

Stelling Minnis Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118681
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313044
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Isobel Randall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	98
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann-Sofi Speakman
Headteacher	John Gray
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Bossingham Road Stelling Minnis Canterbury CT4 6DU
Telephone number	01227 709218
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stelling Minnis is a smaller than average voluntary controlled rural primary school serving mainly the villages of Stelling Minnis and Bossingham. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. They come from an area of relative social advantage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. The school holds the Investor in People Award, Healthy Schools Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark, School Active Mark and Bronze Accreditation for Modern Foreign Languages.

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. It is improving and pupils make good progress and achieve well. Some elements of their personal development are outstanding. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been improving over the past three years and are above average. Although standards vary on entry to the school, they are generally above those typically expected of four-year-olds. Action taken to improve standards in mathematics has been successful. Staff are acting to improve an identified issue with writing, where standards are still above average, but pupils' progress is not as good as in reading or mathematics. It is too early for any effect of these strategies to be seen.

Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps children to settle in quickly and they make good progress. Pupils throughout the school feel safe because they are well cared for, with secure attention to health and safety. A strongly positive ethos promotes consideration for others. The school successfully promotes healthy lifestyles through good sporting opportunities and attention to diet. Pupils respond well to this provision and take advantage of the opportunities to take exercise and usually make healthy food choices. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and supported well, so that they progress at the same rate as others. Pupils use personal targets effectively to help them to improve their work. Marking does not always give them advice about their next step in learning.

Rigorous monitoring and subsequent improvement points given by leaders, coupled with well-focussed professional development, have resulted in good teaching, especially in Years 5 and 6. Recently sharpened systems for tracking and analysing pupils' progress help teachers to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities in their classes. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged well by being given difficult problems. All pupils are supported well by skilled questioning when they work independently. Above all, pupils report that they find lessons are fun, largely because of the good curriculum in which creative themes promote meaningful links between subjects. Pupils' consequent enjoyment is apparent in high attendance and excellent behaviour. In the opinion of one pupil, 'The school couldn't possibly be any better for me.' Although the school has acted to increase multicultural awareness, pupils do not have sufficient appreciation of different cultures in Britain or across the world. They willingly take responsibility within the school community and have strong links with local organisations, especially the church.

Senior leaders have a clear vision for the future direction of the school, firmly grounded in their analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. The active governing body supports them strongly while holding them to account. Actions taken to improve outcomes, already showing good impact, show that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and has improved since the last inspection. Children settle very well in this stimulating and caring environment. Good teaching provides a very good variety of interesting activities to motivate them and broaden their experiences. Staff use thorough individual monitoring to help them plan experiences to suit children of all abilities. The curriculum has a good balance of activities led by an adult and those chosen by the children. They develop early skills in all areas of learning through a wide range of discovery

