

Stalyhill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106222
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	287446
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Gosling
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Nuttall
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2002
School address	Stalyhiil Drive Stalybridge Cheshire SK15 2TR
Telephone number	01457 763598
Fax number	01457 764215

Age group	5–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school is situated in an area of mainly private housing in the residential suburb of Stalybridge. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, providing good value for money. Attainment on entry to the school is above national expectations. Good provision in the Foundation Stage enables pupils to establish independent learning skills and confident attitudes to learning right from the start. Good progress is sustained through Key Stage 1, where pupils continue to achieve well, both in their personal development and in learning, so that by the end of Year 2, they achieve high standards overall, and exceptionally high standards in writing. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well provided for and they make very good progress in relation to their needs and abilities. The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in national tests is above average; it is exceptionally high in writing and this reflects the success of the school's drive to promote opportunities for the pupils to develop and practise their writing skills across all subjects. This success is the result of good teaching, a vibrant curriculum and the school's supportive ethos.

Although good levels of performance have been sustained over the past five years, the school has not been complacent. A review in the last school year resulted in an overhaul of the curriculum, aimed at enhancing pupils' interest and enjoyment. This has brought many benefits. Pupils show great enthusiasm for the new topic-based curriculum and enjoy a broad range of exciting learning activities. Good leadership and management at all levels ensure that monitoring is thorough. This is enabling the school to maintain pupils' good levels of achievement while at the same time revitalising the curriculum. Although teachers set clear and appropriate learning targets for them, the pupils themselves don't play a part in this process. Consequently, they are not fully aware of how well they are doing or of their potential to achieve more. Although there is some good practice in how teachers give feedback to pupils through effective marking of their work, this is not consistent across all the classes. Staff commitment to enriching the pupils' learning opportunities has resulted in a valuable programme of additional lunchtime activities. Pupils enjoy the lunchtime clubs and their learning is further enhanced through this participation. The school has the overwhelming endorsement of parents. 'Not only is this a happy school, providing a good education, but it also teaches the children to have respect for others and to be kind and caring.'

School self-evaluation is good and accurate in most respects. However, some very new initiatives introduced during this school year linked to pupils' personal development are at an early stage of implementation. As yet, these are not producing outstanding results, although a good judgement is well deserved by the school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils through checks on adults working in school meet current requirements, but systems are not reviewed as frequently as they might be. This, together with inconsistencies in the academic guidance offered to pupils, accounts for care, guidance and support overall being satisfactory which is not as strong as the school's view.

Since the last inspection, the school's leaders have taken effective steps to bring about improvement, particularly in the quality of the curriculum. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils in agreeing their own learning targets.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking and academic guidance offered to pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment on entry to the Reception class is above the expected levels for that age group. Pupils make good progress and achieve well during the Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. This good progress continues through Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly above national average levels and attainment in writing is exceptionally high. Achievement of higher attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is equally very good from their different starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is fostered well through assemblies and the religious education curriculum. They are fund-raisers for children's charities; they are encouraged to help each other, for example, as Playground Friends; this is helping them to be thoughtful for the needs of others. A school council has recently been established, so pupils can have a voice in decision making. Although it is very new, the school council has already purchased some new equipment for playtimes. Pupils enjoy school and behave well. Their self-esteem is nurtured through good relationships and opportunities to experience and celebrate successful learning. Parents note that their children are 'confident and happy'. Attendance is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of regular exercise and eating healthily. The school has recently begun to work towards the Healthy Schools standard, but pupils have not yet had the opportunity to become actively involved in this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils progress well because skilful teachers and teaching assistants work in partnership, ensuring good levels of support for all the pupils. Happy relationships underpin good learning experiences and help pupils to feel secure and confident.

Planning takes into account the range of pupils' learning needs. Assessment is thorough and progress is tracked systematically, so that potential underachievement is identified and addressed promptly. The good development of independent learning skills in the Foundation Stage stands pupils in good stead through Key Stage 1, where they continue to show confidence and enthusiasm in their learning. On a very few occasions, pupils may become slightly restless when required to sit and listen for too lengthy periods, but most behaviour in lessons is good. Although teachers set learning targets for the pupils, these are not shared with the pupils and this restricts their understanding of the purposes of their activities and what the next steps in learning will be. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well taught and pupils use equipment confidently. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by good individual plans and well-structured interventions and this enables them to make very good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school curriculum is rich and full of interest. Pupils are captivated and excited by the topics and activities offered. Effective links between subjects enable pupils to use their skills and knowledge in a range of learning experiences. An important outcome of this has been an improvement in the quality and standards of writing in all year groups and pupils' assurance and enjoyment in writing is evident. Pupils delight in the themed role play areas that have been introduced into all the classes. Continuous provision of practical activities supports the Reception class curriculum well and has also been rolled out to Year 1. In both years, it is being monitored carefully to ensure the desired impact on children's learning. Outdoor learning is promoted well in the Reception class, with the limited space used to good effect for purposeful, enjoyable learning experiences. A rich programme of educational visits and visitors enhances the curriculum. Parents become involved in children's learning through well-attended curriculum events. Lunchtime clubs offer a good range of subjects, including French, ICT, sign language and Arabic. The school's link with Bradford College supports further links with schools in Europe, adding an international dimension.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school's pastoral provision is effective in supporting pupils' emotional and personal development. The induction arrangements to Reception are good and transition to junior school is supported well by the Buddy scheme. Good attention to their health, safety and welfare ensures children feel secure; one child observed that teachers, 'always help to sort our problems out'. Current requirements for safeguarding children are being met, but systems are not subject to regular review. Although there are examples of good practice, the quality of marking and academic guidance offered to pupils is inconsistent across the school and pupils are not always given advice on how to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well cared for and supported, which their parents appreciate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school knows its strengths and how it wants to develop. The headteacher's courageous decision to remodel the curriculum has brought great benefits in improved interest and enjoyment for the pupils, with evidence of a positive impact on attainment. This initiative has brought staff together in planning and delivering topics and in monitoring their impact. The whole process has had an invigorating effect on school development. Subject leaders have begun to develop effective monitoring, although further work remains to be done in order for systems to become fully effective. Improvements to provision have been complemented by a successful project to refurbish and extend the school building. This has improved the accommodation for the Foundation Stage, enlarging it and making it more 'fit for purpose'. The supportive governing body is developing its capacity to act as a critical friend to the school, although governors are not yet actively involved in the quality assurance process.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Stalyhill Infant School, Stalybridge, SK15 2TR

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed chatting to you very much. We were very pleased to see how happy you all are in school and how much you are enjoying your work.

On our visit we discovered that the children at Stalyhill Infants School are enthusiastic learners and we saw that you are making really good progress in all your activities. We were particularly impressed with your writing, which is exceptionally good. Well done!

Your school is giving you a good standard of education and the staff work very hard to make sure your lessons are interesting and fun. You work hard too, and you concentrate and listen well. These things help children from Stalyhill to reach high standards by the end of Year 2. The staff look after you well and help you feel happy and safe in school. Your attendance is good. We were very impressed by the good range of lunchtime clubs you are able to attend and we could tell that you enjoy these because so many of you take part in them.

To help the school become even better, we have asked your headteacher and your teachers to involve you more in lessons in making sure you know what your targets are and how well you are doing in your work. We have also asked that when teachers mark your work they help you to understand what you need to do next to improve your work further.

Keep on trying your best and being happy learners.

On behalf of the inspectors and with our very best wishes