

Stanbridge Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109482
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337300
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Smith
Headteacher	Rosemary Godwin
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, governors, senior teachers, staff and talked to groups of children. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, pupils' work and displays and scrutinised 21 parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how consistently pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress in writing and in linking sounds and letters
- how effectively leaders monitor the progress and attainment of boys, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the school's use of feedback to pupils to increase the rate of progress
- how the school's leadership is working to develop pupils' understanding of the United Kingdom's multi-cultural community
- the attendance rate of pupils who are from travelling communities and the impact on their learning and progress especially in mathematics in Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

Stanbridge Lower School is a smaller than an average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and come from travelling communities and a considerable proportion of these pupils join or leave the school part way through the taught year. Pre-school provision is available at the school every weekday during term times from 9.00 to 11.30 for 3 to 4 year olds.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Stanbridge Lower School is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The partnership with parents is outstanding. As a result, pupils settle swiftly into school whether they join the Pre-School, Reception or any other class. Virtually all parents who returned a questionnaire were extremely positive about how happy they were with their child's experience of school. One parent summed up others thoughts when they wrote, 'We strongly support Stanbridge Lower School. Our child enjoys schools hugely which is in no small part due to some exceptional staff members. Any concerns we have had were dealt with promptly and professionally.' Parents strongly agreed that their child is kept safe in school. This is because the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding and is a significant strength of the school. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good and they are polite and very thoughtful towards others. They have an excellent appreciation of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school's leadership aims to treat all pupils as individuals. This ensures that pupils from all backgrounds and abilities are involved successfully in learning. Pupils' attainment is average but they achieve well in relation to their starting points.

The school's leadership gives a high priority to assessing pupils carefully. Pupils progress well because they benefit from good teaching. Staff use practical activities successfully and so pupils learn through a wide variety of approaches. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Assessment is used consistently to plan lessons. Occasionally, however, learning objectives are rather broad and so pupils do not know what skills they are expected to learn. Pupils have individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics but staff do not regularly discuss them in lessons so that pupils know what strategies they can use to meet them.

Meetings to discuss pupils' progress do not always involve staff and senior leaders in identifying what proportion of the year group have made expected or better progress nor record the strategies in detail which could be used to support those making slower progress. Nevertheless, the leadership and management team is successfully driving improvements. The headteacher's leadership is dedicated and inspires others to refine the ways they work together. The many improvements since the last inspection include provision for children in the Reception and Pre-School classes, which is good, especially for learning outside. However, lesson planning and assessment in the Pre-School and Reception classes do not always identify precisely how children can build on what they have learnt to improve their early literacy skills. Self-evaluation is used successfully by senior and middle leaders and governors. Together with the developments since the last inspection, this shows that the school is in a good position to continue to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' progress in linking sounds and letters and writing in Pre-School and Reception classes by ensuring planning and next steps for learning always use guidance on the development of children effectively.
- Enhance senior leaders and staff use of 'Progress Meetings' by making sure they celebrate more formally those pupils who have made expected or better progress and always record the strategies to be used to support those progressing less quickly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress from starting points that are generally below average. As a result, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 4 is broadly average, and that has been consistently the case for the past three years. Many pupils who are settled attain above expected levels of expertise in key areas of learning. More able pupils progress successfully because staff have high expectations of them. Results of assessments show that, in 2009, a quarter of pupils in Year 2 were working at above average levels of skill in reading and writing. Standards in writing have improved significantly since the last inspection as staff have taken on training and developed in expertise. School tracking data shows that boys and girls progress at a similar rate. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported thoughtfully and so they achieve well. Although attendance rates for a number of pupils from travelling communities have an adverse impact on their attainment, it is a mark of the school's success in providing for these pupils that they are helped to make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics, even if they leave or join the school part way through the taught year.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because this is given a high priority by school leaders. The school raises pupils' self-confidence effectively through many performances. Their spiritual awareness is promoted well, for example through the thoughtful use of stories from the Bible. Pupils form very good relationships with adults because staff give them positive feedback about their behaviour and work. Pupils contribute to the community well. For example, pupils worked with a county councillor to improve the local park. Pupils learn to value everyone, including people in other countries who are less fortunate than themselves. For instance, they have raised money for a school in Ethiopia. Pupils' moral development is good and they have a very good understanding of right and wrong. Pupils thoughtfully take on safe ways of working together. This is due to careful guidance from staff, drawing well on the support from public services. For example, pupils learn what to do if there is a fire due to input from the Fire Service. Pupils' cultural development is encouraged through topics such as the Romans and Olympic Games. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles outstandingly well. A good proportion learn to keep fit in outside and inside areas, including through 'Huff and Puff' physical activities organised by lunchtime supervisors. Pupils are knowledgeable about foods which are better for them and those which should not be eaten too often. They have really positive attitudes to learning and concentrate in lessons. Settled pupils'

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attendance is above average but some from travelling communities have attendance rates below the national average. Therefore, attendance is satisfactory overall. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of education because of their literacy and numeracy skills and well developed personal skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The main reason why pupils achieve well in all aspects of their learning is the good teaching they are given. In lessons observed, successful teaching uses effective teaching methods to ensure that pupils develop their key skills well. Questioning is used very astutely to extend pupils' ideas. In one outstanding session seen, drama activities were used extremely effectively and so pupils' developed their creative thinking skills imaginatively. Then the pupils were encouraged outstandingly well to record their stories using expressive vocabulary and a wide variety of types of punctuation. Assessment is used consistently to plan lessons and identify where pupils need extra support. On those occasions when learning objectives are not specific enough, different groups of pupils are not clear about what skills they are expected to utilise. Pupils' targets are kept in

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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folders which are freely available for them to refer to in lessons but few opportunities are taken to discuss examples of how they could be met. This means that pupils do not have an in-depth knowledge of what they can do to improve their work.

