

Stoke St Michael Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123662
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340391
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

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	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Gregory
Headteacher	Mrs Christine McFarlane
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed the school's work, and spent around a third of his time looking at learning. He observed two teachers and eight lessons. Discussions were held with the headteacher and subject leaders, staff, governors, parents and pupils. The inspector looked at documentation, including pupils' books, the school development plan, minutes of the governing body, records of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of vulnerable pupils, records of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of pupils, policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination. He also analysed 31 parental questionnaire responses, together with questionnaire responses from staff and pupils.

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

- reasons for apparent variations in rates of progress between different key stages and different subjects
- attainment by the end of Year 6, and whether higher attainers always reach the levels they should
- the impact of leaders and managers at all levels in securing improvement in pupils' progress across all phases and subjects
- the apparent strengths in pupils' personal development, and the impact of action taken by the school to strengthen pupils' cultural development.

Information about the school

This is a very small school serving a working village in the Mendip hills. Pupils come from the village and surrounding area and a small but increasing minority now travel in to school from the nearby town of Shepton Mallett. There are two classes. Class One incorporates children during their Reception year of the Early Years Foundation Stage, together with pupils of Years 1 and 2 in Key Stage 1. Class Two incorporates pupils from Years 3'6 in Key Stage 2. Pre-school childcare is offered on-site; it was formerly operated privately but the school is undergoing a registration process to transfer responsibility for management of the pre-school to the school itself. The pre-school was not inspected as part of this inspection.

Nearly all the pupils are White British. Two speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, and no pupils on roll have a disability. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The proportion entitled to free school meals is broadly average. A high proportion of pupils join the school after the usual time of admission. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools standard. The school plays an active part in the local Community Learning Partnership through which local schools collaborate to share and develop resources and expertise.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. Parents and pupils are fulsome in their praise of its 'family atmosphere' and the 'fantastic relationships between staff and children'. One pupil commented that the school 'leaves me feeling warm'. Pupils indeed feel very safe and secure in a welcoming and caring environment. A mark of their enjoyment of school is their very high attendance. Pupils' personal qualities generally develop well throughout the school. A good range of enrichment activities gives pupils plenty of opportunities to take responsibility and work collaboratively, and develop skills which help to prepare them well for later life. They develop a good understanding of right and wrong, and behave well. However, their academic progress varies across the school.

Children join the school in the Reception class with skills that vary from year to year but which are, overall, broadly in line with levels expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, attainment is also broadly average. Overall, progress is satisfactory. However, by the end of Year 2, too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. This is because the Key Stage 1 curriculum does not offer enough opportunity for pupils to develop and apply their skills, in literacy in particular, through sufficiently demanding work. Lessons in places move at too slow a pace to stretch the more able pupils in Key Stage 1. By contrast, the Key Stage 2 curriculum is very well planned around highly stimulating themes to offer children across the age range enjoyable challenges well suited to their capabilities. As a consequence, pupils make good progress across Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics, where attainment was high in Year 6 national tests in 2009.

Strong links with partner organisations across the local community do much to promote pupils' learning and well-being. The school, however, recognises that provision needs to be strengthened to allow pupils to understand more about culturally diverse communities in other parts of the United Kingdom. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and as a consequence, the school improvement plan is appropriately focused on the key priorities. However, the actions specified to bring about improvement against these priorities are not sufficiently detailed. Although staff, governors and the headteacher frequently drop into classrooms to observe the school's work, there is not enough formal evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning to sharply identify how best to improve pupils' progress across the school. Nonetheless, significant improvements to the Key Stage 2 curriculum and the school's systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have led to rising overall standards and progress across Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. Taken together with the much improved effectiveness of governance and middle leadership, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of learning and progress for pupils across Key Stage 1, particularly in literacy, by:
 - strengthening the planning of lessons and the curriculum to ensure that all activities are sufficiently purposeful and challenging for the more able pupils
 - quickening the pace of teaching and learning in lessons.
- Strengthen the leadership of teaching and learning by
 - making more frequent and sharper observations of lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching in terms of its impact on pupils' learning and progress
 - using the results of more systematic monitoring of teaching and learning to inform more detailed action planning to improve the quality of provision.
- Develop provision to promote pupils' better understanding of life in culturally diverse areas of the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In Class 1, children of Reception age and lower attaining pupils develop their skills soundly as staff set up some engaging activities to stimulate their interest and enquiry. For example, children worked well together in transforming their 'home corner' into a vet's clinic, drawing on their experiences at an animal sanctuary that morning and referring to simple reference books to inform their decisions. However, older and more able pupils in Key Stage 1 often spend too long completing low-level and mundane tasks and applying skills that they are already very familiar with. Where this occurs, pupils get restless and lose focus on their learning.

In Key Stage 2, learning typically proceeds at a brisk pace. Lesson activities set challenges for pupils which are generally well suited to their abilities, and pupils rise to these with enthusiasm. In one starter activity involving partitioning numbers, some pupils, without prompting, went straight for the largest and most difficult numbers. While pupils' writing skills are broadly average, their numeracy skills are very secure in Key Stage 2, and they apply these confidently in solving a range of challenging problems. For example, they showed a great facility to negotiate 'on-the-spot' over cost and resource requirements, with a panel made up of staff and a local partnership learning mentor, in an exercise based on the 'Dragon's Den' television programme. This exercise was centred on pupils working in groups to raise funds to carry out activities to raise money for the Haiti disaster relief appeal. It demonstrated not only their good enterprise skills, but also their commitment to the school's values of care and compassion.

