



Stapleford Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117455
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290842
Inspection dates 2–3 November 2006
Reporting inspector Florence Olajide

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Stapleford, Hertford
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertfordshire SG14 3NB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01992 583341
Number on roll (school)	80	Fax number	01992 901811
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs J Goldsmith
		Headteacher	Mrs R Collins
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	2–3 November 2006	290842

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small Church of England school. It is part of a 'cluster' group with three other local schools. Most pupils are from White British background and all of them speak English as a first language. None of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties and or disabilities is below average. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. A fine balance between attention to pupils' welfare and their achievement ensures that they attain very high standards within a caring environment.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding because the school has very robust systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching to ensure that all pupils make good progress. In particular, systems for checking pupils' progress and for providing them with feedback are excellent in almost all respects. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge and plan motivating lessons based on a deep understanding of each pupil's needs and abilities. As aptly put by a pupil, 'All the teachers really know the pupils'. Teachers regularly involve all pupils in checking how well they are doing and provide them with extremely good guidance on how to improve. Pupils enjoy school tremendously and as one pupil explained, 'Everyone learns really well but we have fun while we are doing it'. This is reflected in pupils' attendance, which is very high.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Although there are significant differences between the very small annual intakes, pupils generally enter the school with standards that are broadly average. As a result of the excellent teaching, they make very good progress through the school. They reach above average standards by Year 2 and, by the end of Year 6, consistently attain standards that are well above average. The school meets and sometimes exceeds the challenging targets it sets for pupils.

The curriculum is outstanding in its richness and in its contribution to pupils' personal development. In addition to promoting academic excellence, it provides pupils with very good opportunities to develop self-esteem, a sense of responsibility and a moral conscience. Consequently, pupils' personal development is also outstanding. Standards and the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the school recognises that its procedures for checking how well pupils are doing in this phase are not as robust as in the rest of the school. As a result, when pupils transfer to Year 1, their teachers do not always have a completely accurate view of their starting point and this slows their progress.

The school promotes high levels of care and actively supports pupils and their families. As one parent explained, 'Everyone is aware of my son's needs and they all care'. It successfully promotes positive links with the wider community and other organisations, and draws on these resources effectively to enhance its provision.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and the new headteacher is moving the school forward effectively. She is well supported by an able group of staff who are highly committed, and take joint responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Governors, who play an active role in the life of the school, challenge and support it very well. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection and provides excellent value for money. It is not complacent, and with its 'can do' attitude, it has excellent capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance procedures for checking pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage to ensure consistency in the judgements made and improve transition to Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve extremely well and standards have remained very high over recent years despite some small variations from year to year. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress and there are no significant differences between the attainment of different groups across the school. The school identified that some higher ability pupils did not achieve as well as might be expected in mathematics in 2005. As a result of the effective action taken, the 2006 provisional results show positive developments in this area. Attainment in writing has also risen over the past few years. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school maximises pupils' achievement through an appropriate focus on a wide range of skills. For example, as a result of the emphasis on swimming, all pupils are able to swim at least 25 metres by the end of Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils are eloquent and self-assured. They behave very well and cooperate effectively with each other. They are highly independent and stay focused on learning with sustained levels of concentration. They actively show concern for each other and for adults; even the youngest pupils offer each other help in tidying up after activities. These attributes reflect the positive relationships throughout the school and the school's fervent focus on promoting the values of friendship and care. Inspirational assemblies develop pupils' spirituality by providing them with opportunities for joyful praise, and quiet prayer and reflection.

Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and an exceptional understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. They are eager to, and do make an excellent contribution to the school community through responsibilities such as mentoring younger pupils, and 'peer mediation' to resolve any problems. They contribute to the wider community through various activities, which include providing gifts for children in Romania and for the elderly at harvest time, and by fund raising for charities. They develop leadership skills by leading the friendship circles to which every child belongs, and which the school uses to promote a sense of family.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting activities with a clear emphasis on what pupils are expected to learn from them. They share these explicitly with the pupils so that, by the end of lessons, pupils clearly understand how well they have achieved. Pupils find this highly motivating, as explained by one of them who felt good about being able to go home and say to her parents, 'Today I learned the correct use of possessive pronouns'. Activities build on and enable pupils to practise and use knowledge and skills learned from different subjects. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) successfully to enhance teaching and learning. Teaching assistants work in effective partnership with teachers and provide pupils with good support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy the outstanding curriculum and its extensive range of enrichment activities, including sports and the performing arts. The curriculum strongly promotes pupils' basic skills and their understanding of different cultures. Pupils have opportunities to participate in sports competitions, and in public performances in dance, music and drama. The carefully planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme successfully develops their understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, and how to be good citizens. Visits, including residential ones, to local and other places support the curriculum. Pupils have very good access to computers and this helps to develop and promote their ICT skills. The school has achieved several awards including the Basic Skills and the Healthy Schools award. These together with attractive displays of pupils' work around the school celebrate their achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has an exceptionally caring ethos and parents are very pleased with the way it tries to meet the needs of their children. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that the adults care about them. Those who are relatively new to the school expressed satisfaction about the way in which the school has helped them to settle in. There are appropriate procedures for checking the suitability of staff and safeguarding pupils' well-being. Despite the need for further attention to the procedures for checking pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage, the quality of the academic guidance provided to pupils is excellent. Teachers monitor and track pupils' progress and set them appropriate targets in English, mathematics, science and PSHE. They mark pupils' work regularly so pupils know how well they are doing on a daily basis. The school provides good support to pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school has a clear though rather modest view of its effectiveness. It uses its self-evaluation systems to extremely good effect. The leadership and management are firmly focused on ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they can. The new headteacher inspires the confidence of pupils, parents and governors. She has already made changes to strengthen the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress. Staff professional development has a high profile and plays an important role in maintaining standards. The school has rigorous procedures for monitoring its work. Staff and governors are fully involved in evaluating the school's effectiveness and identifying priorities for improvement. The school uses the information it gathers effectively to target resources and bring about improvement. It uses its resources efficiently; class sizes are smaller than average but the school maintains a healthy budget. The school achieves this partly through its links with other cluster schools with whom it shares resources and with the local community, which provides significant support with maintaining the school premises. Governors are committed and well informed. They use their professional expertise to support the school well.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

6 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Stapleford Primary School, Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertford, SG14 3NB

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave me when I visited your school. I had a wonderful time talking to you and listening to the very 'grown up' views you had about your school. I promised in our discussion that I would write to you to let you know what I thought of your school.

Your school is outstanding and I was extremely impressed with the way you all care for each other and the high standards that you achieve.

The teaching is excellent and it helps you to make very good progress and do well in your work. You told me you enjoy learning through the interesting activities that your teachers plan. You also enjoy the various clubs, sports, music and other activities and as one of you told me, these are 'really, really, good'. You appreciate the way teachers give you feedback because this helps you to improve. You all know what your targets are and how well you are doing in school. I was impressed with how much you knew about how to stay healthy.

You are all very confident and good at expressing yourselves. You behave very well, work hard and work well together. You are kind and help each other a lot, for example by being peer mediators and mentors to the younger pupils.

The headteacher, staff and governors lead and manage your school extremely well. They are very keen to make sure you all do your very best and they check how well you are doing regularly to make sure this is the case. I am pleased that your parents support them, particularly by making sure that you all come to school regularly.

You are rightly proud of your school and all the awards that you achieve. To make your school even better, I have asked your teachers to improve how they check the work of the youngest pupils to make sure they are doing as well as they can.

I wish you all the best for the future and hope that you continue to do your best to keep your school the special way it is.

Florence Olajide

Lead inspector