

Staplehurst School

Gybbon Rise, Staplehurst, Tonbridge TN12 0LZ

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have secured considerable improvements in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress across the school. In 2014, standards improved substantially at the end of both key stages.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan work for pupils which is interesting and make sure that pupils know what they need to do to be successful.
- The school is a friendly and inclusive community and has a positive, hard-working atmosphere. Pupils behave well. They are courteous and friendly.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good so that pupils are secure and safe.
- Middle leaders play a valuable part in the school's improvement. They work constructively with senior leaders and governors.
- Governors work effectively with other leaders to support the school's improvement.
- Children in the Reception Year quickly develop the personal and learning skills they need to achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers do not always set work which is challenging enough for the most able pupils, especially in mathematics.
- Activities in the outdoor areas of the Reception classes are not always sufficiently stimulating and focused on developing children's learning.
- Some parents and carers feel communication with the school could be better, especially about their children's progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 22 lessons or part lessons, including one observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. Discussions were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, and three other governors.
- Inspectors took account of 71 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, inspectors spoke with individual parents informally at the start of the school day and at other times during the inspection. Inspectors took account of 36 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of policies and documents. These included the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records, and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as the work seen in lessons. They also listened to a Year 2 and a Year 6 pupil read.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
David Howley	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school means and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school provides full-time early years provision in three Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a breakfast club on the school site, which is managed by the school and was visited during this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers set work which is consistently challenging for the most able pupils, so that they reach the highest levels of attainment, especially in mathematics
 - activities in the outdoor areas of the Reception classes are sufficiently stimulating and focused on developing children's learning.
- Improve communication with parents so that they are better informed about their children's progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has provided clear and consistent direction for the school during a period of change. She works effectively with the deputy headteacher, governors and other leaders to ensure the pace of improvement is sustained.
- Positive relationships help pupils to feel valued and secure. The school's motto, 'Where children come first', reflects its commitment to ensuring that all pupils are confident learners. Leaders respond firmly and promptly to discrimination of any sort.
- Leaders have focused hard on improving the quality of teaching and this has paid dividends. Strong leadership has improved teaching substantially since the last inspection. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school and continue to work closely with teachers to strengthen practice. They have successfully eradicated an element of weak teaching.
- The local authority has made a good contribution to the school's improvement. For example, staff have benefited from a wide range of courses provided by the local authority. These have included training to support the middle leaders to improve their impact in raising pupils' achievement. The local authority has provided more light-touch support recently as the school's performance has improved.
- Leaders have developed robust systems to evaluate and manage teachers' performance. These include regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress and to identify those who need extra help with their learning. Teachers recognise and appreciate the difference that this good support has made to their practice, particularly the effectiveness of the coaching provided by the deputy headteacher.
- The headteacher has developed an effective group of middle leaders. They play a full and confident role in the school's development and share senior leaders' vision for the school's future. They observe teaching regularly, review information about pupils' progress and look at their work. Activities such as these ensure they are clear about how well teaching is promoting achievement, and know which aspects need further development. They attend relevant training so that their subject knowledge is up to date and make good use of this to advise teachers.
- Leaders effectively promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination. They are determined to ensure that all pupils achieve well. For example, they know that in 2014 pupils in Year 6 who were eligible for additional government funding achieved less well than their peers. This year, they have made sure that the additional funding is used more effectively to provide pupils with the support they need. They regularly check that this is making a difference and hold teachers to better account for pupils' achievement. As a result, these pupils are making faster progress.
- A large majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire would recommend the school to other parents, and many who spoke with inspectors were highly positive about the school's work. However, a small minority expressed concerns about communication with the school and about the quality of the information they receive about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with this reservation. Leaders have provided some good quality information for parents about recent changes in the way teachers are assessing pupils' progress. However, they recognise that the information provided for parents about the extent of pupils' progress could be clearer.
- Leaders ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust and effective and meet statutory requirement, so that pupils are safe. Staff are well qualified in first aid and leaders have attended safer recruitment training. They give internet safety a particularly strong focus. For example, the school's website provides useful information about some of the steps parents might take to ensure their children are safe when using the internet. In addition, the website provides a number of links to organisations providing specialist advice about internet safety.
- Leaders use the primary sports funding appropriately to improve pupils' achievement in physical education and their enjoyment of exercise. For example, leaders have increased the number and range of clubs offered. As a result, the number of pupils participating has increased substantially. Teachers are more confident and more knowledgeable about teaching sport than before because they regularly work alongside specialist coaches.
- Specialist music teaching contributes well to the broad and balanced range of subjects taught. Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors which bring learning to life. The school's success in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is reflected in their eagerness to learn and their good behaviour. They learn about different cultures and beliefs and are taught to respect different viewpoints and so gain an appreciation of British values.
- Assemblies regularly bring the school together to celebrate and reflect. For example, during the inspection the school choir performed beautifully in an assembly, ably supported by pupils playing a range of

