

Stockcross Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110017
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	378035
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gavin Jones
Headteacher	Florence Rostron
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2006
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rob Crompton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 15 lessons or part-lessons and observed five teachers. He held meetings with members of the governing body and staff, and talked with pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and observed the school's work. He looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. The inspector examined the responses to questionnaires from 70 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

The school serves a rural community and is smaller than average. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage and none speaks English as an additional language. Far fewer pupils than average are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average; most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class in which some Year 1 pupils work regularly. The rest of the school comprises three mixed-age classes: Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Senior staff have changed since the previous inspection. An executive headteacher was appointed in September 2011. She leads two schools, spending half the week in each. A deputy headteacher has been seconded for this academic year pending the appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy an outstanding curriculum, including excellent attention to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has led to their outstanding behaviour and attention to safety. The school is not outstanding overall because teaching is not leading to outstanding achievement.
- All groups of pupils achieve well. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop a love of learning and make particularly good progress in acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills. Although attainment by the end of Year 6 varies from year to year because of the small numbers, it is generally above average.
- Good teaching has led to pupils' good achievement. There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils. Teachers set tasks to challenge all groups and successfully motivate pupils to do their best. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows because lesson introductions are overlong, leaving too little time for pupils to work independently or to benefit from the support of the skilled teaching assistants. Activities in the outside area for Reception children do not always cover a wide enough range of learning.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and highly positive attitudes to their school and work contribute significantly to their learning. They enjoy a very safe and nurturing environment. Their response to the school's very strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in their self-confidence and the ethos of mutual respect.
- Effective leadership is driving improvements well. Staff changes have been managed successfully and have not disrupted learning. Teaching is monitored very closely; this and regular checks on staff performance and training have consolidated quality in an already good school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise teaching and achievement to outstanding by:
 - ensuring lessons are structured to allow more time for pupils to tackle individual work, and reducing the time spent on introductions to the whole class
 - deploying teaching assistants more effectively during lesson introductions and summaries
 - increasing the purpose and range of outside activities planned for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are happy in the knowledge that their children achieve well. Working and playing alongside the older pupils in Year 1, Reception children soon settle and develop good social skills. Through a systematic teaching programme, they quickly learn the sounds letters make and increasingly blend sounds when reading new words. They enter the school with abilities that are usually in line with expectation for their age. Attainment by the end of Reception varies from year to year due to the different characteristics of each cohort, but it is usually above average. Children currently in Reception communicate well and read unfamiliar words with increasing confidence

Pupils build effectively on this secure start and progress well through Years 1 and 2, generally reaching above average levels of attainment. Standards in reading at the end of Year 2 are above average. Some pupils have made exceptional gains in reading over the past few months, in response to focused improvement strategies in teaching. Key Stage 1 pupils' confidence in reading is increasingly evident in their written work. This example typifies pupils' writing: 'We crept into the conservation area and I could smell the kingfisher pond and... guess what...' By the end of Year 6, levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are generally above average. Pupils' reading skills are particularly well developed. This was evident from Year 6 pupils' insightful comments during their study of *Kensuke's Kingdom* by Michael Murpurgo. Pupils' understanding of the author's use of language and their skill in creative writing was evident in their own alternative endings to the story. One wrote, 'How boring it would be to fish alone, hunt alone, paint alone. I couldn't bear the thought of it.'

Work in pupils' mathematics books indicates good levels of attainment across a wide range of topics. Pupils use their secure basic number skills to solve problems, investigate the properties of three-dimensional shapes, and construct and interpret bar charts. Pupils make the best progress in mathematics. Some Year 5 pupils are already competent using fractions, percentages and decimals, and ratio and proportion, and are working at levels at least two years ahead of expectation.

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Pupils use their well-developed literacy, numeracy and computer skills confidently in other subjects, including science. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and those who lack confidence in communication and language, generally make good progress due to the very effective support they receive. They benefit from skilled help from teaching assistants, who support individuals and small groups in class or in well-focused withdrawal sessions.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers feel their children are taught well, and this view is well founded. Lively teaching promotes good learning in Reception. Flexible grouping is of mutual benefit because tasks are set according to pupils' level of development, not simply their age. Children enjoy the effective daily phonics (letters and sounds) sessions across Reception and Years 1 and 2, reading to teachers and to their parents or carers, and showing their teacher the written comments made by their parents or carers in their home/school booklets. Prompts for language and number work are displayed prominently in the Reception classroom, but are not so evident in the spacious outdoor area. Some resources are set up outside to promote children's imaginative play and creative development but planning does not provide explicit guidance about how adults might promote independent learning outdoors.

Teachers across the school interpret the flexible curriculum imaginatively and use it to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully. For example, pupils in the Year 1/2 class reflect regularly on how they feel and put a peg on the appropriate descriptor, such as 'excited', 'confused' and 'proud'. Pupils' social development is encouraged through many cooperative activities. During a lesson on habitats, Reception and Years 1 and 2 pupils worked in groups to find out information and then became 'experts' when questioned by their classmates about animals living, for example, underground, in rain forests and in polar regions.

