

Stoke Community School

Allhallows Road, Lower Stoke, Rochester, Kent ME3 9SL

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Changes to teaching and learning have not yet had sufficient impact. Teaching is not consistently good.
- Some teachers do not use questioning well enough to promote learning in lessons.
- Lessons are not challenging enough for pupils. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- The revised curriculum has not yet had sufficient impact to ensure that pupils are provided with the range of skills they need across the curriculum.
- Rates of progress across key stage 2 are inconsistent. Not enough pupils reach the expected standards for their age in writing and mathematics.
- Rates of progress for the most able pupils are too slow across the curriculum. As a result, not enough pupils attain standards at higher levels.
- The teaching of mathematical reasoning and problem-solving is not sufficiently developed. Mathematics is often too easy for pupils, particularly the most able.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have a high degree of ambition for the school. They know what needs to be done. The changes that they have made are beginning to have an impact.
- Staff and the majority of parents are supportive of the school's leaders. They recognise the positive changes that have taken place.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Pupils attain well in the national phonics screening check.
- Pupils behave well. They are kind and supportive towards each other.
- The support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective.
- Children make good progress in the early years. The well-resourced and exciting environment supports learning across the curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching through:
 - developing the use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking
 - ensuring that expectations are sufficiently high to support good progress across the curriculum especially, but not exclusively, for the most able pupils.
- Raise progress and attainment levels in mathematics in key stage 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since assuming leadership of the school in 2015, the head of school has been tenacious in her drive to raise standards. She has been supported well in this by the executive headteacher. Following a series of staff changes and the introduction of new policies, outcomes are improving, most notably in key stage 1.
- However, leaders and governors recognise that there is still much to be done to raise standards. Since the school was categorised as a coasting school in 2016, trust leaders have worked with the regional schools commissioner to secure effective support for the school. This has helped to develop appropriate improvement plans. These are monitored regularly and meticulously to ensure that initiatives are effective.
- Membership of the trust has strengthened middle leadership. Subject leaders work in groups across the trust, sharing expertise and planning. This has increased capacity to ensure that the curriculum delivers the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils need to prepare them well for the next stage of their education. For example, the recent curriculum review recognised the gaps in scientific and geographical skills in key stage 2, and plans are now in place to develop these.
- Staff value the many training opportunities that they are offered. All staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire felt that the school was led and managed well. Changes are communicated effectively and expectations are clear. One reply to the questionnaire, which was typical of those received, explained, 'Our managers are very considerate and make us all aware of new policies... sharing is encouraged and colleague support is amazing.'
- As a result of this clear communication, policies such as the marking and handwriting policy are consistently applied and have had considerable impact on raising standards across the school.
- Performance management processes are robust. This ensures that teachers are held to account effectively and supports staff in continuing to improve their teaching.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led well. Needs are identified through a rigorous monitoring system and a range of appropriate support is in place. This support is reviewed regularly to check that it is effective. Support staff are well trained and highly skilled. As a result, most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good or better progress from their starting points.
- Additional funding for the small number of disadvantaged pupils and for the sports premium is spent appropriately.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and British values are promoted well through the curriculum and regular assemblies. This adds to the sense of harmony in the school. During the inspection, an assembly developing mutual respect prompted a pupil to reflect, 'If I didn't respect you, you wouldn't be my friend and I wouldn't have any friends.'
- Most of the parents who spoke to the inspector or completed the online questionnaire,

Parent View, would recommend the school. Parents were generally pleased with the progress that their children were making. However, a small number of parents have concerns which they do not feel have been adequately addressed by the trust. The trust is committed to working with parents to ensure that communication channels are developed further. Regular parent forums are in place to enhance communication.

