

Stoke Community School

Allhallows Road, Rochester, Kent, ME3 9SL

Inspection dates

26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Some pupils are absent from school for too many days each year.
- Staff now take stronger action to improve pupils' attendance. There are some signs of improvement, but there is more to be done to make sure that all pupils attend regularly.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' progress is good overall and the proportions making more than expected progress are higher than those found nationally.
- Teaching is good because pupils get the help they need to make good progress. This includes considerable extra support to help pupils make rapid progress if they are absent or when others struggle to keep up with their classmates. Sometimes staff are over generous in their praise and support, which limits pupils' opportunities to have a deeper understanding of learning and to show what the pupils can do as independently as possible.
- Pupils' behaviour, especially their attitudes to learning and to one another, is good and has improved rapidly as a result of changes in the way that behaviour is managed.
- Pupils take pride in their work. Displays around the school are vibrant and are a real celebration of pupils' achievements.
- Leadership and management are good because changes made over the past 18 months to the curriculum, teaching and behaviour management have rapidly improved pupils' attainment and raised staff's confidence to make further improvement. The structured approach to the curriculum has served well to improve teaching and pupils' learning and leaders are aware that this approach needs to be revisited to ensure the best use of curriculum time to cover a full range of subjects and skills.
- Staff at all levels of responsibility, in tandem with the governing body, are steadfast in their determination to make sure that pupils achieve well. They work very well as a team.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching by teachers and support staff in each of the five classes at least once. Parts of nine lessons were observed, three jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, met with the inspector. In addition to meetings with the headteacher, meetings also took place with the four other members of the leadership team, two groups of teachers and non-teaching staff, the coordinator for special educational needs and the member of staff working on improving attendance. There was a meeting with the school's adviser from the local authority.
- The inspector met formally and informally with pupils and considered the 16 on-line responses on Parent View.
- Pupils' past and current work was scrutinised alongside the school's tracking of their progress and attainment.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of checks on staff, attendance information, records of meetings and leaders' evaluations of teaching, the curriculum and overall performance.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Heather Yaxley, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- In April 2013, the Department for Education agreed to change the school's registration to allow for children to be admitted from the age of three rather than four years of age. This means that the pre-school provision, currently registered and inspected separately, will become part of the Early Years Foundation Stage from September 2013.
- Most pupils have White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for just over a third of its pupils, slightly more than the national figure. This funding is additional money from the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in care of the local authority and those from families in the armed services.
- Eleven pupils are identified for school action or school action plus support for their special educational needs, and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. This is in line with the proportions found nationally.
- The government's current floor standard for pupils' achievements at the end of Year 6 was met in 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the rate of attendance for each pupil is at least in line with the national average.
- Maximise opportunities for pupils to make at least good progress in each lesson by:
 - allowing pupils enough time to develop resilience when approaching challenging tasks, to take risks when trying things out and to use any mistakes or misunderstandings to extend their thinking
 - making sure that adults do not give help before it is really needed to pupils of all abilities, and that their support is clearly linked to assessing what pupils can do and the things that they still struggle with.
- Make sure that the whole curriculum is highly effective in achieving at least good progress for pupils by:
 - reviewing the programmes of study for literacy to make sure that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced for all year groups
 - checking that the curriculum as a whole provides a full range of knowledge, skills and understanding
 - developing subject leadership so that leaders check, assess and analyse how well pupils achieve in their subject and then successfully address any weaknesses, especially (but not exclusively) for science, information and communication technology and pupils' personal development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Good progress from their individual starting points is now the norm for the majority of pupils, regardless of age, ability or vulnerability. This was not the case after the previous inspection but is now because of high expectations, a revised curriculum and good teaching.
- Widespread underachievement in 2011 has been eradicated and most pupils now attain standards that are in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This is sometimes from low levels of skill when children join the Reception class.
- Pupils with special educational needs, those who struggle to read and spell, those with low levels of attendance and those who are supported through pupil premium funding get extra attention to make sure that the gaps in their learning are tackled in small groups or individually, often in addition to whole-class teaching. Their achievements and confidence have improved and these groups make the same amount of progress as other pupils. For example, pupils who did not reach the national standard in the Year 1 check on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) last year have good opportunities to catch up and keep up with their classmates, and are confident readers.
- Pupils have consolidated good skills to sound out words and blend sounds together, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They benefit from a systematic programme, which they really enjoy, and put the skills that they learn into practice with confidence and independence. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading and appreciate the wide selection of books that are now available.
- Pupils see themselves as competent writers. Work in books and on display shows good progress in content and presentation. Pupils particularly enjoy the weeks when they focus on writing and like to see their work on display.
- Assessments in subjects other than literacy and mathematics are not available in enough detail to show how well pupils achieve in a range of subjects, for example in science, information and communication technology, and personal, social and health education. This is partly because, quite rightly, the focus has been on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, and also linked to the developing roles and responsibilities of subject leaders.

