

Staplehurst School

Gybbon Rise, Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 0LZ

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have not driven school improvement with enough rigour. As a result, the standard of pupils' achievement has declined.
- The incisive actions of the recently appointed acting headteacher and leadership team have yet to impact fully on improvements to pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good, particularly in key stage 2. Teaching does not offer enough challenge for the most able pupils or cater well enough for pupils' different needs and abilities. Expectations are too low.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not effectively supported. As a result, they are not making strong enough progress.
- Pupils are not making consistently good progress, particularly in key stage 2.
- Many subject leaders are new to their roles and do not yet play a full part in enabling pupils to achieve well across a wide range of subjects.
- The support for low-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is not effective. This aspect of the school's work is not well led.
- Pupils do not learn well across the wider curriculum or apply their writing skills strongly enough in different subjects.
- Until recently, systems for monitoring pupils' behaviour and supporting vulnerable pupils have not been sufficiently rigorous.

The school has the following strengths

- The new acting headteacher, ably supported by other leaders, has made many positive changes. As a result, standards of achievement are improving, particularly in Year 6, and in mathematics and writing.
- The early years is a strength of the school. Children achieve well and are safe and happy.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The curriculum enables pupils to develop their understanding of different faiths and tolerance.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and other staff fulfil their responsibilities diligently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in key stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' achievement across the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers plan learning tasks which are sufficiently challenging and meet the needs of all groups of pupils
 - improving the quality of support for low-attaining pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Improve outcomes for pupils, particularly in key stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able, make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - strengthening pupils' learning and the quality of their writing in subjects across the wider curriculum.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - continuing leaders' good work to improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - developing the role of subject leaders so that they can more effectively contribute to school improvement
 - ensuring that there is effective leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - reviewing the quality of the support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure that this support is effective
 - improving the school's monitoring, evaluation and support for vulnerable pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. They did not act promptly enough to ensure that teachers and pupils were prepared well enough for the increased challenges of the revised national curriculum in 2014. As a result, teachers' expectations have not been high enough and pupils' achievement has declined.
- Until recently, leaders have not given teachers enough guidance and support, including through performance management, to develop their skills. This has led to a decline in the quality of teaching. However, the recently appointed acting headteacher is providing resilient, strong leadership that is enabling the school to improve. She has inspired a supportive and well-motivated team of senior leaders and staff who share her ambition for improvement. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of her good work.
- Senior leaders ably support the acting headteacher. They work together well as a team and have made some improvements to teaching and learning. They demonstrate good practice in their own teaching and are providing clear guidance and mentoring to teachers. This is well received and teachers report that their teaching is improving as a result. Consequently, outcomes for pupils are improving, particularly in Year 6 and in mathematics.
- The new senior leadership team is now keeping the quality of teaching and learning under closer review. Observations and evaluations of pupils' work are helping leaders to have a better understanding of where teaching is strongest and where it needs to be better. Guidelines have been established to bring about greater consistency of teaching and learning. Since January, senior leaders have also set higher expectations for mathematics and English.
- The school's new mathematics, English and science programmes are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress and attitudes to learning. However, this is not yet embedded in all classes in the school.
- Support for pupils who need to catch up and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has not been effective. This is because, currently, the school does not have a trained leader responsible for this aspect of its work. As a result, parents and teachers have not been able to draw upon expert advice and put in place the right support to enable these pupils to make good progress. The acting headteacher has taken decisive action to address this shortcoming and a new leader with responsibility for SEN has been appointed for September.
- Until recently, weaknesses in the school's systems to record and deal with incidents of poor behaviour have not been sufficiently rigorous. The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's work to support pupils with challenging behaviour has been weak. This has previously resulted in some pupils being excluded from school.
- Most subject leaders are new to post. Although they are enthusiastic and ambitious for their subjects, they have not yet had time to make sufficient improvements to pupils' learning in the wider curriculum.

- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding appropriately to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils. In class, teaching assistants are deployed effectively, working alongside individuals to help pupils make good progress. However, some pupils do not make good progress because the tasks are not always matched well enough to the abilities of the pupils.
- The physical education (PE) and sports premium has been used well to help pupils access more opportunities for sporting activities. Leaders have also used this funding appropriately to develop staff skills in teaching aspects of the PE curriculum. Pupils appreciate the increased number of opportunities available, particularly tennis. They enjoy taking part in competitions and are aware of the health benefits of sport.
- Pupils are taught to value life in modern Britain. The democratically elected school council is proud of the work it has done so far, particularly around improving school dinners, which are both tasty and healthy. Pupils learn about other faiths and a range of cultures, including through visits from faith leaders to school assemblies. As a result, they demonstrate tolerance and understanding.
- A significant majority of parents who presented their views during the inspection were supportive of the acting headteacher and happy with the school. However, some parents have concerns about the lack of permanent teaching staff in certain classes and the quality of teaching in the school.