Governance of the school

- Governors form the local advisory committee. The committee has recently been restructured to ensure that a governor has a specific responsibility for each of the four schools they oversee. This has ensured a detailed knowledge of each school, enabling governors to discharge their strategic responsibilities effectively while acknowledging the unique character of the school.
- The local advisory committee and the trust have worked closely to develop detailed schemes of delegation so that responsibilities are understood clearly. This has allowed governors to streamline their work and supported them in effectively holding school leaders to account for improvements.
- Governors use a range of information, including data, to ask searching questions of leaders. They have a full and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors question leaders regularly about the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupil groups.
- Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium and sports premium funding well. They know how it has been spent and ask searching questions of leaders to help evaluate the impact of the spending.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. There are clear procedures in place and staff receive regular training to raise their awareness of risks to pupils. Records show that staff have taken the right actions to help keep pupils safe. Where necessary, leaders provide challenge to other professionals to secure the best outcomes for pupils.
- Recruitment checks on staff are fit for purpose and meet current requirements. Records show that leaders take care when recruiting staff to ensure that they are safe to work with children.
- Safeguarding is at the core of the ethos of the school. All pupils who completed the online survey felt that they were listened to by staff. Pupils who spoke to the inspector were certain that they could report worries to staff and that these would be sorted out.
- Regular curriculum opportunities such as the recent road safety day and e-safety teaching help pupils to develop awareness of how to stay safe both inside and outside school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school and in different subjects. As a result, some pupils are not making as much progress as they could.
- Lessons are not sufficiently challenging for pupils, particularly the most able. Teachers do not consider what pupils can do well enough and sometimes lessons are too easy. This means that the most able pupils in particular do not have enough opportunities to extend their learning. Consequently, some of the most able pupils are not exceeding the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have not had sufficient opportunities to develop their scientific and geographical skills. Scientific conclusions are not supported sufficiently by evidence. There are too few opportunities to apply mathematical skills in measuring and recording. New curriculum plans are in place to address these issues, but it is too soon to see the impact of these changes in pupils' books.
- Mathematical reasoning and multi-step problem-solving in mathematics are not developed sufficiently well. As a result, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their calculation skills. Mathematics is often too easy, especially in key stage 2.
- Where teaching is most effective, it is characterised by teachers matching tasks well to pupils' ability, asking probing questions, modelling high expectations and challenging misconceptions quickly. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson skilful questioning from the teacher helped a pupil to explain that she had described a house as 'beautiful' because it was 'full of friends and family and love'.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This is particularly evident in phonics teaching, where a consistent approach and confident teaching support rapid progress.
- Pupils use technology well to enhance their learning. For example, Year 2 books show use of a digital microscope to allow pupils to look in detail at different seeds and parts of a flower.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and support pupils effectively. In a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, the teaching assistant skilfully supported pupils to develop an understanding of place value. Questions such as, 'How did you work this out?' prompted a pupil to explain, 'I looked at the units, they were the same, but the tens were different.'
- Changes to the English curriculum have provided a wide range of writing opportunities for pupils. In most year groups, vocabulary is extended well and writing books show pupils' clear progress in sentence structure and punctuation. Handwriting has developed particularly well and pupils are rightly proud of the way in which they present their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe around the school. They told the inspector that staff always listen to them and help to sort out problems. Levels of supervision at playtime and in the dining hall are high.
- During lunchtime, the youngest children are well supported to use their cutlery independently. They have a developing awareness of healthy eating choices, telling the inspector that the 'yummy' carrot cake was healthy 'because of the carrots!'
- Pupils relish the opportunities provided to take part in the wider life of the school, such as training to be a play leader or being a prefect. They take their responsibilities, such as ensuring lines of children are 'impeccable', seriously. They especially enjoy the opportunity to award house points.
- There is a wide range of high-quality social and emotional support in place for those pupils who need extra support.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Expectations of behaviour are high. Pupils are polite and respectful. They move safely and sensibly around the school and, as a result, the school is a calm, purposeful place.
- In lessons, pupils listen well to adults and to each other. They are kind to each other and quick to offer each other praise and support. In a Year 5/6 writing lesson, pupils offered positive feedback to each other about handwriting and vocabulary choices.
- On the playground, pupils enjoy socialising and using the grounds and trim trail. Adults are on hand to support play and help resolve minor difficulties on the rare occasions that support is needed.
- Attendance is improving steadily. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils improved to match that of others in 2016.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Current pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is variable. Recent improvements to teaching in key stage 1 have led to an acceleration in progress. However, teaching in key stage 2 has not enabled some pupils to achieve well enough over time.
- Too few pupils attain the expected standards in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. In 2017, provisional results indicate that more pupils attained the expected standard than in 2016, but percentages are still some way below those seen nationally in 2016.
- The most able pupils are not making good enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics in some year groups to reach the higher levels. Provisional results indicate that last year the proportion of pupils exceeding the expectations for their age in key

