

Stone Church of England Combined School

Oxford Road, Stone, Aylesbury, HP17 8PD

Inspection dates 28–29 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is led and managed well. Leaders and governors have accurately identified the school's strengths and what needs to be done to become even better. Their actions have led to improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Typically, pupils reach above average levels of attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher acted decisively to deal with a dip in the Key Stage 2 reading results in 2014. Her actions have secured rapid progress in the current year.
- In 2014, Key Stage 1 results were significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the early years achieve well. Effective leadership and teaching ensure that they make good progress.
- The care and welfare of pupils are strengths of the school.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers form very positive relationships with pupils. This ensures they concentrate well in lessons and learn enthusiastically.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils enjoy school, and attendance is above average.
- Pupils benefit from an excellent range of clubs, regular visits and other activities which the school offers.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. The key Christian principles of valuing all, respecting others and serving the community underpin all aspects of the school.
- Governors know the school and local community well. They have high ambitions for continuous improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils make good progress in mathematics, it is not as strong as in reading and writing in all classes. Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding sufficiently.
- The progress of a few pupils is held back by a lack of confidence in their mental mathematics skills.
- Pupils do not use their mathematical skills enough in other subjects.
- Some staff are new to their leadership responsibilities and have not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons, of which one was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons.
- The inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff and governors.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils' work. They heard groups of pupils reading and spoke with pupils about behaviour and the safety arrangements at the school.
- The views of 84 parents were analysed through the Parent View website. In addition, inspectors spoke with some parents.
- The views expressed by the 20 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alison Martin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school, where most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some staffing and leadership changes. In January 2015 a deputy headteacher was appointed and the coordination of English and mathematics was reorganised.
- One pupil in 10 is supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average.
- One pupil in six is disabled or has special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average.
- The early years provision consists of one full-time Reception class.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils make faster progress and achieve better in mathematics by:
 - developing pupils' confidence in their mental skills
 - giving pupils more opportunity to use their mathematical skills in different subjects and for different purposes
 - checking pupils' understanding when they are working independently.

- Widen the opportunities for the newly appointed subject leaders to check and improve teaching and learning in their subjects; ensure agreed school practices are consistently applied.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors provide the school with strong, effective leadership and clear direction. There is a clear and shared understanding of what is needed in order to raise achievement further. Staff morale is high and everyone shares the headteacher's high expectations.
- The headteacher and staff have successfully created a safe and positive culture for the pupils. This is evident in the calm atmosphere throughout the school and the pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour, promoted by the good teaching. The school's evaluation of its own work is accurate because senior leaders systematically check on the progress of their plans for improvement.
- Leaders maintain a rigorous focus on raising achievement and this has ensured that pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has improved rapidly. The school's pupil tracking systems indicate that a greater proportion of pupils will make rapid progress this year. Decisive and positive action has been successful in strengthening the teaching of reading and phonics (sounds that letters make) and raising pupils' achievement. This shows that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- The checking of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by the headteacher is rigorous and well planned. This helps teachers to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The newly qualified teacher is well supported. However, the recently appointed subject leaders do not yet regularly check the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility sufficiently to make sure that agreed school actions are applied consistently.
- The management of staff performance is good. Leaders set clear targets which are related to improvement in pupils' achievement and linked to salary progression.
- The curriculum is impressively broad and well balanced and focuses effectively on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics and communication. It has a positive impact on pupils' achievement and their physical well-being. Whole-school topics, for example the First World War, provide a range of high quality activities that promote enjoyment and a love of learning. Many clubs, school trips and artistic and cultural events enhance the learning opportunities for pupils. For example, during the inspection the school choir was singing at The Royal Albert Hall.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school and is secured throughout the curriculum. Pupils are able to talk with knowledge about faiths and cultures other than their own. For example, pupils spoke in detail about the opportunities to learn about different cultures from members of the local community and their recent visit to a gurdwara. They also spoke about their links with a school and mission in India and letters that they had written following outbreaks of violence there. This developed the pupils' understanding of cultures and lifestyles different from their own and allowed them to reflect on British values well. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school is making good progress in developing new assessment arrangements to reflect changes taking place nationally.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is an integral part of the school's ethos. As a result, leaders of the school ensure there is no unfair discrimination between any groups of learners.
- Funding available through the pupil premium is used effectively to finance additional support and resources which help eligible pupils make at least similar progress to their classmates.
- Additional funding from the government to promote sport and increase physical activity is being used well to employ professional coaches and to develop the expertise of the staff. Pupils' participation in a wide range of sporting activities and competitive tournaments has increased. They enjoy these opportunities which have a strong impact on their health and well-being.
- Almost all the parents who responded to Parent View, and who spoke or wrote to inspectors, have confidence in the school. Several commented positively on the way leaders have managed staff changes.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support. It is effective in monitoring and checking on achievement and teaching. The local authority is confident that the school requires only light-touch support.

