. These are having a positive impact in helping them to know what steps to take next to improve their work. This is in the early stages of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has suffered some disruption to staffing recently but this is allowing the headteacher to make changes to the way subjects and areas of responsibility are shared, led and managed which are more appropriate to the needs of the school. However, not all the staff required are in place yet and it is too early to see the full impact of this development. The headteacher has good processes in place for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. These raise the correct priorities and make it possible for the school to measure its degree of success. The tracking of pupils' progress is a significant improvement since the last inspection. It is used constructively, particularly to identify those needing support, which is a high proportion of pupils within the school. High pupil mobility repeatedly challenges the targets set for the school and works against improvement. However, the school continues to set its own challenging targets that do not differentiate between those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and all other pupils. Governance is a strength of the school. Governors are very knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development and, as well as providing very good support, they act as a good sounding board and 'critical friend' when discussing important issues. The school works well in partnership with other agencies to promote the well-being of all pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all its work.

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?	3
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	3

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

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	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

14 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,
Salisbury SP1 3LL.

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and talking with you.

These are some of the things we found.

- You work hard at school and make satisfactory progress.
- You enjoy school and appreciate all the extra activities the school provides for you. Many of you attend well.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe.
- You care for one another, get on very well together and your behaviour is good. Well done!
- All through the school, you are being helped to grow up as sensible young people.
- You and your parents told us how well the school takes care of you and we could see this for ourselves.
- Your headteacher, teachers and all other adults are working very hard to make your school even better.

We have suggested three things to help improve your learning.

- We have asked your teachers to help you improve your spelling and mental maths.
- We have also asked your teachers in Years 1 to 3 to make sure that they plan your lessons very carefully so that you make good progress all the time.
- For those of you in Reception, we have asked your teacher to make sure that the activities you choose yourselves help you to learn and develop even better than you are already.

Keep working hard!

Yours faithfully

Anna Sketchley Lead inspector