instruments. All pupils listened attentively and joined in with the final song.

- Leaders provide good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities as they move up through the school. For example, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 can apply to be 'digital leaders' (pupils with a particular interest in information technology who help leaders to review computer programs). Experiences such as these successfully develop pupils' confidence and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a wide range of skills which effectively complement expertise in the school. They know what has been done since the last inspection to tackle weaknesses in teaching and to recognise good practice, and the impact this has had on pupils' learning. Governors are well informed about the current quality of teaching in the school and know how leaders manage teachers' performance. They regularly discuss pupils' achievement with senior leaders and check the school's performance against others nationally. Governors routinely question senior and middle leaders about developments and verify what they are told when they visit the school. They work very successfully with leaders to ensure that the school's finances are secure. Governors know how different funds are used, including the pupil premium, and how successfully resources are used to ensure that all groups make good progress.
- Governors keep a close eye on safeguarding procedures to ensure that these are effective. They constantly review and improve systems to ensure pupils' safety. For example, recent improvements include the separation of pedestrian and vehicle access to the school at the start and end of the school day.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very polite and talk to adults and visitors respectfully. They take pride in their appearance and work carefully, so that their books are neat and tidy.
- Pupils conduct themselves sensibly and maturely when moving between lessons and behave extremely well during assemblies.
- Most pupils respond fully to teachers' high expectations. They listen attentively during lessons and waste no time in getting on with their work. However, just occasionally, a few pupils make slower progress when they do not concentrate sufficiently on the tasks set.
- Pupils enjoy break times and behave well. The school's 'smile ambassadors' say they help adults to sort out minor squabbles between pupils during playtimes. They perform their roles responsibly.
- Leaders work well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Attendance levels are consistently in line with the national average.
- While the large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire consider pupils to be well behaved, a few expressed concerns. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of behaviour records, indicates that pupils behave consistently well.
- The breakfast club provides a positive and secure start to the school day for those pupils who attend.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils told inspectors that adults take good care of them and listen seriously to their views. This helps them to feel safe.
- Pupils know how to behave to ensure their safety. For example, a variety of events and visitors keep them updated about aspects of safety in everyday life, such as how to keep safe when crossing the road, how to use the internet safely and what to do in case of a fire. Most parents feel children are safe and happy in school.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and are very clear that it is not acceptable. They told inspectors that bullying is not a problem. School records confirm this view. Records indicate that bullying incidents are rare and that leaders deal with any concerns promptly and thoroughly.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved substantially since the last inspection and is now consistently good. This ensures most pupils' rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers give pupils clear explanations about what they need to do to complete tasks successfully. This helps pupils to get on with their work quickly and confidently.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. They give pupils valuable feedback about their work

and about what they can do next to develop their learning.

- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and of their behaviour, so that lessons are purposeful and focused on getting the work completed. However, the work set for the most able pupils is not always hard enough, and so does not deepen their understanding consistently, particularly in mathematics.
- All the classrooms have attractive book corners which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of reading. They include a wide range of good quality texts which appeal to pupils' interests so that they are keen to read.
- Across the school, from Reception onwards, teachers use consistent approaches to teaching phonics skills (the sounds that letters make). This ensures that pupils quickly gain key reading and writing skills as they move up through the year groups. Additional support in Years 5 and 6 is helping to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by past weaknesses in teaching.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to teach mathematics. They make sure that pupils regularly practise and reinforce basic number skills and use these to solve problems.
- Leaders have successfully focused on improving the quality of teachers' marking to check and improve pupils' work. All teachers follow the school's marking policy. They give pupils encouraging feedback about their work and clear advice about what they can do to improve their learning.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to support pupils' good progress, including that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, attainment was much higher than the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2. Some of the older pupils in the school have some gaps in their learning due to past weaknesses in teaching. However, better teaching means they are catching up quickly. While standards at the end of Year 6 were average overall in 2014, they were significantly higher than in the previous year. Assessment information and pupils' work indicate that the school is on track to secure further improvements in 2015.
- Attainment in reading was above average at the end of both key stages in 2014. The results of the Year 1 phonics check are consistently above average and increased substantially in 2014. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well to support their reading and to help them write more confidently. For example, during the inspection children in the Reception classes sounded out the words they needed to write a menu, while others used a word bank successfully to write about Elmer the elephant.
- Pupils confidently use mathematical knowledge to solve problems and to undertake investigations. Improved mathematics teaching means that pupils cover all the areas they need to study in order to be successful by the end of Year 6. Attainment in mathematics improved at both key stages in 2014 to above average levels at the end of Year 2 and average levels at the end of Year 6.
- The most able pupils in the school are making faster progress than before, particularly in reading and writing. As a result, the proportion attaining the higher levels in reading and writing increased in 2014 to above average levels at the end of both key stages. Average proportions attained these levels in mathematics, fewer than in reading and writing. This is because the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in mathematics lessons so that some do not achieve their full potential.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for additional government funding) attained less well than other pupils nationally. The gap was about eight months in reading and writing and about a year in mathematics. When compared with their classmates, they were about a year behind in reading, about 10 months in writing and a year and a half behind in mathematics. The gaps with pupils nationally narrowed in mathematics and writing but increased in reading. The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress was higher than the national average in 2014 in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics.
- Information about eligible pupils currently in the school indicates that this group is making faster progress than previously. The small numbers in each year group make similar and sometimes better progress than their classmates. As a result, gaps between the standards reached by these pupils and others across the school are narrowing, including in mathematics. This is particularly noticeable at the end of Key Stage 1, where the gap has closed completely.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in all year groups. Some teaching for individual pupils is of very high quality, so that these pupils make very rapid progress.

The early years provision**is good**

- Most children have knowledge and skills at levels below those typical for their age when they join the Reception classes. Effective leadership and good teaching ensure that children make good progress across all areas of learning and are well prepared for Year 1. The proportion achieving a good level of development by the end of the year was broadly average in 2014. Better teaching means that the proportion is on track to increase in 2015.
- Children behave well and enjoy school. They keenly greet visitors and happily talk about their accomplishments. Careful supervision and robust safeguarding procedures ensure that children are safe, so that they can play and learn confidently.
- Children make sensible choices about their learning and get on well with each other, happily sharing resources and waiting patiently to take their turn. For example, during the inspection children took turns to talk about the things they see on the way to school and listened carefully to their classmates. Teachers sensitively encouraged those who were less confident about speaking to contribute their ideas too, so that they were able to practise language skills and develop self-esteem.
- Teachers provide plenty of resources to engage children's interest, both indoors and out. Leaders have improved the spacious outdoor areas so that they are attractive and popular places for the children to learn. However, activities in the outdoor areas are not always sufficiently stimulating and focused on developing children's learning. This means that some children lose interest and progress slows as the session continues.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118313
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	455846

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 of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Downey
Headteacher	Cathy Farthing
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 December 2013
Telephone number	01580 891765
Fax number	01580 891291
Email address	headteacher@staplehurst.kent.sch.uk

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