The school is vigilant in safeguarding pupils. Systems are robust. All staff and governors understand procedures and how to carry them out. A strength of the school is the way pupils are cared for, guided and supported in their learning and personal development. Effective transition arrangements ensure pupils are well prepared for the different stages of their learning.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is effective and supports the school well. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. In striving for improvement they have identified the

right priorities. Together with school leaders, governors are actively involved in the future planning of the school.

- Under the leadership of an experienced Chair, governors provide constructive challenge in order to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. They are competent in their analysis and interpretation of data on pupils' progress and attainment. This means they are able to direct informed questions about the school's performance to the headteacher and other leaders. Governors' monitoring of all aspects of the school is effectively organised.
- The governors know what the quality of teaching is across the school. They make sure that staff promotion and salary increases reflect the progress that pupils make. As a result, arrangements for performance management have a positive impact on teaching. They are also aware of support that has been provided to improve teaching.
- Governors check that the pupil premium funding is being used effectively. They question leaders closely to confirm its impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They are challenging leaders to ensure that gaps in achievement continue to close rapidly. They similarly have a sharp overview of other additional funding such as that for sport. School finances are very well managed.
- Governors are very enthusiastic about their school and its role within the local community and links with the local church, but also hold leaders to account as part of the process of supporting their drive for excellence.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very happy in school and the vast majority of parents spoken to or who responded to Parent View agree. 'It's fun and the teachers are brilliant' was one pupil's comment. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to adults.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and are well behaved around the school. Their good behaviour and attitudes help them to make good progress. They were keen to answer the inspector's questions and talk about their work. Year 6 pupils particularly enjoyed reading to the inspector and talking about how much they enjoyed reading.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy the fact that everyone knows each other.
- Records of incidents of poor behaviour show there are few; pupils confirmed this. They indicated that poor behaviour is not tolerated and is quickly dealt with by adults.
- The school's systems to ensure that pupils attend well and come to school on time are good. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils enjoy their responsibilities as buddies, librarians and in representing their classes on the school and sports councils. Pupils help to organise and lead school assemblies and get feedback on the curriculum activities. Pupils on the sports council planned the rota for the new multi-use sports area. Pupils talk excitedly about the topics and subjects across the curriculum and the many visits. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were absorbed in their Shakespeare drama activities, which required a high level of cooperation.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are able to talk about lessons where they learn about dangers in the world, such as when they use mobile phones and the internet or meet strangers. They say that they feel safe in school because everyone cares about them and adults will always give help if they need it.
- Pupils act and behave in a way which keeps themselves and others safe. They talk knowledgeably about the values which guide school life and help them to develop respect and tolerance for people across many differences.
- Pupils' link with an Indian school and mission supports this awareness of others. Name-calling and racist behaviour are rare, and dealt with urgently when reported to staff.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good. They have a very good knowledge of different forms of bullying, and understand the difference between bullying and falling out. They say that bullying does not happen in the school. They say that if it did they have every confidence in the teachers to resolve matters quickly.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after. Parents are very supportive of the school. A very small number of parents raised bullying as an issue. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view in school records, observations at playtime or in discussions with the pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and continuing to improve. Inspection evidence, including joint observations with the headteacher and discussions with pupils, combined with an analysis of the school's monitoring records, confirm this. Teachers use school tracking systems well to monitor pupils' achievement and target any areas of underperformance through extra help and support.
- Weaknesses in the teaching of reading and phonics have been eliminated through effective training for teachers. The marking of pupils' work has strengthened. As a consequence, pupils know how well they are doing and teachers' constructive comments help them to improve.
- Pupils generally learn well because most teachers understand what pupils can do and plan work that takes account of the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able.
- Staff establish a good focus on learning. They have built good relationships and pupils appreciate praise and rewards for hard work. They also enjoy the fun they have in lessons.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils are attentive, enthusiastic and respond well to their questions.
- Teachers ensure that pupils make good progress in phonics and this has improved over the last two years. Teaching focuses very specifically on pupils' next learning steps and those who have completed the phonics programme move on to more advanced spelling strategies.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well so that most pupils are able to apply what they have learned in investigations, research or extended pieces of writing. However, mathematical skills are not used sufficiently in other subjects to develop pupils' confidence and reasoning skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. The special educational needs coordinator, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils receive the guidance and support that they need.
- Teachers provide good guidance and examples to help pupils develop their writing skills. For example, in a Year 4 class, pupils were shown clearly how to write using similes, personification and accurate punctuation. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that their writing in subjects other than English is also of a very high standard.
- Teachers successfully foster an enjoyment for reading. They introduce interesting books to the class and are good role models for reading as they read to pupils with animation and expression. Teachers offer pupils good opportunities to apply their reading skills in different subjects.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress by supporting particular ability groups to practise skills taught in the main lesson.
- Teachers use homework to give extra practice in reading, spelling and mathematical skills, and to extend pupils' learning across the many subjects offered. In Year 6, specific time is set aside to review pupils' homework and teachers' comments in their work. This activity helps them to make even more rapid progress.
- In mathematics, teachers use clear explanations and demonstrations to deepen pupils' understanding of calculation and mathematical operations. They show good subject knowledge. However, a few pupils do not have the confidence to attempt all the tasks set when they are working by themselves. At times, teachers do not check pupils' understanding sufficiently when they are working independently; their learning is not moved on quickly enough and they do not make the progress they could.
- Staff develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through all subjects and experiences. In group work, pupils learn to work together, cooperating well, and on the playground they play happily.
- Displays in classrooms mirror those around the school in supporting pupils' learning and personal development well, and celebrating the quality of their work. They also provide a wealth of information for pupils, who often use them to further their own learning rather than waiting for an adult to help them. Pupils say they feel challenged in lessons and know what to do if they are stuck.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View rightly believe that teaching is good.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. Well-planned experiences and careful monitoring of children's progress help them to learn and develop successfully. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development is slightly above that found nationally and is continuing to improve.

