

Stretham Community Primary School

Wood Lane, Stretham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 3JN

Inspection dates

20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is highly regarded by parents, staff and pupils and plays a significant part in the local community.
- The leadership team has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and addressing weaknesses so that teaching is now nearly always good and often outstanding.
- Where the quality of teaching is strong, teachers guide pupils to choose tasks that provide a good level of challenge and this means pupils achieve to a high standard.
- Teachers know their classes well, understand what different pupils should be achieving and provide additional support when needed. This is having a positive impact, particularly for the most disadvantaged.
- Governors are now more involved in the school. They monitor the quality of teaching by coming into school to see for themselves how things are going.
- The behaviour of the pupils is good. They are focused in lessons, listen well and there are good relationships between adults and pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school, confident that staff will deal with their concerns. All parents who responded to Parent View agree.
- A range of subjects are taught well and pupils are able to apply their basic numeracy and literacy skills in reading and writing across different subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is not always pitched at the correct level of difficulty. Those pupils who need to make even quicker progress, particularly in writing, do not always do so.
- When teachers' subject knowledge is weak, they do not have high enough expectations of what pupils could achieve.
- Some newly appointed subject leaders are still developing their skills to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning effectively.
- Some younger pupils have insufficient opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations in science.
- Leaders, including governors, are not always sufficiently robust in evaluating how effective new initiatives have been in improving the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or outstanding, particularly in subjects where staff are less confident, so that pupils make good progress by:
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in writing
 - pitching work at the correct level of difficulty
 - ensuring that pupils have opportunities in science to plan and carry out their own investigations.

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of newly appointed subject leaders
 - using the school's assessment information to identify how different groups are achieving and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used to address any underachievement
 - ensuring governors and senior leaders use monitoring information to evaluate actions in the school's development plan and identify actions for further improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, ably supported by a well-informed and energetic deputy headteacher, make a strong team. They have established a clear vision for the school that is shared by staff, parents and governors. Together they have improved the quality of teaching through professional development and mentoring. Effective feedback to teachers on the quality of learning in lessons is given through well-written evaluations. Oral feedback, observed during the inspection, provides clear guidance for improvement as well as acknowledging teaching strengths.
- A parent described the school as 'a lovely community school which welcomes everyone'. Being a community school is at the heart of the school's view of itself. It plays an active part, working with the parish council and the local youth club, developing a safeguarding strategy for the village, and hosting the local pre-school on its site. The school embraces the small Traveller community so that pupils feel included and have the same opportunities as everyone else. Responses from Parent View and the pupil and staff questionnaires show that the school is well regarded and staff morale is high.
- The senior leaders and governors regularly monitor the work of the school. However, the school development plan is not used as effectively as it could be as a driver for improvement. Governors and leaders are not always evaluating new initiatives in sufficient detail to identify further necessary actions.
- Changes in subject leadership have meant that some subject leaders are still gaining experience. However, subject leaders display good levels of competence in their subjects, with the potential to be effective leaders committed to bringing about the improvement that is required.
- The school environment, displays and classrooms exemplify high expectations and standards, something the pupils were proud to show inspectors. Areas outside are also valued by pupils, who talked enthusiastically about the Explorers Club and how to survive in the wild while caring for the natural world.
- The curriculum is well planned and lessons effectively incorporate a range of subjects, which are well taught. The current theme of 'Brilliant Britain' has enabled pupils to gain a greater appreciation of the work of the artist LS Lowry and an understanding of social issues of that era, for example where families were displaced to the workhouse. One pupil recorded her thoughts about the wider issues of today and the current displacement of refugees. She posed the following question to other pupils: 'did you know that many people from Syria want to move here?'
- A curriculum that stimulates this depth of thinking not only engages pupils' interests but also helps them to gain a rounded view of the world and develop as good citizens prepared for the world of work.
- Provision both through lessons and assemblies promotes effective reflection on faith, culture and personal choices. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of British values. They are considerate of gender and equality issues, and show respect for people from all backgrounds. This provides them with valuable skills to participate fully and contribute positively to life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught to respect the law, and their understanding is reflected in the way they acknowledge school rules. The work of the school council, sports council and house captains reflects the school's ethos of democracy.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding to provide additional teaching and welfare support for the most disadvantaged pupils, some of whom have special educational needs. This has been most effective with the oldest pupils who are not only supported through additional group work but benefit from first-class teaching in the classroom.

The primary schools sports funding has been used effectively to improve the skills of teachers to teach high-quality physical education (PE) lessons, and high-quality PE was observed during the inspection. Additional extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for all pupils to participate in a range of different sports and to represent the school in competitive games.

■ The governance of the school

- Changes in the governing body since the school's last inspection have brought new expertise in being more analytical when holding senior leaders to account.
- Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. They monitor the work of the school through regular visits, but are still developing their technique of evaluating the effectiveness of actions the school is taking to improve outcomes for pupils.

