

Staplegrove Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123801
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314723
Inspection dates	27 February 2008
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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	177

Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Bailey
Headteacher	Mrs Kirsti Nelson
Date of previous school inspection	30 June–3 July 2003
School address	Hudson Way Staplegrove Taunton TA2 6UP
Telephone number	01823 337313
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress from the start of Reception to the end of Year 2, standards and progress in mathematics, and the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being. Evidence was gathered through discussion with school senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of governors, parents, pupils, and representatives of the school council, together with visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and analysis of school records and planning documents. Parents' questionnaire responses were also analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves a residential area on the western edge of Taunton, where social and economic conditions are relatively favourable. Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and of those with a statement of special education needs, are below average. The school has close links with its local parish church. It has recently gained Healthy School Status and the Active School Mark, as a reflection of its work to promote healthy and active lifestyles for its pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staplegrove is a good school that has a number of outstanding features. Parents are effusive in their praise of the excellent quality of care, guidance and support given to the pupils. They offer many examples of how well the school recognises when pupils need extra help and how quickly support is provided, whether with learning or through counselling and advice. 'No problem is too small', wrote one. 'Full support at all times...with a smile', said another. The school's strong commitment to the care and welfare of its pupils, reinforced by rigorous procedures to ensure their safety, clearly rubs off on the pupils themselves. In the playground, for example, year groups mix freely and older pupils help younger ones to organise games and activities.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. They make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school by willingly taking on all responsibilities given to them. They also show the initiative to organise new activities where they feel there is a need. The new school choir, for example, was the brainchild of a pupil. Older pupils carry out their duties as prefects and playleaders with calm efficiency. They even run the school reception at lunchtime, answering the telephone with clarity and confidence, efficiently taking messages and ensuring their receipt. Through such activities, they develop important skills for later life. Pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility through activities such as involvement in eco-projects and fundraising for overseas development projects.

Pupils' excellent behaviour reflects the very good relationships across the school. There is a high degree of mutual respect between pupils themselves and between pupils and staff. This helps pupils feel very safe and secure. It also means that they can focus fully on learning well in lessons.

Pupils' academic achievement has been transformed over the last two years. National test results for Year 6 pupils in 2005 were very poor. However, under the leadership of the current headteacher, the school has successfully focused on consistently raising standards. As a result, pupils in Year 6 in 2007 made very good progress in relation to the standards they attained at the end of Year 2. Standards have now risen from below average to average by the end of Year 6. Pupils throughout the school are making good progress to recover the ground lost when standards slipped earlier in their school career. Standards in mathematics had been below average for some years, and the school has focused hard on identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, and ensuring that lessons are planned to fill those gaps. There remain some weaknesses in pupils' skills in carrying out basic number operations for calculations, but overall mathematics standards are now broadly average. In the Foundation Stage, overall standards are above average, reflecting children's good progress.

The key to raising standards has been the setting of clear targets for pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy across the school. This is supported by regular measuring of pupils' success in reaching those targets, and effective intervention to support learning when targets have not been reached. Teachers are fully accountable for the progress made by their pupils. They set clear learning objectives for their lessons, and work is marked carefully with constructive comments which show pupils where

objectives have been met or where they have been missed. The more effective marking sets out clearly what next steps pupils need to take to improve their work still further, but this is not consistently done, especially in mathematics.

Teachers plan lessons which move quickly through a series of activities which are well designed to keep pupils engaged and take account of the various ways in which they learn. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard to give pupils visual images and models for solving problems. They use objects and games, such as dice and board games to reinforce learning. The whole-school 'wake and shake' exercise at the start of the day is followed by 'brain-gym' activities throughout the day which keep pupils mentally alert. Lessons move at a good pace, but sometimes class discussions are dominated by those pupils quickest to respond, and do not give enough time for others to reflect and play their part. Work is mostly well matched to pupils' different abilities, and provision for higher attainers has improved since the last inspection, so that they now make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from very well planned provision and close monitoring of their success against clear targets, so that they too make good progress.

