

Stelling Minnis Church of England Primary School

Bossingham Road, Stelling Minnis, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6DU

Inspection dates 13–14 December, 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in all parts of the school.
- Most teachers ask questions that challenge pupils to think hard, and they make sure that work is matched well to what pupils can do.
- Teachers and teaching assistants offer good care and support to pupils who are disabled and have special educational needs so they are able to take part in everything.
- The feedback given to pupils is good. Marking is detailed and pupils respond to comments made by teachers so they improve their work.
- Pupils attend school regularly and enjoy all sorts of different activities. The friendly atmosphere develops pupils' confidence.
- Pupils behave well and they are polite.
- Leaders respond quickly when they find anything that the school could do better.
- They have improved all the areas identified in the last inspection. Pupils are now good at writing long pieces of work and know lots about other cultures.
- The headteacher, with the effective support of governors, makes thorough checks on teaching, and as a result teaching is good and pupils achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply what they have learnt to real life experiences.
- Some pupils, especially the less able, have weaker reading skills because they are not confident in blending and decoding sounds.
- A few lessons move at a slow pace and occasionally teachers do not check that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving to more challenging concepts.
- Teachers in charge of subjects do not always follow-up advice they give to teachers about what pupils need to learn.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. There was also a short visit to a session about how letter sounds are blended together (phonics) for Reception children and Year 1 pupils.
- Meetings were held with the local authority's senior improvement partner and three members of the governing body, including a parent governor, and staff.
- The inspector considered parents' views of the school through discussions and the 33 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also interviewed many pupils at lunchtime to get their views about the school, observed pupils' behaviour around the school and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector examined a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress and monitoring documentation, and looked at pupils' work, behaviour records and attendance figures.

Inspection team

Janice Williams, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is located in a small rural village and is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There are substantially more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, extra funding provided to schools by the government, is very low. As numbers are so low, no judgements are made about their progress in the report.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- A comparatively high proportion of pupils either leaves or joins the school at different points during the school year.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is a strategic partner to a 'teaching school', offering expertise in science and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- None of the school's pupils are taught in other schools or units.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that lessons move at a consistently brisk pace
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their learning to real-life situations
 - checking that pupils' knowledge is secure before challenging pupils to apply their learning.
- Improve lower attaining pupils' ability to identify and blend letter sounds.
- Improve the checks made by subject leaders on how well teachers are filling in any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Although class sizes and abilities differ on a yearly basis in this small school, pupils' attainment by the time pupils leave is usually higher than the national average.
- Children often enter Reception with skills that are below expectations for their age in communication and language skills, and in their understanding of number, shape and measuring. Progress is good throughout Reception and overall in Key Stage 1.
- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is usually average, including in reading, but the summer 2012 national survey of how well Year 1 pupils can link letters and sounds showed some weaknesses in what is now the current Year 2.
- Progress continues to be good through Key Stage 2. A strong focus on pupils writing extended pieces of work and on problem solving activities in mathematics have boosted the attainment of higher ability pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress like their peers. They receive effective support so they can take part in lessons where there is a wide range of abilities.
- Pupils who join the school at different points during the school year settle quickly, and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Average ability and more able pupils read with confidence and say they read regularly at home, but less able pupils do not all confidently use the skills of blending and decoding sounds to assist them when reading.
- In most classes, boys and girls make similar progress and there is no significant difference in the progress of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most lessons are carefully planned to make sure pupils of different abilities get work that is at the right level for them. As a result, pupils of all abilities make good progress. Most teachers ask questions that challenge pupils to reflect.
- The quality of marking has been improved since the last inspection. Pupils' books are marked regularly and teachers provide 'response time' for pupils to read their comments and respond. In some cases, the teacher also marks the response. This is particularly effective as it encourages pupils to do their best and aspire to do even better.
- Reading is taught very well in Reception. In a Reception lesson, the teacher extended children's reading skills by using the blending of sounds to develop their vocabulary. The children eagerly read questions relating to their story and applied their knowledge of the meaning of words discussed earlier to answer the questions. However, test results show that last year some pupils lost ground in Year 1.
- Pupils are usually encouraged to be independent (work without the teacher's direct attention). For example, in a good Years 3 and 4 science lesson on the weather, pupils were challenged to be independent in their selection of materials to put the ice cubes in. Pupils selected a range of materials from a box, plastic, clinging film and foil paper. As a result they had to think clearly about what they were trying to test and why.
- The same lesson provided examples of good use of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils had to measure the ice cubes at different intervals and some pupils had to plot their results on graph paper. The other pupils used a spreadsheet accurately to record the temperature at every interval and to create graphs that best displayed the results.
- In the Years 3 and 4 class, pupils are given regular opportunities to apply what they have learnt