Governance of the school

- In recent years, governors have not been rigorous enough in holding leaders to account. They have not taken sufficient action to challenge leaders about the declining standards of achievement. The newly restructured governing body is determined to reverse the decline in standards and governors have stepped up their scrutiny of all aspects of the school.
- Governors share the acting headteacher's ambitions for the school and support her unanimously. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have an improved understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They welcome the expertise provided by the local authority and have brokered good support for the acting headteacher from a local headteacher. As a result, standards across the school are beginning to improve.
- Governors undertake training to keep themselves up to date and are becoming more adept at challenging leaders by asking appropriate questions. Governors are beginning to analyse the information presented to them and challenge leaders' assertions. They recognise the difficulties presented by staffing challenges and are keen to bring about stability without delay. Governors are extremely loyal to the school and its community.
- Governors, rightly, take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. They are monitoring safeguarding arrangements and ensure that the school fulfils all of its statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have put in place good systems for safeguarding pupils. These systems are understood by all staff, who carry out their responsibilities diligently. Records are clear and up to date. Regular training supports staff in being alert to the possible signs of abuse that pupils may display. Staff report concerns promptly. The designated safeguarding leads act swiftly and maintains effective monitoring to ensure that pupils are well looked after.
- The school makes sure that the school building is secure, for example by carefully checking and monitoring any visitors to the school. Leaders are taking suitable action to make the perimeter of the school more secure. Pupils trust all adults in the school to deal with concerns quickly and effectively. They said that they feel safe in school, that bullying is rare, but that when it does occur staff resolve matters promptly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, teaching is not yet consistently good and there is too much variability across the school. Not all teachers take suitable account of pupils' abilities and interests. Sometimes teachers' expectations are insufficiently high. Consequently, some pupils do not make strong enough progress.
- In some classes, low-attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well through tasks that are suitably matched to their abilities. Effective use of questioning and assessment and support from teaching assistants helps these pupils to learn well. However, in some classes, teachers do not set tasks which meet these pupils' needs closely enough. As a result, low-attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make consistently good progress.
- Where teaching is strong, standards are improving and teachers are beginning to expect more from pupils. Year 6 pupils are catching up rapidly, and the majority are achieving well. For example, during the week of the inspection, teachers' well-planned and engaging problem-solving tasks enabled pupils to apply their skills well and extend their reasoning.
- In mathematics most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They give clear instruction and respond promptly to any misconceptions in pupils' learning. Middle-attaining pupils are now making good progress because they are experiencing greater challenge. However, the most able pupils are not challenged consistently well enough and are therefore not making the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of grammar and punctuation through a variety of approaches and interesting topics. For example, during the week of the inspection pupils were excited to learn about the natural environment through their study of the text 'The Tin Forest'. This also provided a rich opportunity for pupils to extend their knowledge of adjectives and other grammatical devices. However, not all teachers follow the school's marking policy.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is of better quality than key stage 2. Teachers plan interesting special days and activities, such as the recent science day, which help to motivate

pupils and deepen their learning.

- Phonics teaching in key stage 1 is effective and well matched to the needs of the pupils. They learn to apply their phonic skills well when reading and writing and make sensible attempts when spelling new words. Across the school, reading is promoted well, and pupils are encouraged to read widely. They have access to a range of high-quality texts. Teachers ensure that pupils' reading books are matched to their needs and interests.
- Across the school, improved teaching is leading to improvements in pupils' learning and the quality of their work in books, particularly in writing and mathematics. However, variations in the overall quality of teaching have limited the quality of pupils' learning and their writing in the wider curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and spoke enthusiastically about their learning and achievements. They are particularly proud of the improvements they have made in handwriting since January. Pupils appreciate the positive changes made to teaching and behaviour since the arrival of the acting headteacher. They said, 'Teachers are pushing us to do harder work. There is now a focus to do tables across the school.'
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the importance of making healthy food choices and keeping active. They recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They know how to manage risks when using the internet and know that it is important to be responsible in their online behaviour. They feel that there are adults they can go to for help should the need arise, and are confident that any issues will be dealt with.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well and are respectful of each other and of their teachers. They work well together during lessons and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Most pupils move around the school sensibly, for example when entering and leaving the hall for assembly. Pupils said that they strive to improve their behaviour because they want to win extra opportunities to play sport.
- During breaktimes, most pupils play sensibly together and develop their physical skills using the available play equipment.
- School leaders have put in place a range of effective strategies to improve attendance. Attendance in some year groups has improved and is now in line with national expectations. However, leaders acknowledge that they will need to maintain their focus on this aspect of the school's work as attendance rates, although improving, are not