Through their dialogue and marking, teachers ensure pupils are aware of what they are good at and how they can improve. They are skilful in providing tasks to meet the various needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes. All groups made good progress in persuasive writing during a Year 3/4 lesson, for example. While the teaching assistant supported a small group, including pupils with moderate learning difficulties, the teacher effectively elicited the ideas of the more able, drawing on their understanding of how they might elaborate, use rhetorical questions and exaggeration when persuading their parents and carers to increase their pocket money.

In the most effective lessons, introductions are as brief as possible. This approach was exemplified in the Year 5/6 class. During a mathematics lesson, for example, the more-able pupils set to work immediately, rising to the challenge of solving problems involving complex calculations and large numbers. Simultaneously, other groups worked on tasks well matched to their different abilities. In a few lessons, overlong introductory sessions meant that pupils unnecessarily went over old ground and

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some found explanations difficult to follow, leaving too little time for pupils to work on individual tasks.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers feel their children behave well and are kept extremely safe, and these views were supported by inspection evidence. In lessons and around the school, pupils are extremely well behaved and courteous. Pupils talked knowledgeably about different types of bullying, for example cyberbullying and deliberate, hurtful teasing. They are well aware of the difference between minor squabbles and bullying but feel that some parents and carers are not so clear about this distinction. They reported that bullying of any kind is extremely rare and they are confident that it would be nipped in the bud by their teachers, should it occur.

Pupils were keen to talk about the school's family atmosphere and how they look out for one another. During assemblies, pupils readily showed their appreciation of their schoolmates by spontaneously applauding their achievements. Pupils' high level of attendance reflects their enjoyment of school and their enthusiasm for learning. Consistent care from staff means pupils feel very safe. They behave extremely well even when not closely supervised and value the opportunities to spend quiet time in the area set aside for this purpose.

Leadership and management

The temporary leadership team is working very effectively with members of the governing body and all have ensured the uninterrupted, smooth continuation of pupils' good progress and achievement. Parents and carers were keen to acknowledge that the school is moving forward quickly. The headteacher provides excellent guidance and the deputy headteacher provides an outstanding role model in her teaching. The quality of teaching and the curriculum have improved, with impact evident in pupils' improved rates of learning and personal skills. The renewed emphasis on reading, including further training for staff, has led to much quicker progress. All staff feel valued and supported, and parents and carers welcome the closer partnership between home and school.

The excellent curriculum interests and engages pupils, and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Staff successfully broaden pupils' horizons through topics, assemblies, visits and other activities which incorporate learning about different cultures, faiths and lifestyles. Specialist teaching in art, music and sport contributes to the rich, stimulating and challenging activities they enjoy, and complement pupils' classroom experiences. Pupils were eager to show their art work, including their paintings in the style of Andy Warhol. They were keen to perform with the choir and the school band, and proud to show the numerous sporting trophies they had won. They judged the balance between the core subjects and other activities was 'just right'. Pupils were looking forward with great anticipation to 'family learning week' when pupils of all ages, together with their parents and carers, take part in art, music and drama activities with a global

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dimension.

School leaders and members of the governing body are committed to including all pupils equally and eliminating discrimination. This is shown by the range of well-implemented anti-discrimination policies that ensure all pupils are included in all the school offers, resulting in good progress made by all groups of pupils. Safeguarding procedures are well established and implemented highly effectively. The introduction of meticulous assessment procedures has meant that leaders have an accurate view of every pupil's progress. Any trends or anomalies are quickly spotted and fed into the school's well-founded development planning. The school's success in continuing pupils' good achievement despite staffing changes, and the positive impact of recent initiatives to accelerate reading progress, indicates strong capacity for sustaining improvement. The governing body supports the school well and is taking all possible steps to secure permanent staffing.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Stockcross Voluntary Aided CE Primary School, Newbury
RG20 8LD**

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school last week. I enjoyed hearing all about what you were doing. You go to a good school where you achieve well and reach above average standards.

You said learning was fun and I saw this for myself when I visited your lessons. You told me how much you enjoy all the extra activities. This was obvious from the way you took part with such great enthusiasm in the 'one mile for Sport Relief', sang, with such gusto, excerpts from your recent concert, and played so well in the school band. I noticed that your behaviour is excellent and how well you get on with one another and all the adults. You look out for each other and everybody feels safe. It was good to hear that bullying is extremely rare.

Adults keep a close eye on how you are getting on and make sure that each one of you makes good progress. They are quick to notice when someone falls behind and go to great lengths to help them improve. You settle down to work really well but sometimes, the teachers' introductions to lessons are a bit too long. This means that you are not able to get started on your work quickly enough, so I have suggested that in more lessons you could get cracking straight away. Those of you in the Reception class settle in very well and are very keen to learn. There are plenty of activities to do in the classroom and I have suggested that there could be more things outside to help children learn.

Thank you again for making me so welcome and telling me about your school. You can help make your school even better by continuing to work hard, and carrying on being cheerful, friendly and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton
Lead inspector

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