

Stone Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110420
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337496
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John deFraine
Headteacher	Mr Simon Rose
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, small groups of pupils working with teachers or support staff, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring records, records of pupils' progress and pupils' work, plus 42 parents' questionnaires.

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

- progress in English and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2
- the quality of support for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities, or who are at an early stage of learning English
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school that attracts pupils from a wider area than its immediate locality. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are White British. Very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Floods during the summer of 2009 caused a considerable amount of damage to the fabric of the school, especially in the Key Stage 1 and Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms.

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

Stone Primary School is a good school. It has been transformed since the previous inspection. The head teacher, governors and all the staff have worked hard to secure significant improvements in many areas of the school's work. Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Reception class. They are now making consistently good progress in Years 1 to 6 because of a rich and vibrant curriculum, combined with good teaching that provides the right level of pace and challenge. Although attainment at the end of Year 6 is similar to the national average, standards are rising quickly and achievement is good. Pupils are developing a pride in their work which is reflected in good standards of presentation. The school's outward-looking approach that has included working with other local schools and the local authority, has been pivotal in securing these improvements.

The school provides a very welcoming environment where pupils feel safe and secure. Support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are at an early stage of learning English, is much improved and is now good. Pupils are proud of the developments in the school and are keen to make a good contribution to the school community. Pupils are thoroughly involved in evaluating the work of the school by acting as 'mini inspectors'. They are also keen to be involved in the locality and have written to the parish council asking how they can be even more involved in the local community. Behaviour is good both in and out of lessons and there is a calm atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about all the exciting things they have to do at school, including learning through drama, exciting topics such as local history, and the good range of clubs. They say their school is 'caring, responsible, sporty, helpful and kind'. The curriculum is not as exciting in the Early Years Foundation Stage as elsewhere, because resources are getting old, the outdoors is not used effectively enough, and independent learning activities are not planned with clear outcomes in mind.

All staff have high expectations about securing improvements. They are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils have direct contact with children from a wider range of backgrounds. The school has carefully monitored the quality of teaching and keeps a close eye on pupils' progress. As a result, leaders and managers have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and have been able to successfully tackle weaknesses. Since the previous inspection, pockets of underachievement have been eliminated and consistently good progress has been secured. This demonstrates the schools' good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve outcomes and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving resources and use of the outdoors
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan challenging activities that stimulate children's learning when they are working independently, and to ensure good progress for children of all abilities.
- In order to develop their understanding of British and global faith and culture, ensure that pupils have contact with children from a wider range of backgrounds.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

When children join Year 1, their skills are usually similar to those expected nationally. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been above average in recent years but in 2009 it was similar to the national average. Nevertheless, pupils made good progress from their individual starting points. Although outcomes at the end of Year 6 have been similar to the national average, they have improved steadily and are beginning to exceed this level because pupils are making consistently good progress across Years 3 to 6. The school's focus on mathematics has been particularly successful, with an increasing proportion of pupils now working at the higher levels. Standards in both reading and writing are improving rapidly and the school has now turned its attention to raising standards in science. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making good progress in lessons because the quality of the support they receive is good.

Pupils achieve well not only because teaching is good but also because they want to do well. They usually work at a good pace and enjoy their lessons but the school is aware that they sometimes lack the confidence to quickly put pen to paper when they are working independently. Christian values underpin the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. They clearly know the difference between right and wrong and react well to assembly themes about 'doing the right thing'. Consequently, there is a good level of respect for others. There is a pride in the school and a real willingness to help in the school or in the local community. The school provides plentiful opportunities for pupils to appreciate traditional British culture and opportunities to experience different cultures through multi cultural week. However, pupils have limited opportunities to meet with children from different backgrounds to their own.

A good programme of personal, social and health education means that pupils are able to assess risks for themselves. They know their teachers listen to them and their views are respected and, as a result, they feel safe. There is a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and pupils are helping to plan a healthy tuck shop. Good progress in basic skills, including reading, writing and mathematics, together with good patterns of attendance and improving levels of self-belief, means that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers in Years 1 to 6 are very skilled, and this is reflected in consistently good teaching. There are high expectations of academic achievement and standards of behaviour. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and supportive and contribute towards the effective management of behaviour. Teachers plan a good range of interesting activities that engage pupils and make learning pleasurable. The level of challenge has improved because work is now carefully matched to pupils' individual needs.

There is some very high-quality marking, especially in Years 3 to 6, that establishes a valuable dialogue between teachers and pupils. This is helping to boost pupils' progress because they know exactly what to do to improve their work. The use of academic targets is inconsistent, although it is improving, helped by the introduction of personalised learning target time in Years 3 to 6.