The quality of teaching is good

- Rapid improvement in the quality of teaching links specifically to actions taken to improve reading, writing, spelling and behaviour. Actions taken have successfully improved pupils' skills in each of these things, so that their progress over the past two years is good.
- Pupils are keen to get involved, attentive and interested in what is on offer because activities are based on what interests them and often link well together from one day to the next. For example, Maple Class pupils were very excited to find that their potions had made their toys come to life and the next day built on what they had learned about measuring litres and millilitres.
- Specific work to develop teachers' marking and get pupils to discuss ideas and questions in pairs is now well established and provides good opportunities for pupils' involvement in learning as well as in social and spiritual development.
- There are times when teachers and support staff misguidedly give pupils too much help and too much praise. Repeating instructions or steering pupils towards achieving the task successfully mean that pupils rarely make mistakes or take risks and prevent them from thinking really deeply for themselves; some have got used to things being done for them. It also reduces opportunities for staff to assess what pupils can do or struggle with.
- Activities are often planned for different groups but not always to provide different strategies or resources to make sure that learning takes place as independently as possible. For example, those whose behaviour needs to be kept in check often have an adult next to them rather than

having a prompt from time to time to keep them on track. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or who lack confidence are often supported by an adult in group work rather than having tasks with clues so that they can get on with the work by themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The one weak area of pupils' personal development is their attendance. Attendance is well below the national average. Some pupils are absent too often, not necessarily for long periods but, nevertheless, they miss the good teaching on offer. A more rigorous approach over the past year is making some difference, but the pattern of poor attendance for too many families is proving very hard to shift.
- Attitudes to learning and behaviour around school are good. The day starts purposefully and proceeds very smoothly because pupils are ready and willing for the start of each lesson.
- Pupils feel involved in changes to the curriculum and teaching because they have been asked about their views and their comments have been taken into consideration. This has helped to improve attitudes to learning and adds to their enjoyment.
- Pupils of all ages are keen to talk about how proud they are of their work and how much better things are in class and at playtimes because the headteacher makes sure that any problems are dealt with quickly.
- Bullying is rare, sanctions for inappropriate behaviour are rare and there have been no exclusions for some time. This is a huge improvement over the past two years because prior to that pupils' behaviour was a significant barrier to their learning, safety on the playground and personal development.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and show in their attitudes and conduct that they are thoughtful about the safety and well-being of others. Pupils of different ages get on well together at playtimes. Older pupils take responsibility to make sure that younger ones are all right. Those who have been at the school since they were in Reception speak warmly about maintaining friendships, even with those who have moved on to other schools.
- Safe use of the internet and mobile phones is particularly well understood and given high profile, with rules displayed next to computers and consequences for breaking the rules made very clear and applied rigorously.

The leadership and management are good

- After the previous inspection, pupils' performance deteriorated. There has been rapid improvement since then because the right things were put in place very swiftly when the current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed.
- The headteacher is well respected by staff, governors and pupils, and sets a very clear direction for improvement. Under his guidance, raising expectations for what pupils can achieve and changes to the curriculum and teaching have led to pupils now making good progress.
- There was very little reliable information on pupils' performance when the headteacher was appointed. Now, detailed tracking of pupils' progress and attainment accurately identifies the areas for improvement and these are set out carefully in a plan that is well understood and appropriately monitored.
- Strategic leadership is appropriately distributed amongst subject leaders and their development is well managed by the headteacher, who provides the support they need to develop their roles and responsibilities.
- Some leaders are more confident than others in taking the lead for their subject, but all have high expectations and are very motivated to play a full part in school improvement. The special educational needs coordinator does not provide specific enough guidance about strategies for individual pupils or information on the most important things that each pupil needs to learn.
- Changes to the curriculum have had the desired effect of giving teachers a structure to plan and

deliver good teaching. Leaders are aware that now is the time to revisit plans and schemes to make sure that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to provide good outcomes for pupils across a full range of subjects that can be sustained long term.

- The systematic approach to teaching reading and spelling has been very effective and quite rightly delivered daily. But, in some classes, it takes up most of the curriculum time for English and sessions do not now need to be as lengthy as they are to deliver this teaching with pace and precision.
- Leadership of teaching, based on high expectations that teachers meet the professional standards, is thorough and effective in raising pupils' achievement.
- The first complete cycle of performance management of staff at all levels of responsibility focused appropriately and successfully on improving writing. Staff are very positive about their performance management, saying that it gives them a clear direction about how they can play their part in improvements.
- Parents who expressed a view raised very few concerns. Communication with parents is good, through weekly newsletters, daily notes between home and school, and plenty of opportunities to speak with staff and attend activities. Parents come into school more often than before.
- Leaders and governors value support from the school's adviser from the local authority to challenge, check and support their judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance, and make good use of this support. For example, the school's adviser arranged a set of Year 6 books from another school to be loaned for a few days so that teachers could see how their pupils' work compared.
- When the governing body raised concerns about the school's performance in 2011, it felt well supported by the local authority and this helped to address the issues successfully. When support for personnel issues was needed more recently, leaders and governors feel that the local authority took too long to respond.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils.
 - Governors with different levels of experience and knowledge of education are confident to pose challenging questions to leaders about the performance of staff and pupils, and have high expectations for the quality of education provided.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and leadership, and take advice and action when they believe that the quality falls short of the high standards they expect.
 - The governing body has a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve and the governors challenge leaders effectively to make this happen.
 - Plans to reorganise the committees so that governors focus even more on teaching and learning are well thought through to sharpen up their challenge to leaders.
 - Appropriate financial management ensures that there is now a balanced budget, that pupil premium funding is spent effectively and that staff are rewarded appropriate to their performance.
 - The governing body has a keen eye on the future, making sure that plans, staffing and resources are fit for what the governors want to achieve.

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	118315
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	401741

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Whittmann
Headteacher	Neil McDonough
Date of previous school inspection	13 Jan 2010
Telephone number	01634 270268
Email address	mcdon049@medway.org.uk

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