

Stone Cross School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114484
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338377
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Beryl Richmond

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	K Saxby
Headteacher	Anne Allison
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Eighteen lessons were observed, all taught by different teachers and teaching assistants. The team held meetings with governors, members of staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, pupils' work in books, the quality of teachers' marking, the 200 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 30 questionnaires completed by staff and 86 questionnaires completed by pupils in Key Stage 2. Analysis was made of the school's development plans and safeguarding information was scrutinised.

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

- achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with dyslexia
- effectiveness of steps taken by the school to improve achievement in writing, particularly for boys
- how successful the school has been in ensuring that all pupils make good progress throughout the school.

Information about the school

Stone Cross is a large oversubscribed school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average, although the proportion of pupils with a statement of educational needs is almost twice the national average. The range of needs includes academic, physical, behavioural and emotional difficulties. There has been instability in staffing over recent years. The deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2009.

The school runs an Early Birds Club every morning, which is the responsibility of the governing body, and which was evaluated as part of this inspection.

Stone Cross Independent Pre-School operates from a classroom within the school building. It is inspected separately and was not evaluated as part of this inspection.

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 Cross provides its pupils with a good education. After a period of instability in staffing, the headteacher's determined leadership has developed a cohesive staff team. Actions taken by senior staff to improve the quality of teaching mean that teaching is good and as a result, all pupils make good progress. The success of the actions of senior leaders in involving a broad range of staff in management and the rigorous monitoring of the school's performance indicates good capacity for sustained improvement.

Children's starting points are in line with those expected for their ages and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Given level of attainment at the end of Reception Year, not enough pupils attain the higher levels in reading and writing by the end of Year 2. Over the last three years, pupils made good progress in Key Stage 2 when English, mathematics and science were taken into account. Achievement in science was usually good. Pupils, especially more able pupils, are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. Guidance on how pupils can improve their work is not always clear enough. Action taken by the school to improve achievement and attainment in writing, particularly for boys, is having a positive impact but this remains a priority in the school development. There is a clear focus on improving vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. Provision for Information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and has had a good impact on attainment and enjoyment.

A real strength of the school is pupils' personal development. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet, and attendance is above average. Most parents expressed positive views about the school and pupils indicated how proud they are of their school.

The school has taken prompt action to improve the way it teaches pupils with dyslexia. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this provision. Other support for pupils with a range of special needs and/or disabilities is good. They enjoy practical activities and make good use of ICT to support their learning. They progress in line with other pupils. Pupils who have difficulties managing their behaviour and emotions are provided with effective support and this is having a positive impact.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment data to provide the right level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the more able pupils, and when planning

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independent work

- ensuring that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to learn next to improve.

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

Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning and engage well with their work. Inspection evidence, from lessons and work scrutiny, and school information on the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress, confirmed that progress in both Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall. Younger pupils learn best when teachers provide them with activities that are engaging and motivating. For example, in a lesson on ordering numbers pupils keenly participated in a whole class game. Pupils particularly enjoy practical lessons, where they have the opportunity to be 'hands on' and work together. In some lessons for older pupils, particularly when they are working independently, tasks sometimes lack challenge and do not relate to their personal targets. Pupils are not always clear enough about what they are learning. This means that opportunities for pupils to take ownership of their learning and progress at a more rapid pace are missed. Outcomes in ICT have improved well. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed using digital video camera technology to make short films.

Pupils say 'school is really safe'. They know an adult they can talk to if they are worried about anything, and have an excellent understanding of fire drill and how to handle equipment safely. They know what constitutes a healthy diet, and lead active lives through excellent opportunities to participate in sport. A parent commented positively on the playground buddy systems that have helped her child to make friendship choices and deal with difficult situations.

The staff are very successful in promoting pupils' personal development. Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show thoughtfulness about the world around them and have been collecting money for the people affected by the Haiti earthquake. They learn well about the customs, food and religion of different cultures, for example, through learning about Chinese New Year. Pupils enjoy being school council members, citing the new water fountain in the playground as an example of an improvement suggested by them. Bearing in mind pupils' ability to apply their basic skills, including ICT, and their excellent personal skills, they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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?

Although much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain, leading in these lessons to pupils making satisfactory progress. Relationships are good and so pupils learn in harmonious environments. Although most teachers plan well to meet pupils' needs, in some lessons more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers often question well to get pupils to explain and justify their ideas but marking does not always clearly indicate to pupils how they can improve their work.

