

Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Summer Lane, Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 0JP

Inspection dates

2–3 February 2017

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Following a four year period of unsettled staffing, leaders have not maintained the good standard of education previously provided by the school.
- Governors have not provided the support and challenge necessary during the turbulence in staffing. They have not implemented effective plans to cope with the demands the school faced. Pupils' learning has suffered as a result.
- Mathematics has not been planned effectively enough for the demands of the new curriculum. Pupils are ill-prepared for success in the end-of-year test at key stage 2.
- Although much work has been done to improve the teaching of reading, the standards achieved are still not good enough.
- The opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum are limited. Pupils are not developing the skills and understanding of the full range of genres that should be studied at key stage 2. Because of this, pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, particularly for the most able.
- Support for the teacher of the early years foundation stage has not focused adequately on outcomes for children in the Reception class. Consequently, too few children are making the progress expected.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour and consideration for others is very good.
- The curriculum for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects supports pupils' understanding of diversity well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of governance to provide effective strategic leadership that supports and challenges school leaders to bring about the improvements needed.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that leaders:
 - raise expectations for pupils and rigorously monitor and evaluate pupils' achievement information to ensure that they succeed
 - increase pupils' progress so that by the end of each key stage, including the early years foundation stage, their achievement reflects their potential and is at least in line with national expectations
 - quicken the pace of change.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by teachers:
 - having the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able
 - providing challenge that deepens pupils' thinking
 - providing opportunities for pupils to write at greater depth in a range of subjects
 - consolidating the reading skills of pupils so that they can comprehend texts and understand inferences at the level necessary for success in their end-of-year tests
 - using reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics as a result of a sequential programme of study.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The constant staffing issues and long-term absences for the past four years have limited the headteacher's capacity for improvement. The expectations and understanding of the challenge of the new national curriculum were not considered soon enough. Pupils' achievement at key stage 2 plummeted as a result, particularly in reading.
- Leaders and teachers are not enabling adequate progress for pupils. They have failed to grasp the level of change necessary within mathematics and literacy to secure good outcomes for pupils.
- Although the headteacher checks on the quality of teaching, the subsequent actions are not resulting in improvements quickly enough.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes subjects such as French. However, it is not providing pupils with enough opportunities to develop their mathematical and writing skills in other subjects. The learning tasks set limit pupils' expectations and do not allow them to apply their knowledge effectively. Too often, the most able pupils are not stretched.
- Previous external support did not improve pupils' outcomes. Some of the findings, such as the progress of pupils in the early years foundation stage, were overgenerous and lacked rigour.
- The current school improvement partner has a very clear understanding of the key areas in need of improvement. It is too soon to comment on the impact of actions taken so far.
- The majority of pupils arrive on buses because of the large rural catchment area of the school. Leaders have been successful in maintaining engagement with parents despite the lack of face-to-face contact. Attendance at parents information evenings is good. The focus is suitably informative about new initiatives such as the changes to the curriculum as well as pupils' progress.
- The few disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are doing as well as other pupils in the school. Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 are achieving well in writing and mathematics but are not doing as well in reading.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is used well. The school is part of a cluster which shares the cost of a physical education expert. Staff are trained effectively and their skills have improved as well as their confidence. Pupils gain from this by taking part in a greater range of activities, including dance.
- There are a range of extra-curricular, mainly creative, activities. Pupils enjoy these, particularly drama and choir. School leaders evaluate the attendance of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, and ensure that any barriers to participating are removed. Half of the disadvantaged pupils attend, which is a figure similar to the other pupils in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are achieving well from

their different starting points. Many pupils transfer to the school during their primary phase of education and settle in well. Pupils are happy and are achieving strong outcomes as a result of the support offered.

- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils is taught well. Pupils are taught about the fundamental British values of democracy through the school council elections. Each class has developed its own charter, which pupils appreciate and abide by.

