

Stopsley Community Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109553 |
| Local Authority | LUTON LA |
| Inspection number | 310020 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 September 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael Milton |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 385 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Bernie Dunn |
| Headteacher | Mr Colin Abbott |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 March 2004 |
| School address | Hitchin Road Luton Bedfordshire LU2 7UG |
| Telephone number | 01582611035 |
| Fax number | 01582612022 |

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|--------------------------|----------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stopsley Primary is above average size with two classes in each year group. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with just over a quarter from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below average, with few at an early stage of learning English. There are a few children looked after by the local authority and a few children from Traveller communities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The socio-economic backgrounds of pupils are mostly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stopsley Community Primary is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education. It has some strengths as well as areas for improvement. The leadership and management are developing satisfactorily and have successfully created a school in which pupils behave well and are keen to learn. A good range of improvements have been started. Parents are supportive of the school, although a very small minority feels that communication between parents and the school is not effective enough.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy school and make steady progress during Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science although standards in reading are much higher than those in writing. In Key Stage 2, the boys' do better than the girls, which is the opposite of the national trend. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well because they receive good support.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with an increasing amount of good teaching that is improving pupils' learning. Weaker aspects of teaching include insufficient involvement of pupils in assessing their own work and making decisions about how to do their work. A number of improvements are being made to the satisfactory curriculum, such as creating worthwhile links between subjects, but these have not been completed yet. Pupils have many opportunities for involvement in sports and, for example, the girls' football team are local champions. Pupils receive a good level of care from all staff and this fosters their self-confidence and capacity to learn. This care is particularly effective with vulnerable pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly but marking rarely gives clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their work. Pupils have challenging, short-term targets for writing, and these are helping to raise standards, but not all have similar targets for mathematics.

The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection; pupils' standards have risen and a stable, committed staff team has been established. The developing leadership and management are strengthening the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. The school knows its own strengths and weaknesses. Many of the school's well-chosen improvements are not yet consistently implemented in all classes and have not had enough time to raise standards and improve achievement significantly. The work of the governing body is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

On entry into Reception, children's knowledge and skills broadly match national expectations for this age group. The satisfactory teaching gives a sound balance between teacher-led activities and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. As a result, children make steady progress to reach standards that meet expectations for their age the start of Year 1. The outdoor learning area has limited space and the quality of the equipment is poor. Despite this poor provision children enjoy playing together outside. The Foundation Stage staff work hard to create a friendly and caring learning environment. As a result, there are good relationships, children enjoy school and develop their social skills well. Most children attain the expected standards by the end of the Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of all pupils, and raise the attainment of girls in particular in Years 3 to 6, by ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Improve standards in writing.
- Ensure that provision across all aspects of the Foundation Stage is good.
- Ensure that the improvements started to the curriculum and assessment become a regular part of the school's everyday work so that they have their full impact on raising pupils' attainment.