A strong emphasis is given to the development of language, literacy and numeracy skills. The pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the world methodically through investigative activities. The pupils thoroughly enjoy all the projects planned for them and the special event days. They take great pleasure in developing their creative skills because resources are used creatively. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 make wonderful models of chairs and paint them imaginatively. The pupils' personal, social and emotional development is supported well through group discussion sessions which deepen their knowledge of how to handle life's difficulties.

Pupils receive exceedingly high levels of care from staff. Induction into school life is very well organised. From the moment pupils start at school, their pastoral needs are met exceptionally successfully. Those from travelling communities are supported very effectively and so they are fully integrated into school life. Pupils with medical problems are cared for very considerately. The school works very closely with outside agencies to support pupils' well-being. Its work with families is deeply embedded and ensures parents can access training or support if they need it. Regular sessions are held for parents so that they can better support their child's learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team is dedicated to improving the school. School improvement planning sets clear direction for future developments in the quality of education. Pupils have equal opportunities to learn because the school works methodically to break down any barriers to learning. This is the result of the rigorous work of staff to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils' achievement is monitored on a regular basis by senior leaders and so individual targets for their attainment are reviewed regularly. The school is further developing its monitoring systems so that staff and senior leaders can track pupils' progress more consistently, celebrating pupils' successes and identifying the strategies which could be used to increase the rate of progress for a few pupils who do less well than others.

Governors work efficiently with staff and challenge the school well. They are involved successfully in planning for the future. They make sure child protection and health and

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safety matters are dealt with carefully. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements well. For example, all staff receive regular training in child protection and systematic records are kept of the checks completed on staff.

The school works very thoughtfully to unite the school and wider community. For example, pupils regularly sing to the elderly in the local community. The school has evaluated all aspects of community cohesion suitably and is developing further links to enhance pupils' understanding of our multi-cultural Britain. At present pupils learn satisfactorily about our British multi-cultural society by studying celebrations such as Eid and Divali but they cannot compare and contrast other cultures with their own because they do not have first-hand experience of communicating with children from different British cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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

Children achieve well in the Pre-School and Reception classes. Standards are broadly average by the start of Year 1 and children have made good progress from their starting points which are significantly below those expected on entry. The children develop their basic skills effectively because staff use practical teaching methods well. Many activities are available to children to develop their key skills during sessions where they choose what they do. For example, some children explore mouldable materials successfully because resources are used so well. Children learn to use language to express their own thinking because the staff are skilful in asking searching questions. Assessments regularly highlight what children can do but they do not always use guidance on stages of child development methodically in weekly planning or when recording the next steps

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children could take to improve. The starting point of each child is assessed carefully and individual achievement is beginning to be tracked carefully.

The children's personal development and behaviour are good because all adults ensure that the welfare of each individual is supported consistently well. For instance, a member of staff has completed training in first aid for children in the early years. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and can easily extend their learning by collecting extra pieces of equipment due to the thoughtful way that resources are organised and staff expectations of them. Children happily share equipment and work cooperatively. Story time is used perceptively and so children learn to wait for their turn and listen to others carefully. The leadership of this stage of education is good. Effective management has improved the use of the outside areas especially well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An outstanding partnership is in place between parents and carers and the school. Among those parents who returned a questionnaire, the great majority were very positive about the school and the progress their child is making. One parent summed up their thoughts by saying, 'My child loves coming to school and I think the warm, friendly feel of the school means that my child is thriving and fulfilling their potential.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stanbridge Lower School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	57	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	38	12	57	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	48	11	52	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	43	11	52	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	48	9	43	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	48	11	52	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	38	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	52	8	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	43	11	52	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	43	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	48	10	48	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	62	8	38	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stanbridge Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9HY

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You attend a happy and friendly school. Positive things about your school include:

you make good progress in your work

you behave well in school

your headteacher and senior teachers have very good ideas about ways to improve the school

teaching is good and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting

an excellent partnership is in place between the school, your parents, carers and agencies

staff care and support you outstandingly well and listen to you thoughtfully and so you feel really safe in school.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important matters are to:

make sure staff explain to you more fully what skills you could use in lessons and in your work to reach even higher levels of knowledge and understanding

ensure children in Pre-School and Reception classes make even better progress in learning to link letters and sounds and write effectively

make sure staff celebrate your successes in work more clearly and record in detail how those of you who are progressing less quickly could be helped.

Continue to listen carefully to staff comments, come to school everyday and enjoy all the terrific things you are learning at Stanbridge Lower School.

Yours faithfully

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector

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