

Stowford School

Exeter Road, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0BG

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All groups of pupils achieve well. Attainment is rising across the school as pupils are making faster progress.
- Most pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from teaching that is consistently good. Teachers are particularly effective in devising activities that engage and captivate pupils' interests.
- Teachers give pupils very clear guidance, especially in improving their writing, which is helping them to make faster progress.
- Reading is taught well so that pupils quickly become fluent readers and develop a real love of books.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school and have positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well and say that they feel very safe in school because the school provides a caring and secure place to learn.
- The very dedicated headteacher, supported by the effective leadership team and governors, has been successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils have many memorable experiences, including those in music and sporting activities, which contribute strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding because, in a few lessons, some pupils could learn at a faster rate.
- Checks on the impact of teaching by middle leaders do not focus sharply enough on how well different groups of pupils learn.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, several of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons, the dining hall and the playground, and observed three assemblies.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and the school's leaders. Also, the lead inspector spoke with an external consultant who has been supporting the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 83 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as consulting informally with parents and carers before the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's improvement plans, information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring files, minutes of the governing body meetings, the plans for use of the school's additional sports funding and records relating to special educational needs, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspectors heard pupils read, talked to them in lessons and evaluated samples of their work.

Inspection team

Sandra Woodman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Liz Townend	Additional Inspector
Kevin Lynch	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stowford School converted to become an academy on 1 April 2012. When its predecessor school, Stowford Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are organised in 14 classes, in single year groups.
- The large majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the additional funding known as the pupil premium is below average. This is the additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with parents in the armed forces. Currently there are no looked after children in school.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding levels by developing teachers' ability to provide the right level of challenge for different groups throughout lessons.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that middle leaders evaluate the teaching in terms of its impact on the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils of different abilities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The skills of children when they join the school in the Reception Year vary from year to year. In 2013 the majority entered with skills typically below the expected levels for their age, especially in their speaking and listening skills. They make good progress because of the well-organised learning activities, with most beginning Year 1 as confident learners.
- Over the past year, pupils have made faster progress in all subjects across the school. The attainment of the Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2013 was above average, especially in reading and writing. The school has successfully eliminated the dip in progress in mathematics in 2013, so that current attainment is above average in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
- Pupils for whom the school receives additional funding make good, and sometimes better, progress than their classmates in school due to well-targeted, extra support. In 2013, most Year 6 pupils supported by the funding attained as well as the other pupils, in all subjects.
- The most able pupils are making faster progress, and their attainment is rising because teachers have higher expectations. However, achievement is not yet outstanding because the progress of most able pupils is not consistent throughout the school and some pupils could achieve more.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects and are reaching their potential due to the effective support and well-planned help they receive.
- Year 1 pupils performed well above the national average in the Year 1 phonic (sounds that letters make) screening check in 2013. This reflects the greater emphasis put on the teaching of the sounds that letters make, so that pupils are developing their skills to become fluent readers. Older pupils speak enthusiastically about different authors and read widely across a range of literature, demonstrating a clear understanding of what they have read.
- Greater numbers of pupils are taking part in a wider range of sports and competitions supported by the new school sport funding. Pupils say they are more active now and enjoy competing at a high level against other schools in swimming galas and other sports tournaments.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. It is not yet outstanding as, in a few instances, teachers do not provide the right level of challenge and, as a result, not all pupils are achieving as well as they could.
- Overall, pupils learn effectively because teachers plan purposeful learning activities that capture their interests and motivate them to succeed. For example, pupils in Year 6 were enthralled when writing their stories about a haunted house due to the skilful way teachers helped them to build suspense in their writing. 'This is the best writing I've ever done,' was one such comment from a pupil, and others agreed with this.
- Teachers check on pupils' progress regularly in lessons, often adapting the activities to speed up the learning. Pupils know how to improve their work as teachers give them detailed and clear guidance about how to do this and time to act on their suggestions. This is particularly effective in writing and so pupils have made faster progress over the past year.
- Teachers and additional adults are skilled at providing the right amount of support needed for pupils to overcome any difficulties. The work set for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is set at the correct level and this is helping them to make good progress.
- Pupils supported by the additional government funding are benefiting from the extra guidance and small-group work. They are making good, and sometimes faster, progress than others in their class, so that any remaining gaps are closing in their attainment.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children enjoy a lively, vibrant environment that encourages them to explore and develop their own learning activities. The systematic teaching of the sounds that letters make is ensuring that children develop their reading skills well.
- Pupils benefit from expert teaching in music so that they develop their skills in singing and

