

Stanton School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110365 |
| Local Authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 310273 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Daniel Kilborn |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 262 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs R Woodhall |
| Headteacher | Miss H Nicholson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 February 2004 |
| School address | Fairfax Bradville Milton Keynes MK13 7BE |
| Telephone number | 01908 221242 |
| Fax number | 01908 319304 |

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

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who have English as an additional language are higher than most schools. A few of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Most of the minority ethnic pupils are of Black British and Black Caribbean heritage. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Many of these pupils have moderate learning needs. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportions of pupils who enter or leave the school during the course of each year is above average. Following its reorganisation from a middle to a junior school in 2006 there has been a large turnover of staff. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2007.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education. During the period of reorganisation there was a decline in standards and some underachievement. Improvements are beginning to have a measurable impact on achievement, which is now satisfactory in English and mathematics. However, standards remain below average. Pupils have always done well in science. Standards in this subject are above average and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there is now more good and some outstanding teaching. Nonetheless, there remain pockets of satisfactory teaching. Where this is found, teaching is unable to make sufficient inroads into the backlog of underachievement. Many of the initiatives introduced by the new leadership team that are improving achievement and teaching, such as more rigorous assessment of learning and teachers' planning, are not yet embedded securely enough across the school or making a sufficient impact on standards in English and mathematics, particularly for the more able pupils.

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are good. Behaviour is mostly good and pupils try their best. Older pupils are becoming increasingly responsible for influencing the life of the school through the school council and other responsibilities. The school is an orderly and calm community. Pupils enjoy their learning and know how to keep healthy and safe. Care, guidance and support are good, enabling pupils, including those new to school, to feel secure and happy. There is a satisfactory curriculum. The school provides very good extra-curricular opportunities. There is scope to improve the curriculum so that it more effectively meets the needs of higher attaining pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher leads the school well and, along with senior leaders, is a good role model in her commitment and drive to raise standards. Self-evaluation is good. The senior leaders have used a good range of performance data that has helped them quickly identify key priorities for development. These are outlined clearly in a good school development plan. Good support from the local authority, together with effective team commitment, and the energy and drive of the headteacher, underpin good capacity for improvement.

There was a very good response from parents to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection. The large majority support the school in all aspects of its work. As one parent commented, 'My son cannot wait to go to school. Management is well organised and very helpful.' A small minority have some concerns, particularly relating to the leadership and management of the school, behaviour and the school not taking account of their views. Inspection evidence does not support these concerns. The headteacher is tackling effectively some difficult but relevant issues to help improve the school. Pupils say that when they report any bullying to staff it is dealt with well. The school has an 'open door' policy and has good channels of communication with parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievements in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good or better and there is greater challenge for the more able pupils.
- Ensure that senior leaders embed the new initiatives to improve assessment and teachers' planning more securely across the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall 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 enter the school with a wide range of skills and abilities, but overall their standards on entry are below average. Pupils' achievements over the past three years have been consistently good in science. They have been generally good in English and mathematics but in 2007, they fell to below average with some underachievement, particularly for more able pupils as too few reached the higher level 5. This was partly because of staffing and leadership instability, high pupil mobility and high numbers of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. As a result of the new school pupil tracking systems and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers, standards and achievement are improving. Whilst the impact of this improvement has yet to be seen in national test results, inspection evidence and the school's assessment data indicates that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to meet their more challenging targets. Since the standards achieved by these pupils at the end of Year 2 were below average, this represents satisfactory overall achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as other pupils and their progress improves when they receive additional and focussed support in literacy and mathematics. The few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English make good progress from their low starting point. Pupils achieve well in sports and music.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school successfully places a strong emphasis on the personal development of pupils, expecting them to adhere to a code of conduct, which pupils know as 'Proud'. As a result, pupils know what is expected. Behaviour is generally good. Although a small minority of pupils show inappropriate behaviour, this is usually in lessons where teaching is not so strong. Pupils say that there is always an adult to support them if they have a problem. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils like coming to school and enjoy lessons. They develop self-awareness, understand their own feelings and learn to respect others, leading to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Confidence and self-esteem grow as pupils do well in sporting and musical activities. They like receiving stickers for good work and strive to be the 'Stanton Star' when they manage to excel for a whole term. They take on a variety of responsibilities to help others. For example, Play Leaders distribute equipment at playtimes and older pupils help Year 3 pupils to settle in school. The School Council members feel valued. They enjoy their involvement in raising funds and helping to make changes to benefit all pupils. Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle. They are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Much of the teaching is good and, on occasions, it is outstanding. Nonetheless, there is still some satisfactory teaching. This evaluation of the teaching matches the school's own view. Relationships are good. They engender confidence and develop pupils' self-esteem. As school