Governance of the school

- Recent months have seen a time of turbulence in the governance of the school. There have been four new chairs in the past six years. This has led to unstable strategic leadership which has impeded the progress necessary for the school. The most recent chair has attended school training days and is keen to understand the demands of the role. Several of the governors are new and inexperienced. They are learning about the strategic importance of their roles. However, the rigorous support and challenge needed has been absent and the urgency required to manage the improvements has not materialised. It is recommended that a review take place to help speed up the process.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have created a culture where assessing risk is the norm. The site has an open-air swimming pool and the school has effective and regular health and safety audits to ensure that the area is safe. The personal safety and well-being of pupils are secure. Suitable checks are undertaken on staff, visitors and recruitment. Well-managed processes are in place for monitoring and recording any safeguarding concerns. Staff are trained in how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support the more vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers have not considered ways to deepen pupils' knowledge more effectively through incisive questioning and more challenging tasks, particularly in reading comprehension.
- Teachers are not using subjects in the wider curriculum to support numeracy and literacy. They are focusing correctly on the conceptual understanding but the learning activities planned limit pupils' development in writing and mathematical reasoning.
- Teachers provide regular spelling checks on words that are age-related and appropriate. However, there is no consistent practice to improve the incorrect spellings that exist in pupils' extended writing. Pupils' progress in this area, and other aspects of grammatical knowledge, are hampered because of the lack of immediate and planned remedial action.

- Pupils' use of reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics is not planned effectively. Sometimes, resources do not support the tasks, such as number lines that are too short for the calculations set. At other times, pupils complete problems that have no bearing on the arithmetical work previously studied. This tests understanding but does not help pupils relate calculation work to reasoning and problem-solving as is found in the wider world.
- The lead for literacy was appointed in September 2016. She has plans in place to improve the progress of pupils in reading and writing. The plans are evaluated regularly and tweaks made when the impact is not sufficient. The range of areas for improvement are substantial, so development is ongoing. The leader has passion and enthusiasm, as well as a clear grasp of strategic management, which is helping green shoots to appear in this area of work.
- Pupils are keen to learn, and enjoy being challenged. A group of most-able pupils spoke of this to the lead inspector.
- Leaders have raised awareness of the few disadvantaged pupils in the school. There are individualised plans to support these pupils which help them to make expected progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are, likewise, provided with support from skilful teaching assistants. There have been some delays in receiving support from the local authority. The school has managed this difficult situation well and pupils continue to attend and achieve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The nurturing of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective.
- Pupils are confident and keen to do well. They enjoy the opportunities which the school provides for them in sports, leadership initiatives and creative clubs.
- Even on rainy lunchtimes when in the hall pupils play together with tolerance, regardless of age. Pupils are respectful of the school and its equipment.
- Pupils' physical development is enhanced from Reception class onwards by the provision and teaching provided. There is a forest school in the grounds to which the pupils have access at timetabled slots. Here, they are able to exploit the fresh air and challenge of the outdoors. Pupils are given healthy food to eat at breaktimes.
- The environment is conducive to the pupils' positive and stable well-being. Pupils are safe, feel safe and are taught how to minimise personal risk. The older pupils understand the dangers of the internet.
- Bullying in the school is a rarity that is dealt with effectively. Pupils understand the different types of bullying that can occur and know what to do if this happened.
- Pupils are self-motivated but are not given enough opportunities to shine. Similarly,

