



Stoke Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118315
Local Authority Medway
Inspection number 291088
Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Jacqueline Krafft HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Allhallows Road
School category	Community		Lower Stoke
Age range of pupils	4–11		Rochester ME3 9SL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 270268
Number on roll (school)	90	Fax number	01634 270224
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Juliet Wright
		Headteacher	Carolyn Cassettari
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stoke Community is a small, rural school. Most pupils come from the local village and are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have risen and are above average. A larger number of pupils than average join and leave the school each year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stoke Community provides its pupils with a satisfactory education and cares for them well. The school is calm, orderly and attractive so pupils feel safe, enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn. Their personal development and well-being are good. As one parent said, 'All staff are friendly and approachable and my children love the school environment'.

The school has been through a period of many staff changes, with over three quarters of the teachers new to the school in the last year. The headteacher has been in post for almost a year. In that time there has been increased stability and she has developed more consistency in the quality of teaching through careful monitoring and support of staff. Pupils make satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory and has good features. For example, teachers plan tasks that are relevant and engaging so pupils work hard and enjoy being actively involved in their learning. This was endorsed by a pupil, who said, 'every lesson is fun because we can join in.' However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to explain and develop their ideas fully. Pupils have targets for improvement which are shared with their parents but the impact of these on improving standards and achievement is yet to be seen.

Most pupils start school with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. They settle into the school routines quickly and happily because there are effective links with pre-school and parent and toddler groups which prepare them well. Provision has improved and is good so pupils make steady progress, with most reaching the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative skills are not as well developed as other areas. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and reach average standards as they move through the school because the teaching, curriculum and guidance they receive are appropriately matched to their needs. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 vary from year to year. After a period of improvement, they fell in 2006 in Year 2, particularly in writing. Many pupils had recently joined that year group. Results improved in science and English in Year 6 because pupils had more opportunities to develop their writing skills, particularly in other subjects. The improvements were not mirrored in mathematics as the number of pupils who achieved the expected levels fell and targets were missed.

The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate and involves staff and governors. It demonstrates a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas which require improvement. There is a shared vision for the school which is appropriately focused on promoting the pupils' personal development and well-being and raising standards. Subject leaders are monitoring planning and the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations. To ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can, a system for regularly assessing and tracking the progress they make has been introduced. This is in its early stages of development and is not yet providing the school with the precise information needed to identify quickly where pupils are not making the progress they should. Systems to evaluate the impact of the changing needs of pupils and actions taken to raise standards and achievement are not yet developed.

There has been improvement in the areas identified in the previous inspection, particularly in the provision for and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and the management role of the subject leaders in the drive for improvement. There is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve the progress pupils make, particularly in mathematics.
- Use tracking and monitoring information to evaluate the impact of school actions on improving standards and achievement.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and explain their own ideas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. This is because they make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. The school uses assessment information to identify pupils' needs and target appropriate support, and plans a range of relevant, practical tasks to motivate and actively involve all learners. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. The school also uses an appropriate range of support programmes to help pupils catch up if they are falling behind, for example, to develop early reading and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of all pupils are good. Pupils socialise and behave well, are confident and talk happily about their school. As one parent commented, 'Although my child is shy, his confidence has come on... he is happy'.

Relationships in the school are good and pupils treat each other and the staff with respect and courtesy. They are given responsibility to look after each other, including those new to the school, by being 'buddies'. They feel safe, secure and free from bullying. They know what they should do if they are worried about anything and value opportunities in 'circle time' to share their feelings.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know right from wrong, understand other cultures and religions and appreciate art and music. They have a good understanding of the importance of living healthy lifestyles, as shown by the Healthy School Award. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils enjoy making a good contribution to the community by fund raising and giving donations, for example, to the Shoe Box Appeal. They have a keen awareness of environmental issues, recognised in the Eco School Green Flag Award. They are developing appropriate skills for the future in literacy and ICT and the school council members take their responsibility for managing a small budget seriously.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory so pupils make appropriate progress. A strong feature is the calm and purposeful learning environment created, for example, by the playing of well-chosen music as pupils work, good relationships and clear expectations. As a result, pupils are keen to participate in lessons and work well together. Typically, lessons are carefully structured and teachers share the focus with their pupils so that they know what they will be learning. Tasks are relevant and matched to pupils' different needs so pupils are attentive and generally concentrate well. The pace of lessons is suitable but some pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to fully explain or develop their ideas orally and in their written work. This prevents the progress they make from being good. Teaching assistants work well with pupils when working on tasks and with identified groups but they are not always used effectively when the class is working together as a whole.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good features. The effective provision for the pupils' personal, social, health and emotional needs contributes to their good personal development. The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that it builds on what pupils already know and is relevant, and pupils are given appropriate opportunities to have practical experiences, particularly in the Foundation Stage. Effective links have been made with literacy, ICT and art in other subjects, for example, in the history study of Ancient Greece. Pupils say this helps them to learn more. Although plans are in place, these links are not yet established in science and mathematics.

Good use is made of the school environment and the pupils appreciate the good range of clubs on offer. Visiting speakers from the local community, police and the fire and health services are valued by pupils and help to make their learning relevant and interesting.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care the pupils receive is good. Systems to secure the health and safety of pupils are robust and well organised and staff are appropriately trained. Staff know the pupils well and share improvement targets with them and their parents. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also have clear targets, which are reviewed regularly.

There are effective induction arrangements for pupils when they start school and good arrangements to include and support pupils who join the school at other times. Good

use is made of the home-school support worker, other agencies and specialists to ensure pupils and their families get the support they need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The effective headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by senior teachers. Although much is new, they have developed a common sense of purpose which is clearly focused on promoting the personal development and achievement of all pupils. Subject leaders are involved in monitoring learning and teaching and have a clear understanding of where improvements need to be made. Teachers are supported effectively to develop their skills and have an increased knowledge of how to make learning more effective. The use of assessment information to track the progress pupils make and target support is developing but is in its early stages. Self-evaluation is accurate, and involves governors and staff. Governors know the school well and are supportive. They monitor through visits and reports and are appropriately challenging the school to support improvement. School leaders have identified the right priorities within the school development plan and these are suitably focused on raising standards, but procedures for checking the progress of the plan and for evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve standards and achievement are not clear.

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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?	3
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	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school before Christmas. I especially enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with so many of you. You were very confident and told me what you thought very clearly.

You and your parents like your school. You trust and respect the adults and you told me that you feel safe and know who to ask for help if you need it. In circle time you can talk about your feelings and you help those who are new to the school by being their 'buddies'. You behave well and enjoy your lessons because they are fun and you are given lots of interesting things to do. You know a lot about recycling and how to stay fit and healthy.

Your headteacher and teachers have made your school a caring and attractive place and you get a satisfactory education. To make it even better, I have asked them to help you make even more progress, especially in mathematics, and to give you more opportunities to develop your ideas. I have also asked them to keep checking how well you are doing so that they know if they need to do anything differently.

Thank you again for making me so welcome and I hope that you carry on working hard and enjoying being at school.