

Stilton CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110821
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325232
Inspection dates	10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Springford
Headteacher	Miss A Baughan
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 February 2006
School address	Church Street Stilton Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE7 3RF
Telephone number	01733 240480
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

They evaluated the effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well the teaching challenges more able pupils, especially boys in writing
- the effectiveness of assessment procedures in encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their learning
- how well the school is supporting vulnerable pupils.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with pupils, staff and governors and analysis of school documentation and pupils' work. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small primary school caters for pupils in Stilton and surrounding villages. The school roll is falling rapidly as the nature of the village changes and fewer young families settle in the area. Most pupils come from White British families and there is a growing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds although this is still much lower than in most schools. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen sharply in recent years and is now broadly average. Many have significant emotional needs and others have moderate learning difficulties. Over the past few years significant numbers of pupils have either left or joined the school late in Key Stage 2, reflecting the increasing turnover of this small rural community. Year group sizes vary considerably from year to year as do the proportions of girls and boys.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start in the Reception class in the September of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday. Their attainment on entry varies considerably but overall is broadly as expected for children of their age.

The school has won a number of awards in recent years, including Basic Skills, Healthy Schools and Activemark.

The Haven, a privately run organisation which uses the school site, provides childcare facilities before and after school and during holidays.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it provides a good education for pupils. Strong teamwork among staff, coupled with clear leadership from the headteacher and good support from governors, have enabled the school to make considerable improvements since the last inspection. Pupils have appreciated the changes, particularly the way in which teachers now involve them in their own learning by providing clear targets for improvement. Most parents are supportive of the school's work with their children. One spoke for many when she said: 'The school has a warm, comfy atmosphere and parents are kept well informed about everything.'

Pastoral care, including the support offered to pupils with significant emotional needs, is excellent and helps pupils feel confident to take the next steps in their learning. At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding procedures met government requirements. Pupils say that their school is a safe place, where they feel respected. 'They look after you well if you are sad, or need time out,' said one pupil, describing the levels of care provided by all the adults in the school. Pupils are thoughtful and sensitive to each other's needs. They respect one another's ideas and values and work well together in lessons. Pupils in a Year 3 literacy lesson worked successfully in pairs to identify the features of informative writing, discussing their ideas sensibly before highlighting relevant parts of the text. They keenly shared their findings with the rest of the class, who listened carefully to each presentation.

Behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils play happily in the playground and report that bullying, though extremely rare, is dealt with quickly. They have a good awareness of personal safety, describing, for instance, the correct way to cross the road and the possible dangers of using the internet. They have satisfactory opportunities to support their school community through, for example, the school council and through working with the school cook to design healthy menus. Pupils have benefited from the school's work to achieve the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards in recent years. They understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles, enjoying healthy snacks at playtime and participating enthusiastically in physical education lessons and after-school activities, such as softball and dance. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good. Pupils enjoy all the experiences that the school offers, including several residential trips throughout Key Stage 2. These contribute well to their good personal development, helping them to learn how to live and work together away from home. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good although cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a growing awareness of cultural diversity, supported by school wide projects on, for example, Pakistan, but this aspect is not as well developed as other areas of their personal development.

Teaching is good. Teachers know the pupils very well and take great care to ensure that lessons meet pupils' different needs and abilities. Planning is thorough and activities are provided at different levels to ensure that all pupils make effective progress. Additional support by teaching assistants helps pupils who find learning more difficult take a full part in lessons and achieve well. Good levels of challenge are provided for more able pupils, to ensure they extend their learning effectively.

The strongest aspect of the teaching is in the way the teachers involve pupils in their learning by providing them with clear targets for improvement. They do this in a variety of ways, for example by sticking writing targets in the back of workbooks, noting reading targets on bookmarks and giving very clear guidance through their marking. Pupils relish these challenges and their motivation contributes considerably to their good progress. Classrooms are bright and lively and pupils' challenges and targets are prominently displayed. However, there is not enough pupils' work on the walls to recognise and reward their efforts and provide good examples for others to follow.

Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6 and standards are generally above average. Standards in the Year 2 national assessments are rising as more and more pupils reach higher levels, especially in writing and mathematics. Standards in the Year 6 national tests dipped to broadly average in the last two years, mainly because of the high proportions in each cohort who left the school late in Key Stage 2 who were on track to achieve or exceed national standards. However, school records show that pupils achieved well, including those who joined the school late. With a more stable cohort this year, standards are set to rise considerably, with a large proportion of pupils reaching exceptionally high levels. Good academic and personal achievement means that pupils are well prepared for their future education and beyond.