A small proportion of the schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make steady progress but there are some variations between year groups. For example, there is good progress during Year 6 because of good teaching which makes effective use of teachers' specialist subject knowledge. During 2006–7, the school's steps to reduce the gap between the standards of boys and girls at Key Stage 2 were not effective. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because they receive good quality learning support. Looked after children make good progress because of some very good care and guidance. The progress of children from Traveller communities is at least steady and often good. The school sets challenging targets for improvement, and these are starting to help raise standards. In 2007, most of the targets for Year 2 were met while in Year 6 the targets were exceeded for English and science but missed for mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn. They have good rates of attendance and many participate in lunchtime and after-school clubs. Almost all pupils behave well. Pupils feel secure and are confident that any isolated instances of bullying will be quickly resolved. Many pupils live healthy lifestyles because they appreciate the nourishing school lunches and enjoy participating in an impressive range of physical activities, including competitive sport. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and contribute to the school well. Older pupils have been trained to act as playground leaders but have yet to start this new role. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In lessons and assemblies, pupils are often given opportunities to think reflectively in order to help foster their spiritual awareness and self-esteem. Special events such as World Culture Day and many aspects of the curriculum help pupils to learn about and respect the views, values and beliefs of others. They make a positive contribution to their community through a good range of activities, including the Remembrance Day service, which involved many members of the local community. Pupils are soundly prepared for their next stage of education because of their good personal development and average literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Common strengths of lessons are effective class management, with good relationships. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to help targeted pupils to learn well. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards. In the good lessons, there are well planned sequences of learning activities with clear, concise teaching. Teachers' oral feedback to pupils includes guidance about how to improve their work and there is a brisk pace. In otherwise satisfactory lessons, the weaknesses include too few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work. There is sometimes insufficient challenge for more able pupils or not enough opportunities for pupils to use their own initiative. Some activities slow the pace of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The broad and balanced curriculum meets the full range of needs satisfactorily and contributes to pupils' steady progress. Good links are beginning to be made between subjects. For example, science, art, music and design and technology are carefully combined in a topic on musical instruments. The use of information and communication technology is developing to extend pupils' learning in other subjects as, for example, in Year 1 mathematics. The teaching of French and thinking skills further enhances pupils' experience. There are careful systems to identify pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; these pupils are provided with a good range of support and activities. There is a wide range of clubs, visitors and visits that pupils appreciate and support enthusiastically. The curriculum is enhanced by links with local secondary schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There is an effective focus on ensuring the well-being of every pupil, with staff taking very good care of those who are vulnerable or new to the school. Pupils in turn are confident that they have an adult to turn to if they have worries or concerns. All health and safety requirements are met. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet requirements. Pupils are taught effectively about the importance of healthy living and personal safety. Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' personal and social skills throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, supported effectively by senior staff members, has successfully created a positive and caring school in which pupils feel secure and want to learn. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and involves senior and subject leaders, and so it knows its strengths and accurately identifies its key areas for improvement. However, planning for improvement lacks specific and clear measures of success, and this has limited the pace of improvement in aspects such as the performance of girls. Subject coordinators have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. Most teachers assess pupils' progress accurately. The systems to track the progress of each pupil are being improved. This tracking information is being used to help pupils make more rapid progress.

but has not yet had enough time to have its full impact on pupils' achievement. The governing body is involved in various forms of planning and monitoring. However, it has not been monitoring pupils' progress closely enough.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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 | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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? | 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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 | 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

22 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stopsley Community Primary School, Luton, LU2 7UG

Mrs Clennett, Mr James and I really enjoyed visiting your school last week and meeting you, all the staff and some of the governors. I am very grateful to your parents for returning the questionnaires. It was interesting to hear from you that your teachers and other staff understand and help you and that you feel valued at school. The school council has good ideas for improving aspects of the school, and it must have been wonderful to hold one of its meetings at the Houses of Parliament.

You behave well and are keen to do your best work. You mostly make steady progress with your learning, although there is good progress in some years. All the staff are working hard to help you learn more and make good progress all of the time. The adults at school look after you really well. The school is improving what you learn by, for example, making links between mathematics and information and communication technology. The progress of the children in Reception is held back by a small outdoor play and learning area that is too small and does not have enough equipment. Teachers are improving how your work is marked and how you know what you need to do to make your work even better. The school provides some really interesting visitors and visits, including the enjoyable Year 5 trip to the Isle of Wight.

The staff know what needs to be done to make your school even better. Some of the main things are to:

- make sure that you all make good progress in all subjects and classes, especially the girls
- improve your writing standards
- improve the outdoor play and learning area for the Reception class
- make sure that the improvements already started, regarding what you learn and the way your work is assessed, are continued so that they help you to do as well as you can with your work.

You can help the school to get even better by thinking carefully about how you can improve your writing and about teachers' advice about how to improve your work.

With good wishes for the rest of the school year

Mike Milton

Lead inspector