The school has successfully developed an exciting new curriculum in Years 1 to 6 that is closely matched to pupils' needs and is very successful at expanding their range of experiences. Good links are being made between topics and some, like that on evacuees, are giving pupils good opportunities to practise their writing. The science curriculum is being improved through more opportunities for pupils to learn through practical work and make discoveries for themselves. New initiatives in drama and French are very much appreciated by pupils. Visits and visitors are used well to support learning

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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and there are a good range of well attended clubs that vary from football to fashion design.

The quality of care is good and this is reflected in the way pupils feel at ease in the school. There has been significant improvement in the quality of support of potentially vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils now have access to good quality support, including when they are taught as part of small groups. Their needs are now more effectively identified and work is better matched to their requirements; as a result, their progress is accelerating and gaps in their learning are being addressed.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership and management have been central to driving improvement and embedding ambition. The contribution of subject leaders is much improved and they are now making an important contribution to accelerated achievement and improved outcomes. The governing body is becoming increasingly effective at providing challenge and support. Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities well, including ensuring that safeguarding procedures are good and that the school provides good value for money. The school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is illustrated by the way it has addressed differences in rates of progress between diverse groups of pupils and is making sure that all groups are making good progress. Partnerships have been used well both to support pupils' personal and academic development and to improve provision in the school. The school has a good understanding of its local community and is working hard to engage positively with all parents and carers. International links are starting to develop. However, community cohesion is satisfactory overall, because the school is aware that there is still more to do in ensuring that children have opportunities for contact with children from a wider range of backgrounds.

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

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	
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception class with skills that are similar to those typical of four-year-olds. Although they are sometimes good at working with numbers, children are sometimes less skilled at recognising letters and writing. They make sound progress and usually join Year 1 with broadly average skills. However, in 2009 the girls' skills were generally above those expected but the boys' skills were below average in reading and writing. Teachers work hard to make sure that children's learning is checked. However, insufficient use is made of this information to plan challenging activities that stimulate children's learning when they are working independently, and to ensure good progress for children of all abilities. Boys, typically, choose to play with cars or work on the computers and are not always sufficiently engaged with activities that promote reading and writing. Relationships between children and staff are warm and supportive and children are well cared for. When staff work with individuals and groups of children, they are good at questioning them and work hard to move their learning on.

Leaders have recently faced challenging circumstances due to serious flooding that damaged both accommodation and resources, and the leaders' additional subject responsibilities are adding to a heavy load. Although relocation is planned, resources were lost and have yet to be fully replaced. The facilities for outdoor play were also damaged. The resources that are left are tired, and the opportunities for outdoor play that remain are not always fully utilised. Parents very much appreciate the good induction programme that allows their children to quickly settle into school. The coffee morning for parents that was observed during the inspection was very successful because it helped parents to support their children's learning.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents were happy with provision in the school but a few were concerned about the progress their children are making. Inspectors found that, although progress has been slower in the past, all groups of pupils are now making good progress. There were particular concerns about whether the school was meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspection team carefully investigated the provision for pupils who found learning difficult. The school recognised that improvements needed to be made and has worked hard to develop provision maps and teaching in small groups. While the management of special educational needs has changed several times in recent years, this has led to improvements in provision. When pupils were observed working in class, or with support staff or the specialist teacher, they made good progress. A very small minority of parents were concerned about how unacceptable behaviour was dealt with. There were no instances of unacceptable behaviour during the inspection. The school's records show that it deals appropriately with this when it occurs. The good links with other providers help in this respect. A few parents were also concerned about how they are helped to support their child's learning. There have been workshops for parents and, during the inspection, there was a well attended coffee morning for parents that provided numerous examples of how parents can help their children with numbers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at insert name of 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/inspector received 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	50	19	45	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	48	20	48	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	26	28	67	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	31	20	48	8	19	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	15	36	25	60	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	33	22	52	5	12	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	40	25	59	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)	13	31	23	55	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	26	26	62	3	7	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	31	22	52	6	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	21	27	64	4	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	26	29	69	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	36	24	57	3	7	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.



25 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stone Church of England Combined School, Aylesbury, HP17 8PD

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You say that you enjoy school and we can understand why. It is a good school and it is getting better every day. We are pleased to see that you have so many interesting things to do at school. The trip to see the ballet A Christmas Carol sounded super! We were very impressed by your good behaviour and the way you all had such good manners and were so helpful. I hope you are enjoying your work as 'mini inspectors'. We thought you were doing a good job helping the school to improve.

You are making good progress in your lessons. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you are reaching similar standards to other children and have achieved well. It's good to know that you appreciate your teachers and find them helpful and kind. They do look after you very well.

We noticed that the activities planned for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not always as exciting and as interesting as those seen in the rest of the school, so we have asked your teachers to improve this. We know you are working very hard and are keen to help both in your school and in the local community. However, we did notice that you do not get many opportunities to meet children from different backgrounds than yourselves.

Managers at your school are doing a good job. They are working very hard and trying to make your school into one of the best.

Thank you again for being such good company.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh

Lead Inspector

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