Although there is no school council, pupils influence the direction of the school very positively by other means, such as through serving on a recycling committee. They have a good understanding of how to live and eat healthily, and have used their own research to moderate the unhealthy composition of some lunchboxes.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

A strong programme of trips, visits and visiting presenters provides a rich source of resources to stimulate pupils' interest and clarify difficult concepts. The Key Stage 2 curriculum makes particularly good use of such resources to underpin its themes. Through these themes, pupils effectively deepen their knowledge across a range of subjects and develop and apply their basic skills as they advance their learning. For example, a visit to the Roman Baths, including an artefact handling workshop, stimulated some good research using the internet, followed by effective chronological writing, and some very creative design and making of Roman-style pottery. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is well planned to ensure that when drawing on these activities, work extends and challenges pupils of all abilities. Very good systems are now in place to allow teachers and pupils to assess work in relation to their targets, so that pupils are clear about how they need to improve. These assessment systems also apply at Key Stage 1, but they are not always used effectively in planning activities to maximise the opportunities for more able pupils to extend and develop their skills and understanding. Activities across the Key Stage 1 timetable are not focused enough on developing

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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literacy skills in particular, so that, for example, too much time is spent in some lessons on sketching ideas rather than writing about them.

Pupils who require additional help with their learning, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, receive well-planned support which is monitored closely to ensure its effectiveness. Generally, such support ensures that these pupils make satisfactory progress in line with their peers. Staff and governors engage extremely effectively with parents in providing this support, and their endeavour has transformed the attitudes and performance of some individual pupils. Pupils who join the school after the usual point of admission are warmly welcomed and settle well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's leadership has developed a highly cohesive school community. The school's core values, centred on constructive relationships and mutual respect, are widely shared across staff, pupils and parents. Since the last inspection, positive moves have been made to strengthen leadership at all levels in the school. Teachers have been active in developing their own leadership roles in ways that have led to improvements in assessment and the Key Stage 2 curriculum, and the sound development of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Governors have significantly strengthened their effectiveness. Governors know the school well, ask questions about its performance, and visit classrooms to find out for themselves about the quality of provision. They have very well organised systems to ensure that statutory responsibilities are appropriately met. Together with the staff, they ensure that the school has good systems in place for safeguarding the well-being of pupils, including through detailed recording of the suitability of staff and regular health and safety checks. Policies, including those to promote equality of opportunity and to counter discrimination, are regularly reviewed. However, there is not enough formal monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning to eliminate the unevenness of progress for all groups of pupils.

The school does much to promote cohesion within its local community through its strong links with the village and its very effective work with local partners. However, provision to help pupils understand life in more culturally diverse settings across the United Kingdom is at present underdeveloped, and has been identified as a school

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improvement priority.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress to reach the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly average skills. Attainment varies from year to year, but generally the large majority reach the expected level in most areas of learning by the time they reach Year 1. Writing skills are generally a weaker area of performance. Parents speak very favourably about how well their children settle into school, and strong links with the on-site pre-school facilitates this process for many. Children value their interaction with older pupils in their class, who are often keen to look after and support them in class and in the playground. Adult-led work with children often makes good use of space and resources in the school to develop pupils' basic skills, although opportunities are sometimes missed to develop writing opportunities from pupils' phonics and other work. Children are able to use their imagination successfully in initiating their own activities. Staff assess children's progress carefully, and compile detailed individual record books of evidence to celebrate the development of children's knowledge and skills over time. These are not very frequently shared with parents, some of whom say that they would appreciate more regular updates on their children's progress. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory, with sound professional development in place to develop the skills of staff working in this specialist area. Welfare of children is accorded an appropriately high priority.

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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

Parents and carers have an overwhelmingly favourable view of the school. They greatly appreciate the high quality of relationships that permeate the fabric of the school. They appreciate how much their children enjoy their school, and the number of activities such a small school is able to offer. There were no patterns of negative comments on the questionnaires. Some commented to the inspector in discussion that they would appreciate more information on their children's progress, especially in Reception. Inspection evidence supports these views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stoke St Michael Primary 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 inspector received 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 45 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	84	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	45	16	52	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	68	7	23	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	74	8	26	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)	19	61	9	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	68	10	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	74	6	19	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	65	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	68	9	29	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	74	8	26	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.



11 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stoke St Michael Primary School, Radstock BA3 5LG

Many thanks for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school for its recent inspection. I much enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do. I was particularly impressed by the negotiating skills of those pupils who made presentations in the 'Dragon's Den'. This shows how well you work together, and how confident you are to argue your case, using numbers as well as words! It also showed how willing you are to take responsibility to support the school in its charitable work.

My report judges that the school provides you with a satisfactory education overall. You make satisfactory progress to reach standards which are broadly similar to those found in other schools across the country. While you make particularly good progress from Years 3 to 6, some of you, and particularly those who find learning easier, do not always reach the standards you should between Years 1 and 2. Across the school, though, it is clear that that you enjoy school enormously, and your excellent attendance confirms this very strongly. This is because you feel safe in a school where relationships are so warm and friendly, and where staff care a good deal for you. You also enjoy some exciting activities to make your learning fun.

The headteacher and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where it needs to improve. I have suggested three main ways in which the school can get even better.

- Improve progress for pupils across Years 1 and 2, particularly by ensuring that those who find learning easier always get enough challenging work to do.
- Improve the way school leaders check on the quality of lessons.
- Increase the opportunities for you to understand more about the variety of cultures and beliefs that exist within communities across this country.

I am sure that you will do your best to help by continuing to work hard and showing such enthusiasm for your activities.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson

Lead inspector

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