to real life experiences, but this is not so effective in other classes. Although the school's focus on problem solving does help, sometimes the topic involved differs from the focus during the week, and pupils can find making the leap too difficult, even in Year 6.

- In some lessons, the pace of learning slows because the activities or tasks are allowed to go on too long, and a few pupils lose interest.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In lessons, pupils' behaviour is mostly good; there is also some exemplary behaviour around the school and in assembly.
- When the pace in lessons is brisk, pupils' behaviour is good. Very occasionally, when they have not been fully engaged, pupils can get a bit noisy or are slow to follow instructions to gather on the carpet.
- In assembly everyone is involved, and pupils listen intently to the headteacher, sing heartily and willingly pray in front of their peers.
- Around the school, pupils are respectful and kind. They describe the school as 'friendly' and at lunchtime, they relate well to adults and peers. Pupils enjoy the school's breakfast club because it is 'fun' and they get to play with their friends.
- Pupils and parents all praise the many musical instruments and classes that pupils receive, and pupils proudly list the various roles and responsibilities that they have in the school. These include acting as water bottle monitors, eco-warriors, art monitors and 'walking bug' monitors.
- There are weekly rewards for good behaviour and teachers and teaching assistants nominate children for them. Pupils are also encouraged to nominate each other for rewards.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying which they define as a negative action that 'happens more than once'. They say bullying does not happen often and, if it happens, it may be as a result of 'something going on at home'.
- Leaders have worked hard to make pupils and parents aware of internet safety. E-monitors have taught their peers about e-safety awareness and how to keep themselves safe whilst using the internet.
- Pupils, parents interviewed and those who responded to Parent View say pupils are safe at school. When individual pupils show challenging behaviour the school takes good action, such as allocating a dedicated teaching assistant to them.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because leaders know the strengths of the school and its areas for development. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders have taken actions to deal with weaknesses as they are identified.
- Leaders have responded to some low attainment in Year 1 reading by investing in online software that teaches letter and sounds through games and activities. Reception and Year 1 pupils have daily letter and sounds practice. The special educational needs coordinator now offers small group support in letters, sounds and literacy. The headteacher has plans in place to extend this to Key Stage 2 pupils where needed.
- The headteacher and governors have thoroughly monitored the quality of teaching in the school. A target related to pupils' progress is given to teachers as part of their performance management so they are held to account for how good it is. There are also pupil progress meetings with teachers to ensure pupils achieve or surpass their targets in the shorter term.
- Subject leaders make detailed analyses of pupils' performance on examination questions and share this information with teachers, but do not always follow up to check teachers' plans to see whether any gaps in knowledge are filled. The headteacher has worked closely with the local authority to confirm the school's judgements about quality of teaching in the school and to

identify areas for improvement.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is a strength in this small school. Pupils have opportunities to pray and consider moral questions in collective worship. The school also has a religious education focus week. As a result, pupils are reflective and caring towards each other. During the last inspection, pupils' awareness of different cultures was an area for improvement. Pupils are now both tolerant of, and knowledgeable about, different cultures. In summer 2012 the whole school learned Bollywood and Classical Indian dancing, and learned to play Gamelan instruments.
 - The pupil premium funding is used effectively to assist in additional support programmes for Years 3 and 4 pupils.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained, very supportive of the school's work and challenge leaders about pupils' progress. They have regular meetings with subject leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of what is taught and do short lesson visits to examine pupils' attitudes. They are aware of how the school compares to other schools. They carry out health and safety checks, ensure safeguarding requirements are met and use questionnaires to get parents' and pupils' views of the school. Governors make suggestions for improvement and development through contributing to the school improvement plan. They are aware of how the pupil premium funding is used and its effectiveness. They ensure that teachers' pay and promotion are linked to their effectiveness.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118681
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403357

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Fieldwick
Headteacher	John Gray
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
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