

Stonesfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123022
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327833
Inspection dates	23-24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of School	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Dancer
Headteacher	Mrs Susie Bagnall
Date of previous school inspection	08 June 2006
School address	High Street Stonesfield Witney OX29 8PU
Telephone number	01993 891687
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stonesfield is a smaller than average primary school located on a spacious site in the heart of the village. Almost all of its pupils are from the local community and are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. There is also a small number of pupils who have dyslexia. Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises the Reception class. There have been a number of staff changes over the course of the last two years. A new headteacher took up her appointment in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stonesfield is a good and improving school. Within a relatively short period, the new headteacher has had a considerable impact. There have been considerable improvements in the provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a much greater focus on the learning needs of the most able, and a number of key improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The combined impact of these initiatives is seen in the good progress now being made by pupils overall, and the outstanding progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The parents greatly appreciate the many changes made during the headteacher's first year in post, and the impact that these are having on their children. Typical of the many positive comments appended to the inspection questionnaires is: 'We have an incredibly dynamic headteacher, who is a very strong leader and who will do all it takes to make this school outstanding'.

All pupils are warmly welcomed and fully included. They achieve well because they are taught well and benefit from a well-planned curriculum, enriched with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are keen to learn, attentive, and play a full part in lessons. This occurs because teachers are skilled at motivating their pupils and manage their behaviour well. Pupils also achieve well because of the good quality academic guidance given to them by teachers in lessons. However, the guidance provided through teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. There are many examples of useful comments made by teachers in pupils' books, but little evidence of pupils acting on the advice or completing corrections.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are set to rise appreciably from the broadly average levels reported in 2008. Early indications from national test results, yet to be validated, are that standards in Year 6 are above average in English, and mathematics. No results are yet available for science, but the work scrutinised in pupils' books indicates that attainment is also above average. In Year 2, there has also been an improvement. Attainment here is above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.

A particularly noteworthy feature of the school is the pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The strong family feel that permeates all aspects of the school's work stems from the very effective promotion of pupils' social awareness and the excellent quality of the pastoral care provided. Pupils' impeccable behaviour contributes strongly to the culture for learning that is a feature of all classes. They work and play together very well. The school's high attendance rate reflects pupils' real enthusiasm for all aspects of school life.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Plans for the coming academic year include a restructured senior management team. In the interim, the headteacher is supported well by her senior teachers, but much of the direction is provided by the headteacher. The new system for tracking the progress made by pupils, introduced by the headteacher, is effective in enabling managers to monitor the effectiveness of provision in reading, writing and mathematics, identify pupils who need extra help, and set challenging targets.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. Its current good track record in improving standards and accelerating the rates of pupils' progress show that it is well placed to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'I am delighted with the well-rounded education my child receives. Over the past year he has enjoyed a diverse range of inspiring experiences... and has a strong sense of inclusion in the school family'. This comment from one of the parents accurately sums up the good start made by the children and the excellent provision for their welfare in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are excited to come to school, and are happy and settled.

The school judges attainment on entry to be broadly in line with what is normally expected at this age. The only records of attainment on entry available to inspectors referred to this year's group of Reception pupils, and these support this judgement.

The curriculum covers all areas of learning well. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children, both indoors and out. However, the outcomes of activities that children choose for themselves are not closely monitored, consequently the adults are largely unaware of the learning that takes place. In the adult-initiated activities, the good staff team make effective use of their observations to help plan the next steps in learning. The school acknowledges that systems to track the progress made by children across all areas of learning are not yet developed well enough. Despite the weakness in monitoring and tracking, the children make good progress in their learning because they are taught well and there is always something to capture their imagination and hold their interest within the wide range of exciting activities provided. For example, the school offers a range of 'real life' learning experiences for the children, such as looking after the crop of vegetables planted by the class.

In some aspects of their learning, such as reading, writing and their social and emotional development, children make outstanding progress. Overall, attainment is above average. At the time of the inspection, the children were almost at the end of their Reception year and most were working securely within the goals expected at this age. In addition, an above-average proportion exceeded these expectations.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed by the headteacher as an interim arrangement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of academic guidance provided for pupils through teachers' marking and ensure that the guidance results in better quality written work.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, improve the monitoring of children's learning in activities that they choose for themselves and the tracking of children's progress overall.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The trend, highlighted by national performance data over the past two years, of declining standards at the end of Key Stage 2 and slow progress between Years 2 and 6 has been reversed. The very strong focus placed on provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is having a clear impact on attainment overall as the National Curriculum levels attained by these pupils have considerably improved. This is the result of a wide range of initiatives including the early identification and diagnosis of problems experienced by pupils, carefully targeted help provided for these pupils, good communication with the parents of these pupils, and training for all staff in working with dyslexia. The broader focus on improving pupils' attainment has included training for staff in the use of assessment for learning and the introduction of 'two stars and a wish' - highlighting two strengths and a point for improvement - as part of the marking of pupils' work. In addition, the involvement of pupils in assessing the quality of one another's written work has sharpened their awareness of what they need to do to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils display a good understanding of what constitutes a balanced diet and the good take-up of additional sporting activities illustrates their commitment to a healthy lifestyle. They have a good appreciation of safe practices, for example when handling equipment, and know what they need to do to keep themselves safe. The pupils' contribution to the day-to-day life of their school and the local community is a significant strength. The school is at the heart of its community and plays an active part in village life. The pupils are very well prepared for life beyond the primary phase of their education and have many opportunities