some endeavours are not rewarded or shared with parents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is orderly.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons and ready to learn.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Teachers are not building on these attitudes sufficiently to make sure progress is more rapid.
- Attendance has improved overall and for all groups of pupils. It is better than the national average across the board. The practices for ensuring that pupils are in school have been strengthened effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in 2016 at key stage 2 were very poor. They placed the school among the bottom 5% of schools nationally in reading and in the lowest 25% in writing. There is a high hill to climb to make sure that pupils achieve expected progress.
- The majority of pupils in each year group are in the middle-ability range. Expectations from teachers were not high enough for them and this had an impact on results. In the English, grammar, punctuation and spelling test in the summer of 2016, the performance of middle-ability pupils, including the disadvantaged, was significantly below the national average.
- Pupils in key stage 1 are not making progress in phonics in line with age-related expectations. Teaching is shared and is not always secure. Pupils are not corrected automatically when mispronunciations are made. In addition, pupils are making too many basic grammatical mistakes, such as in the placement of capital letters and full stops. This lack of understanding impedes pupils from making sufficient progress in the more sophisticated punctuation and grammatical constructs in key stage 2.
- The most able pupils are not provided with enough challenging exercises in mathematics. Consequently, the most able pupils are not achieving their potential in mathematics in Years 1, 4 and 6.
- In order to improve reading, the lead for literacy, with help from volunteer parents, has transformed the library. Now, it is well stocked with books, both fiction and non-fiction and is both purposeful and inviting. Pupils make considered use of the library at various times of the day as well as in timetabled lessons. Pupils are guided in their reading but the most able could be stretched further in their choice of reading books. The decoding and fluency of reading is improving but there is still a way to go to help pupils comprehend the more challenging vocabulary. Older pupils are aware that their skills of inferring what a literary text is implying are not yet good.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress. Many of the pupils have significant needs, emotionally and physically. These are understood well by the special educational needs coordinator and the

teaching assistants.

- The majority of disadvantaged pupils are now making progress in line with national expectations. The few pupils who are not yet at the expected standard are making progress but it is slower. Planning and funding are in place to make sure that they achieve their potential.
- The more careful monitoring of pupils that is done currently shows that there are signs of improvement in reading and writing. There are indications that some of the most able pupils are achieving at the higher levels.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Neither school leaders nor those within the local authority have provided enough support and challenge to ensure that outcomes are good.
- Professional development has not had an impact on the required academic areas and in raising expectations.
- Not enough children are exceeding at a good level of development. The least-able children are not receiving teaching and provision which helps them catch up in reading, writing and numeracy.
- Insufficient play and exploration prevents children from applying their letters and sounds knowledge across the curriculum. This is hampering them from making rapid progress in reading and writing.
- There are too few opportunities for children to develop numeracy and measuring skills independently. Signposting is lost within an overcrowded series of displays. Careful consideration of what is important to progress learning within a given timeframe is not apparent.
- Children are unable to apply their own learning to solve problems. They are often not provided with the challenge they need to make good progress.
- Academic expectations are too low and are outweighed by the consideration of emotional and physical well-being. Consequently, children are not performing at age-related expectations in numeracy, writing and phonics. Planning is not precise enough with regard to the improvements that need to be made.
- Teaching does not check children's understanding regularly. Children are not prompted to consider new initiatives that build on the progress they have made. This was seen in the teaching of phonics where pupils continued with mark-making rather than developing individual letters.
- Children respond well to adults. They take responsibility for their actions eagerly. They are keen to learn. Children show resilience and tenacity over an extended time when allowed to do so.
- Children's personal and social development is strong because teachers know the children well. Activities are set up where children can integrate, learn to share and take turns without undue fuss and bother. Their time in the library is a good example of this where they show independence of thought with regard to the books they

want to look at. Children wait patiently to share and explain their books to other children, teachers and adults.

- Teachers have created a rich learning environment to engage children, including use of the forest school. However, the threads for literacy and numeracy are not used advantageously in the different classrooms, inside and out.
- Children are safe and the safeguarding practices are robust.

School details

Unique reference number	113799
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10000821

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Campbell
Headteacher	Kathy McCann
Telephone number	01935 83287
Website	www.sticklands.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@sticklands.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about safeguarding as the 'Keeping children safe in education' document is out of date, and the phonics and reading schemes are not mentioned for parents on its website.
- Sticklands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is smaller than the average primary school.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The school has a very wide rural catchment area and the majority of pupils travel on

buses to and from school.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector visited lessons jointly with the headteacher.
- A wide sample of pupils' work, from all year groups and a range of subjects, was scrutinised.
- The lead inspector talked with a group of most-able pupils from key stage 2, as well as with pupils informally across the site.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body. A telephone call was made to the school improvement partner.
- Information and other documentary evidence were evaluated including that relating to safeguarding, assessment, school evaluation and external reviews.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to and nine comments in the online Parent View survey, the 14 responses to the pupil survey and the 11 responses to the staff online survey.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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