

The Stonebridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101521
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	320540
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Wotherspoon HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rose Pennells
Headteacher	Ms Sophie Allen
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2006
School address	Shakespeare Avenue London NW10 8NG
Telephone number	020 8965 6965
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school serves an area of high economic and social deprivation. This is reflected in the high number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Almost all the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, with about three fifths from Black African cultures. A very high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language of whom 83 are in the early stages of learning English. A higher than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the start of the school year is much higher than in most schools. The school is expanding gradually to two forms of entry due to demands for school places within the local authority. An additional Reception class opened last September, with refurbishment to accommodate the pupils funded by the authority. Plans to rebuild the school are under discussion.

When Stonebridge School was inspected in June 2006, it was judged to require special measures. A new headteacher was appointed from April 2007 and there have been several other changes to teaching and support staff, mainly in the Foundation Stage, during its time in special measures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school has made good progress in tackling the inadequacies that led to its being placed in special measures and now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in driving forward the necessary changes. Pupils recognise her impact on the school's improvement. Together with a senior leadership team that has become increasingly knowledgeable about whole-school issues, she has raised the expectations of the whole community. All staff, governors and pupils have played their part in the school's improvement through their hard work and determination. Initially reliant on a high level of support from the local authority, this support has reduced as the school has demonstrated a good capacity to sustain the momentum of improvement.

Leadership and management are good. Systems for staff and governors to evaluate how well the school is doing and to identify what it needs to do to improve are robust. A thorough system for tracking and analysing pupils' progress includes termly meetings between the headteacher and staff to discuss the progress of each child. These meetings emphasise the importance of accelerating pupils' progress and enable the school to respond quickly to those who need further challenge or support. The school's focus for improvement has, rightly, been on English, mathematics and science. However, staff have recognised the need to review provision in other subjects and their leadership role is developing as the broader curriculum receives greater attention.

Pupils' standard of work remains well below that expected for their age, particularly at the top of the school. Figures from national assessments in 2007, indicated positive signs of improvement in Year 2 where the gap between the school and national figures narrowed. In Year 6, results fell again in English, where writing was a significant weakness, rose slightly in mathematics and showed a good increase in science. However, few pupils gained higher levels in any subject. The school is monitoring closely the differences in performance of boys and girls.

Eight months on the picture is one of continuing improvement. Pupils make more consistent progress in lessons as teaching improves. Their achievement is satisfactory. This progress can be seen both in the school's analysis of the latest set of data and in pupils' work. Teachers have worked hard to improve their practice in response to support from the headteacher and from local authority consultants. There remains more to do to move satisfactory teaching to a good level and, in particular, to increase the pace of work by ensuring activities provide a suitable level of challenge, especially for higher attaining pupils. Classroom displays are interesting, attractive and support pupils' learning. Teachers are at an early stage of planning links between subjects to add interest and variety to pupils' learning.

The school's positive ethos of care helps pupils to feel safe and secure. Positive relationships, mutual respect and the good role models of adults underpin the consistent approaches to behaviour management. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' linguistic and cultural diversity to make a strong statement about how the school values each individual. This raises pupils' awareness of each other's differences and encourages them to be tolerant of each other's difficulties and needs. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory and provided, for example, through moments of reflection in assembly. It is more limited in class where there are few opportunities for creativity. Pupils are

increasingly enjoying school, as their improved attendance shows. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning that will serve them well in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision is planned effectively. Significant improvements in the environment provide children with a broad range of interesting and stimulating activities, which encourage them to explore, investigate and become independent learners. Opportunities for physical and creative development are promoted strongly and provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Good induction procedures and positive relationships with parents help children to settle quickly. Behaviour management is consistent and effective with the result that children are meeting age-related expectations in their personal development. This represents good progress from their starting points and was seen when the children presented their assembly to a large audience of pupils, staff and parents with great confidence and clear enjoyment.

An effective balance of adult-led activities and those that children choose, combined with a systematic approach to teaching basic skills has enabled the children to catch up significantly over the past two terms. However, the transition from general activities to focused group teaching is noisy and gives children the opportunity to be off task. The groups are large and it takes time for the children to settle; adults' voices are raised and this prevents the inside area from being a calm and quiet learning environment for focused group activities in early literacy and numeracy. Assessment systems are developing well. Adults gather their evaluations of the children's knowledge and skills into individual profiles. However, assessments of their development in early literacy and numeracy are not always included.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress to raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teachers plan activities that match closely pupils' needs and abilities to provide a suitable level of challenge for all.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and in reviewing the curriculum.