and investigation activities, both in the classroom and in the greatly improved outdoor area. Good leadership ensures that the teacher and teaching assistant collaborate well together in advancing children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standards of pupils' writing at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that all marking informs pupils how they can improve their work.
- Broaden the pupils' awareness of the range of cultures represented in Britain and around the world.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement has been steadily improving in recent years and is now good. Appropriately challenging targets were met in full in the national tests in 2007. Pupils in Year 2 are working at above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Teachers' tracking shows that slowing of progress in Years 5 and 6 in past years has been reversed. The above average standards in reading and mathematics in Year 6 demonstrate progress in excess of that expected nationally. Leaders recognise some issues, particularly in extended writing where progress is satisfactory, and so are focussing on improvement in this area. Standards in science are above average, with more rapid progress than in previous years. Higher attaining pupils make good progress as a result of good levels of challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Children in the Foundation Stage are confident, polite and caring. Pupils of all ages collaborate happily in the classroom. Many friendships across year groups stimulate the exceptionally good relationships seen throughout the school. Pupils know that they are treated fairly, and that adults respond promptly to any concerns. They are closely involved in local community activities. Their charity committee leads generous support for many local and national good causes. They have good knowledge of Christianity, and some understanding of other major faiths and cultures. Their cultural development is satisfactory overall. Although they have good understanding of European culture, their understanding of a wider range of cultures is limited. Pupils' attendance is outstanding, as they greatly enjoy school and have very good attitudes to work. Their behaviour is usually exemplary. They are always keen to accept responsibility and use their initiative. They warmly welcome newcomers to all year groups. A Year 5 pupil commented, 'Everyone is friendly and polite.' Pupils feel very safe in school. Bullying is infrequent and quickly resolved. The school council successfully promotes pupils' views, and had a significant influence on the development of the playground. However, the role of the council is underdeveloped. Members are untrained in committee procedures and adults chair meetings. Pupils understand the requirements for a healthy lifestyle. They make sensible dietary choices and take part very enthusiastically in many sporting and exercise activities such as the daily 'wake-up and shake-up'. Their literacy and numeracy skills, social skills and their interest in business enterprise activities are good preparation for secondary education and future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and results in pupils' good progress. Teachers plan well to challenge individuals, giving specific targets for improvement that are regularly updated. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well through a focus on problem-solving, and they learn well. Relationships are warm and collaborative between teachers and pupils and also between pupils, including those from different year groups in the same class, making pupils confident learners who support each other well. Consistently applied procedures allied to high levels of enjoyment promote excellent behaviour. Teachers broaden pupils' understanding of key points by asking pupils from the lower year groups to share their experiences when they have been taught separately. Teachers explain clearly the purpose of each activity, and give good oral guidance to pupils so that they can improve their work. Marking is supportive, usually with praise for achievement and correction of errors, but does not clearly identify how pupils can improve. Teachers and teaching assistants support groups of all abilities skilfully by asking questions that clarify pupils' thinking. When the class is working as a whole, however, teaching assistants are not often actively involved, for example in enabling lower attaining pupils to contribute to the discussions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well. Exciting contexts for learning, such as 'Pirates', support the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across all subjects. Experiences that overlap between year groups help pupils to move confidently into new classes. For example, learning through play is continued for part of the week into Year 1. Previous weaknesses in mathematics have been successfully addressed. Year 6 booster classes and links with local secondary schools have raised standards in science. The quality of French teaching has been recognised by national accreditation. The school uses the village well as a context for learning, for example using movement round the area to teach angles and direction in Years 3 and 4. Multicultural education has improved since the last inspection, with a theme each year dealing with other cultures, but opportunities for experience of different cultures are thin. There is a good range of clubs, along with activity days and visits that are thoughtfully planned to complement classroom learning. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their sense of responsibility and ability to make personal decisions. The school is well prepared to meet the requirements for community cohesion.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Christian teaching and values contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school life, and are central to their good relationships, self-esteem and regard for the welfare of others. A good induction system settles children very well into the Foundation Stage. Pupils joining other year groups settle quickly and happily into the school's routines, and are supported by 'buddies' for as long as necessary. Year 6 pupils are confident about secondary transfer. They participate fully in events organised by selective and non-selective secondary schools. Pastoral care is good, and academic support is satisfactory. Although pupils are given helpful oral feedback on their work, the quality of written marking is inconsistent. There is little clear guidance about how to move on from their present performance and it does not relate closely to individual

targets. Teachers and other adults have good knowledge of pupils' personal development, and they respond thoughtfully and sensitively to individual needs. Pupils with learning difficulties are quickly identified in the Foundation Stage and subsequently receive good support in all year groups. The school makes good use of external agencies to provide extra support for pupils whenever necessary. Child protection arrangements are effective, and pupils are secure in a clean and carefully maintained environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have successfully improved provision over the past few years, so that pupils now achieve well. The headteacher has created a collaborative approach in which all teaching and support staff feel that they have a voice. They therefore cooperate well to develop a common approach that prioritises improvement in pupils' learning and personal development. The development plan is based on thorough analysis of outcomes that identifies areas of strength and weakness. Close monitoring of teaching has enabled leaders to take appropriate action to improve their provision, including effective professional development of teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders have begun to take action to deal with inconsistencies in marking practice. Links with the community, in particular the church, are strong. The school has a good reputation in the area and parents are overwhelmingly positive about its teaching and care for pupils. External agencies are used well. The school's links with other schools in its cluster and with local secondary schools support improvement, for example by developing expertise in science. The governing body is well informed, very supportive and is effective in holding the school to account. Carefully managed resources have enabled good development of buildings to meet pupils' needs.

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Annex A

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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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	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

10 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stelling Minnis C of E Primary School, Stelling Minnis, CT4 6DU

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed watching you 'wake up and shake up' when we arrived. It was good to hear so many of you say how much you enjoy coming to school. We are not surprised as Stelling Minnis is a good school.

We found a lot of things about the school that we really liked. Here are the most important:

- You are all learning well and reaching above average standards, and you told us you enjoy your lessons very much.
- Your teachers really know how well you are doing so that they can plan for you to improve.
- You all get on very well together, and are kind to each other.
- You behave very well.
- The school takes very good care of you.
- Your headteacher and teachers know clearly how to make your school even better.

So that it can be even better, we have asked the school to:

- Help you to raise your standards in writing.
- Make sure that your teachers' marking tells you how you can improve.
- Give you more experience of people from other cultures.

You can help by reading what your teachers write in your books and taking their advice.

Yours sincerely

Isobel Randall Lead inspector