council members said, 'We like our teachers, they are our friends.' Teachers have secure subject knowledge and this enables them to develop pupils' vocabulary well. In the most effective lessons, they ask searching questions that make pupils think more deeply. Learning is linked well to 'real-life' situations and problems, which makes it more meaningful, interesting and motivates the pupils successfully. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning effectively. There is good encouragement for pupils to assess how well they have done and this helps them measure their own progress. Where the teaching is less successful, there is a lack of challenge for the more able and they 'tread water' rather than move forward. There is a lack of pace and tight classroom management. As a result, some pupils do not focus on the task set for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils satisfactorily. There is an extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular activities. These include residential visits, outings to places of interest, visitors and very well-attended clubs involving the arts and sport. These enrich pupils' learning and add significantly to their enjoyment of school. The school knows that there is still room for improvement to ensure greater challenge for the more able pupils in order meet their needs more effectively. Improvements in the continuity of learning in the English and mathematics curriculum are helping raise standards in these subjects. Provision for the few minority ethnic pupils who are at the early stages of learning English is satisfactory. New initiatives to ensure individual educational plans are focused on more relevant and measurable targets are improving the satisfactory provision for pupils with learning difficulties.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places a strong emphasis on the care and support it offers to pupils. Cultural diversity is recognised and harmony promoted. Academic guidance is generally good and has improved markedly over the past year. Pupils know their own targets in English and mathematics and developmental comments in teachers' marking of pupils' work helps show pupils how they might improve. There is good encouragement for pupils to evaluate their own work and this shows them how well they are progressing. The school is fully aware of the support needed by its more vulnerable pupils, and has good links with external agencies. Good opportunities exist for pupils to learn about adopting safe practices. There are good arrangements to help younger pupils settle in and when Year 6 pupils move to secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has introduced significant changes over the past two terms. A new management team has been formed and new subject leaders appointed. Leadership and management by key subject coordinators are satisfactory. They are highly committed and have identified the right priorities for development but have had too little time to impact on pupils' achievement. Senior leaders support the headteacher well and staff morale is high. There is good use of performance data to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching is enabling the school to focus more clearly on where support is most needed. Action to improve the rate of pupils' progress has led to class restructuring and greater use of

ability grouping. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are increasingly holding the school to account by challenging the senior leaders. They now monitor the work of the school more effectively.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

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 | 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 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 | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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.

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 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| 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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stanton School, Milton Keynes, MK13 7BE

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. It was good to see you working hard in lessons and to know that you enjoy school. The school council were particularly helpful and we were impressed with how they had helped raise money for charity projects. We think most of you behave well and regularly attend school.

We have said that your school is providing a satisfactory education and that it is improving well. This means that while there are good things happening in your school there are still some important things that can improve.

You are doing well with your science, sport and music. We were impressed with how well you use your extensive playing fields and with all the trophies that teams have won in competitions. It is clear from what you tell us that you also enjoy all the many additional activities provided after school. We have asked the teachers to help you more to improve your English and mathematics by giving you work that is not too easy. We saw some good lessons during our visit and have asked the headteacher to make sure that all your lessons are as good as these. We have asked the headteacher and governors to continue to ensure that all the new things that are happening continue to develop.

Your headteacher and all the staff are working very hard to improve the education provided for you and we are sure that you will do your very best to help them make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Kilborn

Lead Inspector