yet high enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because not enough pupils make consistently good progress. New leaders are taking effective action to improve pupils' learning. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in the quality of some teaching remain and limit pupils' progress.
- In 2016 and 2017, attainment at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average. Low aspirations, weak teaching, and instability in staffing over a prolonged period had resulted in many pupils making insufficient progress across the key stage. As a result, these pupils underachieved at the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics.
- Outcomes for the current Year 6 are improving rapidly because teaching is strong. Pupils are working hard and catching up quickly. Recent and externally moderated assessments show that more pupils than the previous year are on track to achieve the expected and higher standards. Work seen in pupils' books confirms that Year 6 pupils are making good progress in mathematics and English. However, the picture is not so positive for pupils in all year groups.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils achieved less well than other pupils. Few of these pupils achieved the higher standards at key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics combined, and at key stage 1 in reading. Current disadvantaged pupils are not making strong enough progress. Similarly, pupils who have SEN/and or disabilities are not making consistently good progress. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching have hindered these pupils' progress.
- Pupils' progress is stronger in key stage 1 than it is in key stage 2. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieve the required standard in the phonics screening check is consistently in line with the national average because of effective teaching and well-matched activities. In 2017, the proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieved the age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics was at or above the national average. Overall, most current pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress.
- With the exception of the current Year 6, the most able pupils are not making consistently good progress across the school. This is because teachers' expectations are too low and these pupils are not challenged enough.
- Pupils' progress in writing is improving, however there remains some variability across the school, reflecting the quality of teaching, particularly in key stage 2. In some classes, pupils' skills are not developed well and pupils do not apply their skills well enough in different subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is led well and is a strength of the school.
- The knowledgeable and enthusiastic leader has a clear understanding of the strengths of the setting and where further improvements can be made. She ensures that

children's progress and development are carefully tracked through well-considered evidence.

- Teaching in early years is consistently good. Adults have a good understanding of each child's development and plan accurately for their next steps.
- Adults are nurturing, supportive and skilled in techniques that develop children's language and communication skills. The environment is stimulating and supports children's learning well.
- Children enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Children make good progress and at the end of Reception the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is in line with the national average.
- The outdoor area has improved since the last inspection and is now well stocked and exciting. Children benefit from a wide variety of creative and imaginative experiences, such as making music using different instruments. They are able to develop their skills by using a wide variety of materials. Teachers carefully plan outdoor activities to complement those offered in the classroom so that children's learning is enriched.
- Teachers plan many interesting opportunities for children to develop their language and imagination. Adults are responsive to children's needs. They help to sustain children's play and attention and enhance their learning. For example, when playing imaginatively in the 'spaceship' the teacher joined in to become another member of the 'space crew' and used this well to extend children's vocabulary and learning.
- Teachers plan and organise activities which help children learn well and develop their curiosity. They also provide opportunities to develop their early reading, writing and number skills. Phonics is taught well and enables children to make a good start with reading. However, occasionally, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the most able children or extend their learning well enough.
- The school's partnership with parents and carers is strong. Parents and carers meet regularly with staff and contribute regularly to their children's learning records. This helps the early years staff build up a thorough understanding of each child and their needs. All parents with children in Reception whose views were gathered during the inspection spoke positively about early years.
- Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and ensure that children are kept safe. Children are happy, confident and prepared well for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	118313
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10046456

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Chris Roome
Headteacher	Cathy Farthing
Telephone number	01580 891 765
Website	www.staplehurstschool.co.uk/
Email address	headteacher@staplehurst.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2015

Information about this school

- The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2018. The long-standing permanent headteacher took leave the day after her arrival. This developed into long-term leave and the deputy headteacher was promoted to acting headteacher and currently undertakes this role.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has a breakfast club which is run by the school staff.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for standards and progress for pupils in Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and other teachers from the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and the local authority’s school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes across the school and undertook learning walks. All lessons observed by the lead inspector were observed jointly with the acting headteacher. Two assemblies were also observed. One inspector visited a pupil being educated off-site.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at work in pupils’ books and discussed pupils’ progress with leaders.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including the school council, and spoke to pupils in classes and on the playground. One inspector had school dinner with the pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through discussions before school and through 96 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, 56 free-text responses, and one email to the Ofsted help desk. The views of staff were taken into account through the 20 staff survey responses and through discussions with teachers.
- Inspectors also reviewed a wide range of other documents, including minutes of meetings, behaviour logs, policies, action plans, records of performance management, curriculum plans, evaluations of teaching and learning, and information from the school website.

Inspection team

Anna Boshier, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Keen	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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