Last year, through careful analysis of assessment data, senior staff realised that boys were not doing as well as girls in writing, especially in Key Stage 2. Hardly any boys reached the higher Level 5 in the national tests in Year 6. Changes were made to the curriculum to provide more first hand, relevant experiences to engage boys' interest more effectively and increase their motivation. Writing about aspects of their history work on the Second World War, for instance, grabbed boys' imagination and resulted in some thoughtful and reflective writing. Setting clear targets for improvement has also contributed to boys' improved achievement in writing. They are keen to respond to teachers' comments in their books and show a real desire to succeed. Consequently, standards are rising and a high proportion of boys are on track to reach Level 5 this year.

Assessment procedures in reading, writing and mathematics are rigorous. Regular pupil progress interviews between individual teachers, the headteacher and deputy headteacher quickly identify pupils who are underachieving so that interventions can be implemented to help pupils overcome any problems. Consequently, pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those with more significant learning needs make good progress. The school is working hard to extend the links it has with support groups and services to more fully meet the needs of families and children.

Senior staff and governors have been conscious of the changing nature of the school's population. They have been proactive in establishing a community committee to find ways to sustain and extend the school's links with the local community. Pupils are beginning to understand what life is like in different sorts of communities. Links with a village in France are developing and the pupils welcomed French visitors to their school last year. The community committee is aware of the need to forge more links with different communities in the United Kingdom, to extend pupils' understanding about life in multicultural Britain.

The school's falling roll and resultant reduction in funding have presented considerable challenges to the headteacher and governors in terms of school organisation and staffing. They have approached this carefully, and have managed finances prudently over the last few years to allow them to maintain good staffing levels so that pupils' education does not suffer. A few parents have been concerned about mixed age classes, but inspectors found that the needs of pupils in these classes are catered for carefully so they are not disadvantaged. The school's good curriculum is at present under review to ensure that pupils' skills in all subjects continue to develop progressively as they move through the school.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher. Together, they form a strong team who evaluate the school's performance rigorously and act quickly to address weaknesses. They monitor teaching carefully and provide good levels of coaching and advice to help teachers continue to improve. Governors play an important role in school management, through their work on committees and a good system of school visits. They bring a useful range of skills to support the school in, for example, finance and community issues. Overall, the school shows a good capacity to improve further in the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage **Grade: 3**

Children make a satisfactory start to their formal education in the Reception class. Effective induction procedures mean that parents have confidence in school staff and that children settle quickly into school life. They enjoy all the experiences that are organised for them over the year. One parent of a Reception child commented: 'My child goes into school with a smile on her face and comes out with it still there!'

The children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Most meet the goals expected of them by the end of the year. This provides them with a solid platform on which to build when they move into Year 1. Good relationships exist between the children and with the adults who teach them. Staff know the children very well and have a kind, caring approach in their dealings with them, particularly those that need more help with their learning.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Staff are working hard to implement changes to the learning environment so that all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum are offered to the children. Where improvements have already been made, like in the 'under water' and 'space' role play areas, the children are keen and excited to learn more. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities during the day to access these areas and to learn for themselves. Too many activities are led by adults and this further restricts children's independence. The school is aware of this and has plans to develop the curriculum to include a wider range of more stimulating activities. This includes providing a shaded area outside so that this space can be used more frequently by the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the range of learning experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure they have sufficient opportunities for independent learning.
- Strengthen links with the local community and extend links with communities further afield to promote community cohesion more effectively.

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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?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good is 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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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

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.

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
How well 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	3
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?	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



11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stilton CofE VC Primary School, Stilton, PE7 3RF

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school recently. It was good to watch you working in lessons and chat to you in the playground and around the school.

You go to a good school. All the adults look after you really well. It was great to hear your views about the school and how much you enjoy learning. The quality of work in your books and the contributions you make in lessons show that you are making good progress. You take care with your work and try your best to meet the targets that your teachers set. Your hard work, along with good teaching, helps you to achieve well. Your behaviour and attendance are good. You know the importance of keeping fit and healthy, many of you taking part in regular sport in and out of school. It was good to see many of you enjoying the nutritious school meals which have been carefully planned and prepared for you.

The people in charge are doing a good job. They are always looking for ways to make the school even better for you, the pupils. We have asked them to organise more activities for the children in Reception to work and play independently indoors and outdoors. We have asked your teachers to build more links within your local community so you can play an even more active role in supporting it. They are also going to extend the links with other communities so you gain a better understanding about what life is like for other people.

Thank you once again for your help. Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mary Summers
Lead inspector