to develop 'life skills', for instance by taking part in the gardening club. A recent, particularly noteworthy initiative is the 'Dragons' Den' project involving all pupils in Year 6. The objective is to raise money, some of which will go to charity, at the village fête. Following good presentations of their ideas to the 'dragons' (the headteacher and two governors), pupils were given loans to help fund four products: 'Sweet Sensation' ice cream, 'Munch 'n' Crunch' chocolate bars, 'Beauty and the Beast' make-overs and 'Fudge Factory'. This project not only gave great relevance to learning but promoted real enjoyment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Key strengths in teaching are the management of pupils and relationships between teachers and their pupils. The result is a high-quality climate for learning in which pupils rapidly develop confidence as learners because they feel secure and well looked after. Teachers are skilled in making learning fun. They do this by using a wide range of strategies and making effective use of resources. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were planning the framework for a poem about ladybirds. Their learning was considerably enhanced by the teacher's lively enactment of the way in which ladybirds prey on greenflies, complemented by good use of video footage about ladybirds' movements using the interactive whiteboard. Some good practice was observed as teachers used the skills learned in their training about assessment for learning. However, not all teachers involve pupils regularly enough in evaluating their own progress. A further inconsistency is teachers' use of success criteria when setting pupils' work. Sometimes they do not make clear enough what their expectations of the completed work are, and consequently the pupils do not know precisely what they have to do to demonstrate their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A strength of the curriculum is the wide range of enrichment activities provided for pupils. The teachers make good use of local resources. For example, during the course of the inspection, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were at a local authority residential centre for an overnight stay. Good use is also made of the skills of visitors and links with local schools. For instance, pupils from The Marlborough School provide mentoring for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and are working with pupils in Year 6 to produce an art installation for display at the Marlborough School. This sort of involvement helps smooth the transfer of pupils to secondary education. An emerging strength is the work taking place to develop cross-curricular themes, such as the 'Dragon's Den' project in Year 6. This not only helps develop pupils' skills in English and design and technology, but also involves skills in mathematics as pupils work out how many more ingredients they would need to buy, for example, to increase production of their 'Munch 'n' Crunch' chocolate bars by 35%. Similar relevance in learning is seen in Year 5, where the pupils are keenly rehearsing a production of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' as part of their project about the Tudors and Stuarts. The curriculum needs further development, since it is currently more focused on the transmission of knowledge than the development of pupils' skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The excellent quality of the school's pastoral care is summed up well by a pupil in Year 6 who commented to one of the inspectors, 'Our school is like a big family. Everyone knows and cares for each other and we are really helped to do our best'. The school provides a safe environment in which pupils are well known to staff and are well supervised. Checks to ensure the suitability of adults working with children are in place, although the administration of the associated paperwork could be better. The quality of academic guidance provided for pupils is good overall. However, corrections are not always used as a tool for improvement. The individual education plans provided for pupils who have learning

difficulties and/or disabilities provide very clear academic guidance together with realistic and achievable targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is the driving force for improvement and is supported well by the senior managers and staff team. The initiatives introduced this year have brought about a marked improvement in pupils' progress and have raised standards. Targets set are challenging and are based on a realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The improvements made so far have been very well received by parents. As one commented, 'I have always been pleased with the school. The new headteacher has brought with her a new sense of commitment to drive the school forward'.

The new headteacher introduced useful systems for checking on the progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, and acknowledges that this system needs to be extended to include science. At present, the teacher responsible for this subject is unable to make well-informed plans for future development because she does not have enough information about pupils' performance.

Governance has improved since the last inspection. The governing body is well organised. Governors know the school well through their local contacts, focused visits, and the good quality information provided for them, and closely monitor the school's effectiveness.

The school makes a very strong contribution to community cohesion within the locality, but lacks the wider, international dimension necessary to help broaden pupils' horizons. At present, governors do not have systems in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school strategy to promote community cohesion. The school is well aware of these deficiencies and plans are in place to improve the situation.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are the children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

The quality of provision

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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

08 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stonesfield School, Witney, OX29 8PU

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you, and looking at your work. Your parents think that you go to a good school, and we agree.

Here is a list of some of the things we like best.

- You learn well in lessons and make good progress because you are taught well.
- This year, the standards of work produced in Year 6 are above average. Well done, you should be really proud of your achievements!
- You develop your personal skills extremely well. This is important in helping you to become good citizens in the future. We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way you get on really well with each other.
- You enjoy and learn a lot from the interesting and exciting activities your teachers plan for you, such as the 'Dragons' Den' project for Year 6.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.
- Your headteacher and the people who help manage your school are doing a good job.

Every school has something that could be improved, and this is what we have asked your school to concentrate on to help you to do even better.

- We would like your teachers to become even more skilful in marking your work, so that they all give you really useful ideas about how to improve. You need to play your part as well by making sure that you follow their instructions, so if teachers ask you to do corrections, you need to do them! By doing this you will be helping yourselves to make even more progress.
- We would also like the school to keep an even closer check on how well the children in the Reception class are getting on from the beginning to the end of the year, and to keep a particularly close check on how well children are doing in the activities that they choose for themselves.

I wish you great success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mike Thompson
Lead Inspector

