

# Stow Heath Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104324
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	355560
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Walsh

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carl Bucknall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynnette Holden-Gough
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Hill Road Portobello, Willenhall WV13 3TT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 26 lessons or parts of lessons and saw 11 teachers teach. Meetings were held with the headteachers who are supporting the school as well the acting headteacher, other staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its development plans, the records of pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work in English and mathematics. They scrutinised 53 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

Are pupils making enough progress in English and mathematics?

- Is teaching of sufficient quality to accelerate pupils' progress?
- What is the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils who find learning challenging, and what impact is it having on their progress?
- Does the school have sufficient capacity to improve within its own management team?

## Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals is well above average. The majority of pupils are White British but a wide range of other ethnicities are represented. A significant number come from an Indian heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, and an above average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2010. The substantive headteacher has recently resigned after being absent since Christmas 2010, and the deputy headteacher is now the acting headteacher. Currently the school is being supported by the local authority and two headteachers of local schools who are National and Local Leaders of Education. Pupils are taught English and mathematics in classes that are set by ability.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics, the quality of teaching, and the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

By the time pupils leave Year 6, attainment is too low because their progress is inadequate. It has improved recently, especially in writing, because the school has focused closely on improving writing skills. Opportunities to write at length have improved in many classes, although these opportunities are not consistently available for all pupils. Pupils' spelling is not always accurate and there are weaknesses in the way they construct their sentences. New leaders quickly recognised that weaknesses in the curriculum resulted in gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics. The curriculum is now much improved, but pupils' calculation skills, their understanding of fractions and their ability to solve problems are still underdeveloped. Pupils' future economic well-being is inadequate because they are not developing their basic skills well enough.

The quality of teaching is improving and the lessons observed during the inspection were mainly satisfactory, with pockets of good teaching. However, it is still not good enough to boost pupils' progress and, as a result, the gap between pupils' attainment and the national average is not closing quickly enough. In the weaker lessons teachers are not sufficiently clear about what pupils are expected to learn, and the work set is not always closely matched to pupils' needs. Teachers do not always make sufficient checks on learning in lessons, and are therefore, not able to take prompt action to address misconceptions. Teachers' marking has improved, but it still does not consistently provide pupils with sufficiently clear information about how to improve their work. The use of academic targets has been introduced, but not all teachers refer to them in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making inadequate progress because they are not being effectively supported. Not enough good-quality programmes are designed to help these pupils catch up. Additionally, teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed and do not always have sufficient knowledge of pupils' individual needs. Pupils who find learning hard do not always have enough access to practical resources to aid their understanding in lessons.

The school does have some strengths. Substantial improvements have been made recently to the environment and the school is a warm and welcoming place where pupils feel safe and secure. Behaviour has improved because the acting headteacher has implemented a behaviour policy that teachers consistently apply. Pupils attend school more regularly

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because their attendance is carefully monitored and good attendance is rewarded. There is a strong emphasis on keeping healthy and pupils particularly enjoy their involvement with sport.

The support from the local authority and the extra help from the headteachers from other local schools have been pivotal in securing rapid improvements, but the acting headteacher has also made a substantial contribution. Self-evaluation is rigorous and pinpoints exactly where the school needs to improve, and together with effective development planning, it has been instrumental in moving the school on. The skills of middle leaders have improved and important improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and care, guidance and support. This has accelerated pupils' progress and improved their personal development. The steadfast determination of the governing body and staff to bring about improvement, together with the decisive actions taken by new leaders and managers, underpin the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Close remaining gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics by:
  - improving the accuracy of pupils' spelling and the way they construct sentences
  - ensuring that all pupils get ample opportunities to write at length
  - developing pupils' calculation skills, understanding of fractions and ability to solve problems.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by:
  - ensuring that both teachers and pupils understand precisely what pupils are expected to learn in lessons
  - improving the match of work to pupils' needs so that learning is extended for all pupils
  - making frequent checks on pupils' learning, both during and at the end of lessons, so that misunderstandings can be promptly addressed
  - ensuring that marking and target-setting are used more effectively so that pupils always know how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who find learning hard by:
  - improving the quality and range of additional programmes that focus on boosting progress
  - using resources more effectively to support learning
  - improving the way that staff are deployed
  - developing the skills of teaching assistants so that they have a greater awareness of pupils' individual needs.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

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When pupils enter Year 3 their attainment is usually below average, although it has recently improved. Pupils do not all make the progress they should and historically, boys, pupils from Indian heritages, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils who find learning challenging have made the slowest progress. The progress of pupils of Indian heritage has improved significantly over the last year and the majority of these pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Many of the lower sets are made up mainly of boys, and during the inspection they did not always have access to sufficient high-quality teaching. Boys were not always eager to answer the teacher's questions, although they were always well behaved. When the lesson was exciting and expectations were high, for example during a Year 6 lesson about Macbeth, boys were extremely well motivated, including those who find learning challenging. They were able to fully understand the driving force behind the actions of Lady Macbeth and the way that Macbeth was troubled by his conscience, and were keen to record their thoughts.

Pupils' work is almost always neat and well presented. Pupils' skills in reading and the quality of the content of their writing have improved because the school has employed a more structured approach to teaching reading and writing. However, some pupils continue to struggle with spelling, punctuation and grammar. Progress in mathematics is also accelerating, but at a slower rate than writing because many pupils have weaknesses in very basic calculation skills that make it difficult for them to develop a good understanding of the manipulation of fractions or how to solve problems.