- Governors are familiar with the school’s data for tracking pupils’ achievement, but cannot clearly articulate how well different groups of pupils are doing across the school and where improvements need to be made.
 - Governors are aware that the most disadvantaged pupils have not always achieved as well as other pupils, but have put in place interventions so that this is now improving.
 - Governor reports show that they check up on pupil attendance and know that this has improved.
 - Governors understand that the progress pupils make should be the main incentive for teachers’ pay awards and have been partly successful in using appropriate processes where teaching has not been good.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The nominated governor ensures that the school’s safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Lessons at Stretham are delivered by teachers with high energy and creativity. Teaching across a range of subjects is of a high quality. In the best lessons, pupils are given the responsibility, with guidance, to choose work at an appropriately challenging level. This means pupils make rapid progress in lessons.
- Teachers use questioning well to probe pupils’ thinking. For example, older pupils were asked to think about ‘risk.’ They engaged productively in a discussion and debate, and showed that they were able to respect the views of others and gain a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding safety.
- Pupils told inspectors that they particularly enjoy practical lessons. In a computing lesson, pupils gained a good understanding of algorithms because the teacher had secure subject knowledge and the expertise to teach this effectively. In a PE lesson, pupils were active and quickly honed their skills in tag rugby because the teacher was knowledgeable about the tactics and skills required to be successful.
- Teachers use a range of teaching styles in lessons. When pupils organise their work and make choices about whom they learn with, they demonstrate their ability to cooperate and adapt within a group. In one lesson, pupils were asked to use role play and inference before being asked to write a story about a child magician who conjured a cruise liner to travel down the waterways of Venice. This resulted in some lively and imaginative writing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in most areas of the curriculum. Some teachers lack confidence in a secure understanding of some technical language, for example in English grammar, and this hinders pupils’ progress in writing. Others lack specific scientific knowledge, and when this is the case, pupils do not achieve as well as they should and opportunities are limited for pupils to plan and carry out their own investigations.
- Teachers generally know their pupils well and have identified where there are gaps in their learning because they have made accurate assessments of pupils’ achievements. Class teachers are aware of those pupils who are at risk of not doing as well as they should. They work with teaching assistants to provide additional support to fill the learning gaps and this is largely successful, particularly for the most disadvantaged. In lessons, oral feedback from teachers provides good guidance to move learning on and address any misunderstandings.
- Pupils’ books are presented well because teachers have high expectations. Pupils’ handwriting is neat and work is set out clearly. There is consistent use of the school’s marking policy and teachers spend considerable time providing written feedback to pupils. Pupils respond to teachers’ marking by correcting their own work and re-editing, which results in improvements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school looks after their child well. The school works effectively with ‘hard-to-reach’ families to support both them and their children by providing additional opportunities for clubs and extra-curricular activities. This is having a positive impact on the most disadvantaged pupils.

- Pupils say they feel secure and that there is little or no bullying in school. Their responses to the questionnaire show that they are confident that the adults in school will listen to them if they are worried. The school's system of appointing buddies when pupils start school ensures that the youngest pupils feel well supported.
- Pupils have done work in lessons on bullying and proudly showed an inspector the anti-bullying display. They have a comprehensive knowledge of different types of bullying, including any related to gender or race, and know what to do if it occurs. Their good understanding of how to keep themselves safe on the internet was observed by inspectors during a computing lesson.
- Pupils show a respect for people's differences. There is a small but increasing number of pupils who bring a richness of cultural diversity to the school and this is recognised and appreciated by the pupils. Discussion with one inspector revealed that pupils had a good understanding of the importance of living in harmony with people of different races and religions and could relate the values of democracy to their own elections to the school and sports councils. This prepares them well as good citizens in a tolerant and diverse Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and all the parents who responded to Parent View agreed. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and take seriously their roles and responsibilities, especially being a 'buddy' to a Reception class child. A group of pupils was proud to show an inspector round the school for a tour and talk about the work pupils had done, which was attractively displayed.
- Pupils are well mannered and courteous. They are confident to engage in conversation and are articulate. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They have good attitudes to learning, are attentive and listen well to the adults and their peers, showing respect for the views of others. When they move around the school or in and out for breaktimes, they do this in an orderly fashion responding quickly to instructions.
- Pupils told inspectors how they had introduced a charter for table manners and as a result, lunchtimes are now much quieter. The behaviour of any pupil who finds conforming to the school's high expectations difficult is dealt with effectively by staff. Consequently, the school provides an orderly place to work for staff and pupils.
- As a result of the school's sharp focus on tackling pupil absence, attendance has improved and is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- In 2015, when compared with the national average, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, although higher ability pupils did not do as well in writing when compared with others.
- The progress these pupils had made in reading and writing since leaving Key Stage 1 was broadly in line with the national average, but the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in writing has been below the national average for the last two years.
- While the quality of teaching is now good, it has not been consistent over time, and this means some pupils having to make up lost ground. However, current Year 6 pupils are making rapid progress because of the high quality of teaching.
- The school's data and tracking of pupils' progress and the quality of pupils' books show that pupils currently in the school are doing better. Most year groups are now making better progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, and are continuing to do so because teaching has improved. The progress for pupils is not quite so fast in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading and expected progress from their starting points in mathematics and writing, but this hasn't always been fast enough for them to catch up with other pupils in these subjects where attainment overall has improved. By the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school closes because the quality of teaching is good and additional support is effective.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported both in class and through additional group work to accelerate their progress. The school has appointed a new coordinator to take on responsibility for this group of pupils and she is now getting to grips with the needs of these

