

Shepton Mallet Community Infants' School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123660
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	375420
Inspection dates	07–08 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen McShane HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Lovell
Headteacher	Honoria Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 November 2009
School address	Waterloo Road Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 5HE
Telephone number	01749 342322
Fax number	01749 346060
Email address	office@sheptonmallet.somerset.gov.uk

Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	20
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	27 February 2009

Age group	0–7
Inspection date(s)	07–08 December 2011
Inspection number	375420

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Nine lessons or part lessons were observed led by six members of staff. Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the National Leader of Education who has been supporting the school, a representative of the local authority, staff, parents and carers, and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and examined policies, records and assessment information.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The improvement in the quality of teaching since the last visit.
- How well leaders and managers have secured improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils, and are clear about the school's current priorities.

Information about the school

This is a small infant school. Currently, the pupils are registered in mixed-age classes and then, during the day, learn in different groups comprised of pupils of similar age and ability. While most pupils are of White British heritage, the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language is increasing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and these are related to learning or speech, language and communication difficulties.

The child care provision is opened for 50 weeks a year from 8am until 6 pm. There is a Children's Centre on the school's site.

When the school was inspected in November 2009, it was placed in special measures. Four monitoring inspections were conducted, in May and October 2010 and in February and June 2011, to assess the progress made towards addressing the issues raised in the 2009 inspection. Since March 2010, the school has been led by an interim headteacher who took up the substantive post in September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

When the school went into special measures, there was much to do. Although progress was uneven at times, due to the complexity of the issues that had to be resolved, the school is now in a good position to sustain the improvements and to make things even better. Governors, leaders and the whole staff community have demonstrated that their work makes a difference to pupils. As a result, pupils' attendance and attainment have improved and match that seen nationally. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the amount of progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 is now satisfactory.

There have been particular improvements to:

- teaching, so that inadequate teaching has been eradicated, and is now satisfactory overall with a growing proportion of lessons that are good
- the curriculum, where there is now an appropriate emphasis on ensuring pupils develop the basic skills of literacy and mathematics
- the environment, including the nursery and child care provision, so that it is more conducive to learning, safer and more secure
- the support pupils receive, which is now of good quality and ensures that they engage very well in the classrooms, play together happily and develop good personal outcomes
- leadership and management, which is now good, as there is a strong ambition for the success of pupils of Shepton Mallet and a very effective team approach led by the dynamic and dedicated headteacher.

There remain weaknesses in the quality of teaching, particularly in relation to: ensuring that assessment information is used consistently, the effectiveness of written feedback to pupils and the emphasis given to pupils taking responsibility for their own learning. There are good plans in place to address this. The curriculum in Key Stage 1 does not yet systematically build on the good start pupils get in the Early Years Foundation Stage and does not always ensure that there are clear links between the different subjects and opportunities so that skills can be practised and consolidated throughout the day.

The school's capacity to improve further is good. The school monitors and evaluates very effectively; it has a good sense of what it needs to do next. The committed

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senior leadership team scrutinises the assessment data and information, and works collaboratively and quickly to implement further improvements, challenge historic practice and support new ways of working. Parents and carers are supportive of the school, more actively involved in their children's learning and the Parents' and Friends Association goes from strength to strength. Led by an energetic and knowledgeable Chair and Vice-Chair, the governing body has taken strong and swift action when necessary and has good plans to ensure that responsibilities are shared with a wider group of governors. Links that had to be made when the school required support are now very effective partnerships to further improve provision and outcomes.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so that by Autumn 2012 it is consistently good, ensuring that:
 - assessment information is used to match activities to the particular needs and abilities of individuals and small groups
 - there is suitable emphasis on pupils learning independently in lessons
 - written feedback on work is consistently clear so that pupils know what they have to do to improve further.
- Improve the curriculum further by ensuring that:
 - there is a clear progression from approaches to developing learning successfully in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - there are clear links between different subjects and activities so that pupils can practise and develop their skills and knowledge systematically throughout the day.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