- The result of the phonic screening check for pupils in Year 1 in 2014 was above the national average, although there was a large difference between boys and girls. The school's information indicates that this gap has now closed and the performance will improve significantly this year. Pupils are encouraged to love reading from the start of school. Regular teaching of phonics is supporting children well in rapidly developing their reading and writing skills.
- Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 has consistently been higher than that found nationally.
- In 2014, at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment was above national levels in mathematics and writing, and at national levels in reading. This group of pupils made good progress from their starting points. In the current Year 6, pupils are on course to attain better standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the summer.
- Work in pupils' books, the school's own checks and inspection findings show that progress in reading, writing and mathematics, in all classes, is at least as expected, and in the majority of cases, better. Most pupils are reaching standards at or above those expected for their age in all three subjects.
- The most able make good progress. The proportion achieving Level 5 in Key Stage 2 assessments in 2014 was above national levels. The school's data and visits to lessons indicate that the progress of the most-able pupils is improving because of well-planned teaching that challenges them well, particularly in Year 6.
- Standards in writing by Year 6 are high. Evidence in pupils' topic books shows that pupils are confident at writing in a wide range of genres to a very high standard.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies from class to class, as does the complexity of their needs. Leaders track their achievement carefully. This has resulted in their particular needs being met well, and these pupils making similar progress to their peers nationally.
- The attainment in 2014 of Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium is not reported because the numbers were too low and individuals could be identified. Across the school, most pupils supported by the additional funding are making good progress. Gaps in attainment are closing rapidly.

The early years provision

is good

- Children achieve well in the Reception class and make good progress. From a range of different starting points three quarters of the children reached a good level of development in 2014, which is slightly above average. They are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The children's behaviour and attendance are good. The adults have high expectations and children respond by listening and following well-established routines. Children demonstrate a high level of concentration and a commitment to what they are doing.
- Teaching is good. Activities inside the classroom are well planned and based upon the children's interests and adults' knowledge of what the children know and understand. The outside area has been developed effectively since the previous inspection. During the inspection, groups of boys were seen experimenting with floating and sinking materials on the puddles caused by heavy rain. They independently added more water when the boats did not float.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders visit the children's pre-school settings before they start in Reception. Parents value the 'stay and play' sessions which help their children settle quickly into school life.
- Staff regularly observe and record the children's progress, assess the ways they learn and interact with each other, and use the results well to plan for their future work. The children have electronic 'Learning Journeys' which record their learning and show good evidence of their progress across all the areas of development. Parents also contribute well to this ongoing record.
- Relationships between staff and children are established quickly through effective arrangements at the start of the year. This allows children to grow in confidence and make good progress in developing personal and social skills. Parents told inspectors that their experience of the school is 'very positive' because teachers are approachable, friendly and ensure there are good levels of communication between school and home. Parents feel involved in their children's learning.
- The Reception class meets all statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements to keep children safe.

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	110420
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	448737

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 of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Cuddy
Headteacher	Claire Mirams
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 November 2009
Telephone number	01296 748340
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