pupils. Observations during the inspection showed this group of pupils to be well motivated and ably working without needing direct supervision all the time.

- The achievement of individual pupils from minority ethnic groups is good across the year groups. Some of these pupils come to the school with little or no English and some have special educational needs. However, the support these pupils receive enables them to be well integrated and they soon grasp the language because of the improved quality of teaching and provision in class.
- The most-able pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics when compared with the national average, but do less well in writing. The recent changes in teaching and lesson planning to meet the needs of the most-able pupils are resulting in better achievement. Teachers are now better at pitching work at a higher level. Inspectors looked at books for this group of pupils, which showed the most-able pupils effectively applying their writing skills across different subjects.
- Pupils achieve well in the phonics screening at the end of Year 1. The inconsistency in the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 does not always build well on the good foundations established at the end of the early years, where children leave at above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain standards broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils are well prepared with the necessary skills to become confident readers. Younger pupils have a good grasp of phonics (the sounds letters make), and they say they enjoy reading and being read to. When reading to inspectors, they brought a range of books and could explain their choices and preferences, although they had limited knowledge of how to use the school's library. Older pupils have a wide range of reading skills, and a pupil told an inspector, 'I can now use new words in my writing that I have learned during the word challenge'.

Early years provision

is good

- Children get off to a good start as they enter school. The early years leader has ensured transition arrangements are good. She establishes effective working relationships with parents and carers and liaises with the local pre-school on site. She knows the children well before they enter the Reception class, and consequently children settle well. Routines and expectations are established from the start and these young children show confidence within their learning environment and maintain good relationships.
- Children are admitted into school from a few different providers. Although each cohort varies, most children come to school with skills typical for their age. The strong emphasis on developing children's social and emotional skills and their spoken language means that children are able to communicate well with each other and adults. During the inspection, an inspector was welcomed into the role-play area, a Chinese restaurant, and was given a menu from which each item was carefully and clearly explained to her by four- and five-year-olds.
- There is a bright and stimulating environment both inside and out to support the learning of these young children. The creative approach to providing children with tasks to consolidate their learning means that children are keen to learn. For example, children took great pleasure in throwing paper snowballs outside on a frosty morning to learn some new words. While inside, they were able to concentrate for a length of time on rubbing off paint to reveal some 'tricky' words they were learning to read and write.
- The planning of children's learning means that there is a good balance of teacher-directed tasks as well as opportunities for children to explore for themselves. On the second morning of the inspection, children discovered that their science experiment had frozen overnight due to the weather. This resulted in a group excitedly bashing ice with a hammer and some very cold hands. Children were able to use a range of vocabulary to describe what they were doing and how it felt, and showed that they could share and take turns with the hammer.
- Children's writing books show good progression from the start of the year, with children attempting simple sentences and spelling using their phonic skills. In lessons, children were observed gaining a good mathematical knowledge about shape and space. Their learning journeys recorded their development in mastering basic number skills.
- The leadership in the early years is highly skilled. There is an ongoing commitment to improving the quality of learning for these young children through a range of creative and imaginative approaches. Children make good progress during their Reception Year. Their achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is better than the national average due to the high-quality teaching. Due consideration is given to the well-being and safety of children.

School details

Unique reference number	110645
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10001944

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alice Travis
Headteacher	Andrew Robertson
Telephone number	01353 649271
Website	www.strethamschool.co.uk
Email address	office@stretham.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2013

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school. Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, although there is an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average. This funding provides additional support for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all classrooms, some with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised with subject leaders. Inspectors heard pupils read and spoke to pupils about their enjoyment of school and their opinions of behaviour and safety at the school.
- Discussions were held with staff, governors and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation; its raising attainment plan; behaviour and attendance records; governing body documents; and documents relating to the monitoring of teachers' performance.
- The views of the 46 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as discussions with parents and the questionnaire responses from staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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