For the last two years, pupils' attainment has consistently matched national averages. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from starting points that are generally lower than the level expected for this age group. Progress across Key Stage 1, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory overall. It had been previously affected by staffing disruption and the quality of teaching. However, the school intervened successfully in the last academic year to ensure that the Year 2 group made accelerated progress and systematically addressed weaknesses and gaps in their knowledge. The school still has to address a legacy of underachievement among a minority of pupils. However, these pupils are working towards aspirational targets and are now making

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better progress. Pupils' work shows that they are successfully acquiring early writing skills. Presentation of work, spelling, punctuation and the use of complex structures such as connectives and similes are all developing well. Pupils are becoming confident in working with numbers and problem solving in mathematics. During the inspection, pupils were diligent, and engaged and motivated to do well. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in acquiring early language, settle well and learn the expectations of school successfully.

Pupils say they feel very safe. They trust adults, who they say will sort things out for them. Pupils are polite, engaging and behave well. They apply themselves well to their work and are purposeful. They move around the school calmly and get along very well with one another. Those pupils who experience difficulties respond quickly to the school's expectations and to additional support such as the Nurture Café. From the earliest age, pupils respond well to assemblies with different cultural, spiritual and moral issues and have a good understanding of 'Respect', which has been explored as a school theme. Pupils enjoy raising money for charities, being 'V.I.Ps', wearing a tabard and taking responsibilities for jobs during the day. They are proud to be playground buddies. Through the school council, questionnaires and interviews, the school ensures that their voice is heard and that their comments influence developments in learning. Pupils participate very energetically in physical education and dance sessions, and are very active at breaktimes on the playground. Many walk or scooter to school and know about the importance of healthy eating and not eating too many sweets. They respond well to the hygiene routines that are in place and ensure they always wash their hands. Pupils are developing their basic skills satisfactorily, including in information and communication technology. Opportunities are sometimes missed, however, to support them to work independently and to apply their basic skills in different areas.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

All lessons are calm and purposeful and have a consistent structure so that pupils are clear about what they have to do. The development of this consistent approach has been key to the school's success. In the best lessons, interesting activities are available that challenge pupils at different levels, using a variety of equipment to support learning; for example different objects to count and different ways to record in mathematics and, in literacy, different sentence openers provided on cards. Learning is most effective in those lessons where the pupils are encouraged to discuss, explore and solve problems. It is less effective when there is too much talk by the teacher with a reliance on 'hands up' responses, or when additional support is too focused on the completion of the task rather than the learning. The school has improved its assessment of pupils significantly. It now has a clear idea of progress and attainment so that it can form teaching groups accurately and amend these quickly so that pupils can be taught with others of a similar ability. Within these large groups, however, assessment is not always used to ensure that activities are targeted at individuals or small groups precisely. Marking is now consistently carried out in all classes. At times, it is not always clear to these young pupils what needs to be done in order to improve.

The newly adopted curriculum gives an appropriate structure to whole-school topics and ensures appropriate breadth and coverage over a two-year cycle. Homework has been improved. Reading at home has been a priority and this has contributed to a rise in standards. Families are also given a 'homework challenge' to further learning on topics; pupils have eagerly engaged in such work and are very proud of their models and 'fact books' on dinosaurs, which were featured in the local newspaper. The school has placed a great deal of focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Targeted interventions using a published scheme were initially successful in raising achievement quickly in reading and writing. Recent adaptations have been made so that pupils across Key Stage 1 are now taught daily in ability groups for literacy and mathematics, and this is proving to be effective. In addition, a new way of teaching letters and sounds has been introduced to give sessions greater purpose and interest. The school recognises that it had to act quickly to raise standards in the basic subjects and that the curriculum needs to improve further. This is so that pupils can build upon the learning skills developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly independent learning, and have systematic opportunities to practise basic skills across the whole curriculum.