Letters and sounds are now being taught more systematically throughout the school, although the full impact of this work on pupils' achievement in reading and writing is yet to be seen. Pupils are positive about the curriculum. One pupil said: 'I enjoy all our different learning journeys that we have each year. We did Rags and Riches last term which was about the Victorians and I enjoyed all the surprises we had like a Rainbow Theatre coming in.' Pupils enjoy excellent music lessons, where they show high levels of engagement and enjoyment when learning how to play percussion instruments.

Good transition arrangements are in place between key stages and when pupils transfer to secondary school. Excellent systems are in place to raise attendance levels, which are checked on a regular basis. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with dyslexia, are tailored carefully for them. The Early Birds Club provides a satisfactory range of activities, which pupils enjoy. The school is aware that not all the required documentation is in place, including planning for children from the Early Year Foundation Stage, in this club. This is being addressed. A trained counsellor and well-trained teaching assistants provide good support to families and

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pupils and there are strong links with social services professionals.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well as a team and ensure that responsibility for leadership and management is widely shared throughout the school. Regular, thorough monitoring of planning, scrutiny of work and tracking of pupils' progress take place and the impact of this work is evident in pupils' good progress throughout the school. Teaching is rigorously and regularly monitored. Responsibility for this is shared so that the ethos of improvement is well understood by everyone. Strengths of provision and points for improvement are shared widely and are helpful for improving practice. The governing body is effective because it reviews the way it works. For example, meetings are now recorded so that priorities and actions needed are clear to all members. Safeguarding is good because all statutory requirements are in place and staff understand these and demonstrate a caring attitude for all pupils.

The school has good links with parents, who are fully involved in their children's development. Ongoing dialogue, opportunities to discuss children's progress and reporting arrangements give parents a clear picture of their child's achievement. Parents help with the development of the grounds, run cooking and gym clubs and help in class. The school has good links with other schools and specialist agencies. It provides excellent support to other schools in terms of Early Years Foundation Stage expertise. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school itself is a cohesive community with good local and international links. Recent links have been established with a school in Camden. Discrimination is not tolerated. The school monitors the progress of all groups of pupils and is beginning to be successful in closing the gaps in differences in progress.

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

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers are very positive about the school's arrangements for the admission of their children. Over recent years, there has been an increase in the proportion of children starting school with speech and language difficulties. However, most children have good social skills and are articulate for their age. Children are very well settled and routines are well established. The school explains to parents and carers how their children will learn through play, oral and practical activities so they can help in the learning process.

Children benefit from good-sized classrooms and outdoor learning in most weathers despite there being no cover. Teaching is consistently good, often outstanding, and children engage very well with their learning to make good progress. Staff are skilled in providing a wide range of activities that help children make choices and gain the confidence to investigate for themselves. Improvements have been made to the teaching of letters and sounds and the impact of this work can be seen in some aspects of literacy in terms of faster rates of progress and higher attainment.

Excellent, knowledgeable leadership has set the tone for improvement. Teamwork is very well developed. Assessment is good and children's records, using a range of evidence, including photographs, are kept diligently in their 'learning journeys'. These are used very well to plan the next stages of learning. Parents are invited into school to take part in building this full picture of what their child knows and can do and reporting systems are good. Welfare provision is very good with all statutory requirements met.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

There was a very good response from parents in terms of the number of questionnaires completed, often with comments. A very large majority of parents are positive about the school's work. A few parents were concerned about their children's progress and how the school meets their children's needs, how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and how the school takes account of their concerns. The inspection team agrees that pupils' progress is not consistently good and that not all pupils' needs are met. The inspection team has no evidence that the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour appropriately and that it does not take account of parents' suggestions and concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stone Cross 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 200 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 422 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	119	60	71	36	6	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	123	62	74	37	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	98	49	102	51	11	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	87	44	102	51	11	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	103	52	83	42	9	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	94	47	97	49	7	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	37	118	59	6	3	1	1
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)	63	32	111	56	4	2	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	76	38	111	56	8	4	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	35	102	51	10	5	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	73	37	103	52	7	4	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	85	43	99	50	6	3	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	47	97	49	6	3	1	1

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 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stone Cross School, Stone Cross, BN24 5EF

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with you. You go to a good school. Here are some of the things, which are good or better about your school:

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