Although pupils consistently behave well in lessons and around school, they are not always excited about learning. Since the new behaviour policy has been implemented, behaviour has improved and pupils also say that they feel safer in school. They always have someone to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils know what they need to do to keep healthy and are particularly enthusiastic about sport. There are now more opportunities to contribute to the school community and pupils are responding well. Some are training to be peer councillors and others are eager to help children in the infant school to learn to read. When pupils are encouraged to develop spirituality they react well. For example, Year 4 pupils produced some very evocative writing after being asked to use all their senses to develop an appreciation of the outdoors. Most pupils can work well in teams and have a good awareness of right and wrong. Pupils' cultural awareness is relatively weak because they have a fairly narrow range of experiences to develop this aspect of learning.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

There are some exciting lessons where learning moves on at a good pace. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and encouraging, and this contributes to the effective management of behaviour in the classroom. Teachers sometimes vary the level of support for pupils in line with their needs, but their expectations of outcomes for pupils of different abilities within an ability set or class are often very similar. In particular, the expectations of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who find learning hard are, at times, too low. Consequently these pupils make slow progress and sometimes work at a very low level, particularly in mathematics. Teaching assistants' contribution to the progress of pupils is inconsistent because they are not always deployed to the classes where there is the most need, and their level of expertise is variable. There are not enough high-quality resources to support learning, particularly those that are necessary to illustrate mathematical concepts.

Prompt action has been taken to ensure that the curriculum now provides pupils with their full National Curriculum entitlement, and more is being done to make certain that progression is built in. However, some lessons still lack excitement and the school is aware that the curriculum does not always fully reflect pupils' interests. There are more opportunities for pupils to write at length but sometimes, pupils who find learning hard complete worksheets in English lessons and do not always have enough other opportunities to practise independent writing. Pupils enjoy the good range of extra-

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curricular activities. During the inspection many pupils were enjoying Street Dance and Art Club.

Pastoral care is generally effective in supporting pupils' personal development. Strategies designed to improve attendance rates have been implemented well and attendance rates have improved significantly. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and other potentially vulnerable pupils is improving because their additional needs are being more effectively identified. However, not enough is done to meet these additional needs. The school has very few specific programmes available that have been designed to meet the requirements of these pupils, and teaching assistants are not always fully aware of how to meet pupils' specific needs because they have not had sufficient training.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has improved the way that information about pupils' progress is collected, analysed and shared with the governing body and staff. Consequently, they all recognise that pupils' progress is too slow and that attainment is too low. They share the ambitious vision of the senior leaders and are determined to create a climate that drives improvement. Several teachers have attended an 'improving teaching' course at a local school. This has had a positive impact on the quality of their teaching, and pupils are already progressing at a faster rate than before. Governance is satisfactory. Governors' skills are now matched more effectively to their roles on the governing body and they are better informed about the school's work. As a result, they are able to challenge the school more effectively. For example, they have asked important questions about the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Middle leaders feel empowered by the new management team and are now able to have a greater impact on their subject areas. They are very familiar with data and make regular checks on pupils' progress. However, their involvement in the direct monitoring of lessons is less well developed. The school gathers good-quality information about the performance of different groups of pupils, but there are wide variations in outcomes. Therefore, the effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunities is inadequate.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. The school ensures that pupils are kept safe in school on a day-to-day basis, but many of its policies and procedures are not well established. The school has a good understanding of its local context but its work to promote community cohesion beyond the local area is more limited.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was fairly low, but most are satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. They recognised that recent improvements had been made and said that staff were approachable. A small number were rightly concerned about provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the inspection team have asked the school to improve this area of its work. Other concerns were about communication and the school has tried to improve this. For example, it is now sending out more regular newsletters.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stow Heath Junior 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 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 272 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	38	27	51	4	8	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	25	47	27	51	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	30	31	58	5	9	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	34	30	57	4	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	34	30	57	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	36	25	47	7	13	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	34	34	64	1	2	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)	15	28	31	58	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	32	31	58	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	34	27	51	5	9	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	28	30	57	5	9	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	14	26	32	60	4	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	40	25	47	4	8	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



31 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Stow Heath Junior School, Willenhall, WV13 3TT**

Thank you for being so friendly when my colleagues and I visited your school. We felt very welcome. Although your school is not currently providing you with a satisfactory standard of education, and has been given a 'notice to improve', the situation is improving. You told us that behaviour is getting better and that you feel safe at school. We noticed that you really enjoy sport.

By the end of Year 6, your attainment is too low because you are not making enough progress in some classes. Your writing is improving, although some of you find spelling and constructing sentences hard and not everyone gets the opportunity to produce long pieces of writing. Your progress in mathematics is also improving, but not at such a good rate. This is because many of you struggle with basic sums and this makes it hard for you to do more complicated work like calculating fractions and solving problems. Although your teachers work hard, some of the teaching in your school is not good enough. Teachers are not always clear about what you are expected to learn in lessons. The work set for you is sometimes too hard, and sometimes too easy. We have asked your teachers to improve this and the way that they make checks on your learning in lessons. We noticed that teachers do not always tell you how to improve your work. We are concerned that those of you who find learning hard are not making enough progress because you are not receiving enough support. We have asked the school to find better ways of helping you, including making better use of teaching assistants and ensuring that these staff always know exactly what they need to do to help you.

School leaders and all the staff are working hard to make your school a better place. Inspectors will come back soon to check that your school is continuing to improve. We were very pleased to see that some of you are now coming to school more regularly, well done! We hope you keep this up.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh

Lead inspector

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