A caring staff are strongly committed to the safety and welfare of pupils. The

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introduction of clear rewards and sanctions such as golden stickers, attendance awards and 'writer and reader of the week' awards have all been very effective in improving behaviour and engagement. The staff have developed a flexible provision so that they can respond quickly if a pupil seems to have a difficulty, including effective small group or one-to-one support. Close partnerships with other agencies, including family support workers and the Children's Centre, mean that families can be supported when necessary. Regular contact with parents and carers means that difficulties can be resolved quickly. Those spoken to appreciate staff, including the headteacher, being available at the beginning and the end of the school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Throughout the period of special measures, the headteacher, initially in an interim capacity, has been resolute and steered improvements. With the support of the governing body, she took strong action to tackle inadequacies. The school now has an effective team committed to the achievement of all pupils. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders, teachers, learning support assistants, administrative staff and the caretaker are all working effectively together for continued improvements in achievement, provision and the environment. Regular monitoring, continuous professional development, high expectations and detailed action plans are systematically improving teaching. Governors had to address issues of their own capacity, leadership and organisation, and found effective solutions. They challenged and worked effectively alongside the local authority so that very difficult decisions could be taken. They are systematically reviewing policies, highly visible around the school, informed and beginning to ask searching questions to hold the school to account. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The school has recently welcomed more pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds. They have settled well into a harmonious community. Detailed data analysis allows the school to track the achievement of all groups of pupils and, if there are concerns, swift action to be taken. Curriculum opportunities support community cohesion satisfactorily.

The school gives a high priority to safeguarding children and is very diligent if there are concerns relating to child protection. The school has taken good action to consider how to make the site safer for its pupils and this is working well. Policies,

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procedures and training are all up to date.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children learn and develop well. They make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals, in particular in their personal, social and emotional development and their communication, language and literacy, which support their learning in all other areas. Children become confident, independent learners who are enthusiastic in applying themselves to tasks that suit their needs and interests. They behave very well, share equipment, and cooperate and make friends to play and work with. They develop good, healthy habits throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and learn to keep themselves safe; for example the older children know why they must wear fluorescent jackets on a visit outside school. All adults work as cohesive teams to ensure that children are well cared for and provided with a variety of interesting activities to help them make progress. Adults are suitably trained. Safeguarding is a priority. Links with parents and carers are strong, and many speak highly of staff and the provision. Self-evaluation and the drive to make things even better are clearly evident. These can be seen in the recent, significant improvements in the nursery and day care areas which have led to a more integrated provision for the children to work and play.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. The school's own questionnaire in summer 2011 showed that 100% of parents and carers who responded thought their child was happy at school. Communication was raised as both a strength and an area for development. The school has addressed this concern by improving its progress reports on pupils and making them more regular.

Inspectors met with groups of parents and carers when they came to school with their children. Those spoken to were overwhelmingly positive about the school and said that their child was happy and learning. They particularly highlighted the friendly and approachable staff. A few parents and carers spoke about the significant recent changes and the excellent leadership of the headteacher.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shepton Mallet Infants' School, Shepton Mallet BA4 5HE

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. On my last visit, I really enjoyed hearing about all your dinosaurs and I was very impressed by all your hard work.

I have been visiting your school regularly because it had to get better at teaching and helping you learn. I am really pleased to tell you that, because of all the hard work by Mrs Thompson and all of the staff, your school has improved a great deal. Teaching is better and more interesting so that you are now all making progress. You behave well in the school and in the playground. The staff look after you very well.

So, although I am sad not to be visiting you any more, I am very pleased that the school is now giving you a satisfactory standard of education.

I have asked the school to keep improving so that all lessons are as good as the very best, and to make sure that you practise the skills you are learning in the morning throughout the whole day. All of you can help the school by continuing to work hard and coming to school every day you can.

Thank you again for welcoming me and I send you all good wishes for the future.

It has been a privilege to work with you.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

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