stage 2 was below the 2016 national average in all areas.

- Pupils' books show that the small number of disadvantaged pupils are making progress from their starting points that is in line with that of other pupils.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points in most year groups.
- In 2017, provisional results show improvement in attainment at both expected and higher levels at key stage 1. Attainment at expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is now in line with or above the national levels in 2016. Attainment at higher levels is now in line with 2016 national levels in writing and mathematics.
- For the last three years, numbers of pupils attaining the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check have risen. In 2016, percentages were in line with those seen nationally. Provisional percentages for 2017 show further improvement to above the 2016 national level.

Early years provision

Good

- During the Reception Year, children make good progress from their starting points. Children start Reception with levels of attainment broadly matching those expected for their age. Levels of attainment have risen so that in 2017 more children than the national average in 2016 left Reception having attained a good level of development.
- The Reception teacher has been working closely with the Nursery team to share training and planning. As a result, children are now coming into the Reception Year with more secure phonics skills.
- The environment is attractive and engaging both inside and out, stimulating curiosity across the curriculum. During the inspection, children in the Reception Year were enjoying outside role play and 'delivering letters' on the bikes and trikes.
- Staff model games for children before encouraging them to adapt and develop the play. For example, the children in Reception Year were playing an adult-led numbers game using the parachute. Children then led the game, effectively developing both their number and social skills.
- The setting meets the needs well of the small number of two-year-olds who attend the Nursery. An appropriately quiet space is provided for young children to rest.
- Observations across the curriculum contribute effectively to the learning journal and next-step planning for each child. The new system allows for parents to share in this process, adding comments and photographs.
- Transition both into early years and into Year 1 is well supported and ensures that children move on happily. Parents who spoke to the inspector were pleased with the information they were given to help support their children at home.
- The needs of the small number of children who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well. Children make good progress from their starting points.
- Adults care for the children in early years well. However, some opportunities to extend children's thinking and encourage oral contributions are missed.

School details

Unique reference number	141553
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10036925

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Simon Carter
Head of school	Eleanor Rees
Telephone number	01634 270268
Website	www.stoke.medway.sch.uk
Email address	office@stokeprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school converted to become an academy in November 2014, when it became part of The Williamson Trust.
- Prior to conversion the school was inspected in June 2013, when the overall effectiveness was judged to be requiring improvement.
- The current head of school took up her post in September 2015. She is supported by an executive headteacher from the trust.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities are broadly in line with those found nationally. Few pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The very large majority of pupils are White British.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2016, the school met the national coasting schools definition. The trust has been working with the regional schools commissioner to secure appropriate additional support.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons in all classes, spoke to pupils, heard them read and looked at work in their exercise books. Observations were conducted jointly with the head of school.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in and around school, during lunchtime, and on the playground.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, a group of pupils, members of the local advisory committee (governors) and the trust.
- Several documents were looked at, including the school's information about pupils' achievement, the school's evaluation of its work, plans for school improvement and records concerning pupils' safety.
- The inspector spoke to parents on the playground and considered five responses, and four free-text responses, to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also considered 16 responses to the staff questionnaire and 47 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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