

Stow-on-the-Wold Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115540
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326218
Inspection date	10 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	116
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dick Glazier
Headteacher	Rebecca Scutt
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Edward's Drive Stow-on-the-Wold Cheltenham GL54 1AW
Telephone number	01451 830784
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well the school ensures pupils make consistently good progress, particularly in writing
- the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in evaluating the impact of the school's provision on pupils' progress.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's data on pupils' progress; visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work; observation of an assembly; discussions with staff, governors, parents and pupils; and analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this small primary school are White British and have English as their first language. A few are of Gypsy Roma heritage. A number of pupils from Exclusive Brethren families attend the school until the end of Year 2, when they transfer to a Brethren school in Gloucester. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little above average in the school as a whole. It is high in some year groups. These pupils' needs cover a wide range, mostly moderate learning difficulties or problems with speech, language and communication or behaviour.

A children's centre opened on the school's site in November 2008. There is also an independent Nursery, which has been running since February 2007. Most children now attend the Nursery prior to entering the school. In October 2007, the school started a breakfast club for its pupils.

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. Its partnerships with others to ensure pupils' well-being are excellent. Particularly significant is the impact of the close links with the on-site nursery for children starting school, ensuring a very smooth transition. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs met swiftly from the outset and this is much appreciated by their parents. The school works extremely closely with a wide range of professionals and the children's centre to support pupils' welfare needs very effectively.

Partnerships with parents are very good. Many parents told inspectors how much they appreciate the dedication and commitment of all staff and the way in which the headteacher 'bends over backwards' to work with them. They rightly see communication between home and school as excellent. As one parent observed, reflecting the views of many, 'The headteacher and teachers are always available to chat with if we have any concerns.' Another commented, 'I have made occasional suggestions for minor improvements and the head responds immediately.'

The school promotes community cohesion well and this is reflected in the effective way in which it includes all its pupils. It works closely with elders as well as families from the Brethren community, for example, to support pupils' access to the curriculum. All pupils are helped to gain insight into the diversity of backgrounds represented within the school. Pupils have, for instance, visited the Stow horse fair to find out about Gypsy Roma culture. Workshops are provided for parents to help them support their children's learning and, for instance, to promote safety for pupils when they are out of school. An exceptionally good initiative is the provision of a variety of interesting holiday activities for pupils. The breakfast club has been welcomed by parents, helping those who work to drop children off at school early. It has also contributed to improved attendance and to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The vast majority of pupils behave well and enjoy school a good deal. As one parent said, 'My children cannot wait to go to school each morning and hurry me along!' Relationships are good among pupils of all backgrounds and between pupils and adults. Pupils are sure that they have an adult to whom they can turn should the need arise, and say that they feel safe at school. The school is successful in promoting healthy lifestyles, such as through its good provision for sport. Pupils enjoy exercise and have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is strong. In particular, they have a voice in evaluating initiatives, such as the provision of new resources for information and communication technology. They also have a real say in improving the school's accommodation. Pupils take part in many community activities and willingly raise funds for charities.

All in all, pupils are well prepared for their future lives through the personal attributes they develop and the good progress they make with their work. From starting points that have, until recently, been below the levels expected nationally, pupils achieve well. In most recent years, standards have been above average at the end of Year 6. However, pupils' progress and standards have not been as high in writing as in reading, mathematics and science. The gap between pupils' standards in writing and those in other areas was particularly evident in the assessments of pupils' performance at the end of Year 2 in 2008.

The school has rightly identified pupils' writing as an area to improve. It is giving writing a high profile, through displays of pupils' work, the award of 'writer of the week' in each class and improvements in how adults guide pupils in writing activities. While some good action has

already been taken, the school recognises that it has not yet done enough to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their standards in this area.

- There are a number of reasons why pupils' progress is good overall. The tracking of pupils' progress is rigorous and has become even more so recently with the implementation of new systems. Pupils not moving on well enough are quickly identified and swift action taken, such as in the provision of extra support. As a result, some pupils with learning difficulties in particular have made tremendous gains. This was reflected in test scores for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2007 and 2008. A very effective development recently is the school's participation in the Making Good Progress project. This project provides individual tuition for pupils in Years 3 to 6 who are most in need of it. Pupils are responding well to this support.

Teaching and the curriculum also have a good impact on pupils' progress. In addition to their daily lessons, the many opportunities available to pupils, such as clubs, visits and visitors, broaden their experiences well. Many strengths in teaching move learning on at a good pace. In particular, teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and they tell them the expected outcomes of each lesson. Instructions and activities are focused well on promoting the intended learning. However, there are instances of teaching that is satisfactory, rather than good. When teaching is less effective, it is not closely enough matched to the different needs of pupils in the class and does not challenge them all fully. Some academic guidance is very good but not all is equally effective in telling pupils how to improve their performance. This results in missed opportunities to move learning on, particularly in writing. It also prevents pupils from taking more responsibility for their learning.

The school is led and managed well. It has made significant strides since the last inspection in supporting pupils and their families. The strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained. Governors now provide much support but their role in asking leaders challenging questions is still developing. Leaders, particularly the headteacher, are effective in evaluating the impact of provision on pupils' progress and in taking well-focused action for improvement. As a result, the school has good capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are now starting school with skills at the levels expected for their age. Good teaching ensures that they get off to a good start in the Reception Year, and standards at the end of Reception are rising. Last year, they were above average overall, but not as strong in early writing as in other areas.

As a result of the excellent attention given to their welfare, children settle quickly, behave well and soon grow in confidence and independence. The school works closely with the nursery staff to gain accurate assessments of children's attainment on entry to the school. Good account is taken of these initial assessments in planning the curriculum. Many interesting activities are provided for children, both indoors and outside. There is a good balance of activities that children select for themselves and those that are directed by adults. Effective action is being taken to help children to make a better start in writing. The teacher knows, however, that information gained through ongoing observations and assessments is not always used sufficiently well to match activities to children's needs. The Reception provision is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and raise the standards they attain in this aspect of their work.
- Ensure all teaching is closely matched to all pupils' needs and challenges them fully.
- Provide all pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their performance and take more responsibility for their learning.

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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?	1
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 are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are 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	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

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 interests 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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stow-on-the-Wold Primary School, Cheltenham GL54 1AW

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, watching your lessons and looking at your work. We found out that yours is a good school. It works very well with your parents and with other people to help you.

You are lucky to have a wide range of activities in addition to your daily lessons. We saw that those of you who attend the breakfast club are helped to get off to a good start to the day. There are also lots of clubs, visits and visitors. The events that the school organises for you during the school holidays sound like a lot of fun.

We saw that you enjoy school and behave well. You get on well with each other and with the adults in school. The school also teaches you how to stay safe, such as when you are involved in practical activities. You know a lot about how to stay fit and healthy. You make a good contribution to your school and to the wider community, such as when you raise funds for charities.

You make good progress at school and there are several reasons for this. One reason is that the school is very good at checking on your progress and giving you extra help when you need it. Another is that the teaching and the activities that you do help you to learn well. Your school is also well led and managed and your headteacher and the other adults want it to be even better. To help, we have asked them to do these things:

- Speed up your progress in writing and help you to reach higher standards in this aspect of your work. At the moment, you make better progress in reading, mathematics and science than in writing.
- Make sure that all the teaching and the activities in lessons are always at the right level for each of you – not too easy, but not too hard either.
- Give all of you clear guidance on how to improve your work. This should also help you to take more responsibility for your learning.

Thank you once again. You can help by always doing your best and being considerate towards others.

Yours faithfully

Alison Grainger

Lead inspector