Enjoyment of learning is at the heart of everything the school provides. 'Our son comes home most days full of enthusiasm about what he has done' was typical of comments made by a number of parents. This is reflected in good attendance rates, and high participation in the good range of extra-curricular sports clubs. The school strongly encourages pupils to live healthy and active lifestyles, and provides a rich programme of physical activities, with many sessions led by sports coaches. A broad, well-balanced curriculum is enhanced by a good range of trips, visits and visitors. Learning is often taken outside the classroom into the school grounds to help pupils to apply their skills in a different environment. The newly-equipped computer suite provides pupils with sound opportunities to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in ICT lessons. However, pupils do not have enough independent opportunities to apply their ICT skills to help them learn in other subjects.

Good leadership and management have secured strong improvements in pupils' academic progress while strengthening still further the school's ethos. Little wonder, then, that the headteacher is so highly regarded by parents. Together with the senior management team, she is giving the school excellent direction. A well-organised governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and carries out its duties efficiently. The school still has some way to go in raising standards, especially in mathematics, but a strong start has been made. Current whole-school performance targets have been set too low to reflect the school's aspirations for excellent achievement. Nonetheless, the school has clearly demonstrated a good capacity to raise standards further. It is in a strong position to build on what, in the words of one parent, is already 'a good learning environment, with wonderful teachers and a genuinely happy atmosphere'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children join the Reception class from the playgroup attached to the school. Skills on joining the school vary from year to year, but are broadly in line with those expected nationally, with relative strengths in personal, social and emotional

development and relative weaknesses in communication, language and literacy. Children make good progress, and the current Reception class are on course to reach above average standards when they finish the Foundation Stage. They are making particularly strong progress in literacy, where their early writing skills are developing well. The new leadership of the Foundation Stage has been particularly effective in ensuring that children's progress is very closely monitored and tracked. This enables staff to make sure that children get the most out of activities to take forward their learning. Learning is purposeful and enjoyable. The school recognises the need to improve ready access to outdoor learning and play to broaden learning opportunities still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve pupils' confidence and capability in calculation to further raise standards in mathematics
- encourage pupils to apply their ICT skills independently and to use ICT to support their learning across all subjects.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards reached by learners ¹	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1– exceptionally and consistently high; grade 2 – generally above average with none significantly below average; grade 3 – broadly average to below average; grade 4 – exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Staplegrove Church of England Primary School, Taunton TA2 6UP

Many thanks for the welcome you gave me when I visited the school for its recent inspection. I very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and at play. It was tremendous to see how efficiently some of you manage the reception area at lunchtime, and how well older pupils look after younger ones as play leaders. The way you all take on responsibilities so willingly and look out for each other's welfare is a great strength of the school. You, of course, take your lead from the excellent care and support given to you by the staff. They keep a very close eye on your progress and well-being, and are very quick to act if anyone needs extra help.

Your school is a good one. The headteacher has brought in a number of important improvements which have led standards in the school to rise in recent years. You now reach standards in line with those in other schools, and are making good progress. Children in Reception get off to a good start and do well in all areas of their learning.

You are taught well. Teachers check regularly on how well you are doing, and plan lessons carefully to help you reach your targets. They also make lessons enjoyable, with plenty of varied and exciting activities. You and your parents were quick to tell me how much you enjoyed coming to school. You really are a very healthy lot, too! Your energetic activities throughout the day, starting with 'wake and shake' and involving lots of other physical and sporting activities, keep your bodies fit and minds alert.

In my report, I have pointed out two main ways in which the school can get even better. Firstly, standards in mathematics had been below average for a number of years and, whilst there have been improvements, there are still some areas to work on, especially in calculations. You can help here by continuing to work with enthusiasm on your maths. Secondly, I have asked teachers to give you more opportunities to use computers when you feel it would help you, and to use them in a range of subjects.

I wish you every success for the future.

Ian Hodgkinson
Lead Inspector