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

Standards are still low with too many pupils in each year group not meeting expectations for their age. However, achievement is now satisfactory. The school's own data show that the majority of pupils are making expected progress. Some are beginning to make accelerated progress to catch up lost ground but the legacy of underachievement remains. The wide range of abilities and learning needs found in all classes is compounded by continual changes as pupils join and leave the school. The quality of work in pupils' books continues to improve following the successful implementation of the marking and presentation policy. The focus on developing pupils' writing skills is beginning to pay dividends particularly in Years 1 and 2. The school has set ambitious targets for pupils currently in Year 6 based on them making better than expected

progress. Many are on track to meet their targets which, if achieved, will secure an improvement on results of 2007. Those who join the school speaking little English are making rapid progress in learning the language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school and that teachers support them. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. The small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave as the school expects are supported effectively by adults and by other pupils who are tolerant of their differences and difficulties. Pupils manage the many stairs throughout the three-storey Victorian building sensibly and with due regard for health and safety. They have a satisfactory knowledge of how to stay healthy through eating the right food and taking exercise and a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are confident that adults, older pupils and 'Red Hats' support and help them when they have difficulties. Bullying and racism are rare, and pupils are confident that such incidents are dealt with effectively. Members of the school council, junior road safety officers, Red Hats and 'buddies' take very seriously their responsibilities to look after others. Support for charities locally and nationally help pupils to understand their responsibility to others further afield.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Lesson planning focuses clearly on what pupils are expected to learn. Strategies to help pupils learning English as an additional language feature consistently in lessons. Paired work, 'partner talk', the use of visual aids, and a focus on key vocabulary are beneficial aids to learning. At its most effective, teaching uses what pupils already know to underpin new learning, which is introduced using a clear step-by-step approach. However, at times, pace and productivity are issues, especially where teachers talk for too long. Explanations are not always clear and adults direct activities too much, so that pupils have too little practical experience or too little time to do their own work. The high level of adult presence in classes is effective now that teaching assistants have clear guidance on what to expect pupils to learn and how to support them. Very good liaison and teamwork between all the adults mean that information on pupils' learning is shared effectively and used to plan subsequent lessons - this is a big step forward. Further work is needed to ensure that evaluations of pupils' learning lead securely to appropriate levels of challenge for all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

All subjects of the national curriculum are taught regularly, although the school has focused on improving provision in English, mathematics and science to raise standards. Booster groups and intervention programmes have met with some success in helping pupils to catch up lost ground. There is more to do to ensure that the curriculum is planned to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, and to provide a more stimulating, creative approach to learning. The headteacher and staff have begun a review of the curriculum to increase the links between subjects. 'Learning together days' are a positive step in helping parents to become involved in

their children's learning. An increasing number and range of clubs, visits to places of interest, and visitors to the school add to pupils' enjoyment of school life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Day to day care is good. Vetting procedures on all adults who work with the pupils meet requirements. A number of policies are currently being updated to ensure they match the good practice in place. Procedures to support pupils new to the school are good. Information for new parents is translated into key languages and pupils are assigned a 'buddy' who speaks their language and helps them to settle. Good liaison with external services provides appropriate help for vulnerable pupils and those in need of specific support. Systems to improve attendance are implemented rigorously by the headteacher, with much success. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is well targeted and its impact on pupils' progress is monitored effectively. Staff increasingly make use of targets in pupils' individual education plans to meet their needs in class. Thorough systems for tracking pupils' progress give staff a clear view of attainment and achievement over time. The headteacher's analysis of this information is outstanding. It is used effectively to target support to individuals and groups of pupils and to set challenging targets. However, not all staff yet have the same level of understanding of how data can be interpreted and used.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher can be seen best in the way that all staff are pulling together with a common sense of purpose and in the rising confidence of parents and pupils in the school. The headteacher's strong focus on supporting the professional development of staff has been a significant factor in the school's improvement. It has had a good impact on increasing their skill and knowledge, both as practitioners and as leaders and managers. Regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and feedback to staff has helped to establish a shared understanding of the features of effective teaching. Senior leaders have developed a clear understanding of whole-school issues and have undertaken a greater role in monitoring the quality of provision and in evaluating the impact of the school's actions. Their leadership is now good. The robustness of whole-school self-evaluation processes, which involve all staff and governors, is a key feature behind the school's rapid improvement and of its good capacity to continue improving. Governance has gone from strength to strength. Governors are now thinking strategically about the school's long-term future and what it needs to do to become good. High quality information from the headteacher and, increasingly, from staff helps governors in their decision-making. It also increases their confidence to challenge the school.

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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?	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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3
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

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	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

08 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Stonebridge School, London, NW10 8NG

As you know, I came to visit your school recently with my colleague. I have been visiting your school each term to check how well it is improving since it was inspected in June 2006. This was my fifth visit. I am pleased to say that your school is now satisfactory.

My colleague and I were pleased to see that you are now making satisfactory progress. We could see that you are trying hard to improve the quality of work in your books. Your behaviour around the school is good and you manage all those stairs very well. You told us that you feel safe at school because there is always someone to help you if you have a problem. You get on well with each other. It was good to hear that you enjoy school now and I am pleased to say that attendance has improved. Well done! Keep it up! Many of you have jobs around the school that includes helping others. Members of the school council, junior road safety officers, Red Hats and 'buddies' all take their roles and responsibilities very seriously. Some of you told me about the 'learning together days'. I know that you enjoyed seeing the fire engine while your parents had a talk about fire safety in the home.

Some of you told us how much Ms Allen has changed things for you. We are confident that, together with other staff, she will continue to improve the school. I know that you also have ideas about how to improve the school and have made some suggestions. We have asked your teachers to make sure that lessons are not too easy or too hard but challenging for all of you so that you make better progress, especially in English maths and science. We want the staff to check on other subjects too so that learning is interesting and fun.

I will miss coming to visit you each term and wish all the very best in the future.

Jane Wotherspoon

Her Majesty's Inspector