playing simple instruments to impressive levels. They have regular opportunities to perform to an audience and they do this with exceptional confidence from a young age.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically, pupils are polite, friendly and very considerate of each other. They are well motivated, settle to work quickly and enjoy all the school has to offer.
- Relationships throughout the school are secure and effective. The playground is a safe, harmonious place because pupils have plenty to do, with a wide range of activities and play equipment. 'It is brilliant here!' This was a comment from a pupil, and this sentiment was echoed by others.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because of occasional lapses in concentration in lessons by a few pupils when they fidget and waste some time.
- Pupils, their parents and the staff are positive about standards of behaviour. The school's records show that the school deals effectively with a small number of pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties, and the incidents of poor behaviour are few.
- Pupils are clear that bullying is rare, although they are knowledgeable about the forms this can take, such as cyberbullying or racist name calling. They have clear strategies for combating any minor problems and have confidence in the adults to help them where necessary.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and the parents who completed the online questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors agree.
- Pupils are developing good strategies for keeping themselves safe from any harm, such as from cyber bullying, through learning activities in school, such as those during anti-bullying week.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They are involved in making decisions about what happens, such as their work as school councillors and eco-warriors to improve the school's outdoor environment. They relish the opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities, such as helping to appoint new staff as part of the interviewing process.
- School leaders work hard to encourage regular attendance and reduce any unnecessary absences. Consequently, current rates are above average compared to the national average for primary schools, with most pupils attending well.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is very dedicated and has instilled a strong sense of ambition in the school, supported well by all staff and governors. She has brought a great clarity to how the school, judges its effectiveness, and uses this information astutely to prioritise areas for improvement.
- The headteacher and her leadership team work well together to drive forward the necessary improvements. They check the quality of teaching, pupils' attainment and progress regularly during the year. They use this information to set challenging targets to promote faster rates of progress for different groups of pupils.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding. This is because leaders have not secured a high enough proportion of outstanding teaching across the school in order for all pupils, particularly the most able, to achieve as well as they should.
- Middle leaders are confident in their roles and are ambitious for the school. They have taken steps to improve the quality of teaching by providing a range of training activities. Their checks on teaching are not yet focused sharply enough on the impact on the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils in lessons and in their books.
- Teachers have clear and challenging targets for improving their performance which focus on pupils' achievement and teachers' wider responsibilities across the school. They know what constitutes good practice and how their pay progresses only when their targets are met.
- The school has commissioned some useful support from external consultants to help leaders when judging the school's effectiveness and improve what the school provides for all pupils.

- Pupils' learning experiences across a range of subjects are varied and memorable, particularly in music and sport. The school provides a wide array of enrichment activities that contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Checks on the plans for the use of the new sport funding show that more pupils are participating in a wider range of sporting activities such as basketball, running and multi-skills for younger pupils. Staff are able to develop their skills alongside sports specialists to help sustain these activities.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They appreciate the good levels of communication, particularly about how well their children are doing, and welcome the opportunities to become involved in their learning.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted at all times and any discrimination is tackled well. There are no recorded incidents of harassment in recent years. The school tailors the support carefully and effectively for those pupils supported by additional funding in order to raise their achievement.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and systems are managed efficiently. Staff training in areas such as child protection is up to date.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to providing the best possible education for all pupils and receive high quality information about how well pupils are doing from the headteacher. They have a clear understanding of how the school's performance data compare with similar and all schools nationally. Consequently, they are able to ask leaders challenging questions about the achievement of different groups of pupils. Increasingly, they are involved in developing and checking on improvement plans for themselves. They know about the quality of teaching through their regular visits to school. They undertake good quality training that they commission from the local authority to keep their skills up to date. They know how the performance of staff is managed and have been instrumental in introducing rewards for good performance.
 - Governors manage their budget effectively, including the additional funds for sport and pupils eligible for free school meals and those with parents in the armed forces. They know how the funds are allocated and the impact they are having on pupils' physical health and their achievement.

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	137963
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	440159

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	372
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Wycliffe-Jones
Headteacher	Helen Tipping
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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