

# Shears Green Junior School

White Avenue, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 7JB

**Inspection dates** 18–19 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The school has a positive atmosphere where pupils get on very well together. They thoroughly enjoy learning. Lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular activities promote their creativity and curiosity well.
- The school has improved well since its last inspection, and progress has been particularly rapid under the leadership of the new headteacher.
- The school checks its performance rigorously. The strategies introduced over the last year have improved the quality of teaching and led to a rapid increase in pupils' achievement.
- Pupils make good progress because of consistently good teaching, so that their attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is above average. This prepares them well for secondary school.
- Pupils learn well from the active, practical tasks which capture their interest and enthusiasm. Teachers make sure that activities have an everyday relevance which helps pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is above average.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While the curriculum topics motivate pupils and develop their literacy and information technology skills well, there is not enough emphasis on developing skills that are specific to different subjects, particularly in geography and history.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress but it is not yet as rapid as that of other pupils. This is because the tasks that are planned for them in lessons do not always meet their needs as precisely as they should.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 25 lessons involving all teachers who were teaching on the days of the inspection. A small number of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, attended an assembly, and scrutinised pupils' work, progress data, development and evaluation documents, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and minutes of governing body meetings.
- As most Year 6 pupils were on a residential visit during the inspection, an in-depth scrutiny of their books took place.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by 29 staff.

## Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Juliet Ward

Additional inspector

Martin Marsh

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Shears Green Junior School is larger than most primary and junior schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding made available by the government) has risen in recent years and is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are from ethnic minority backgrounds is in line with schools nationally, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above the national average. Around a tenth of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs, which is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a breakfast club attended by around 20 pupils daily and about 60 pupils over the course of the week. After-school care is provided at the adjacent infant school and does not form part of this inspection.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher took up her post in September 2011 and the two other senior leaders joined the school in September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen curriculum planning to make sure that all subjects, particularly geography and history, are taught in sufficient depth.
- Reduce the gap between the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and their classmates by giving teachers and teaching assistants further training to plan tasks which are always closely matched to pupils' individual needs.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress rates have accelerated over the last two years, and attainment by the end of Year 6 is now above average. Current work shows good progress through the school, with a good quality and quantity of work undertaken since September.
- The school has tackled earlier differences in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics well, so that there is now little difference across these areas. Pupils have good writing skills, although the work seen during the inspection shows that pupils have fewer opportunities to write at length than to learn about grammar, sentence structure and punctuation.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their reading because staff build progressively on the approach to phonics (letters and their sounds) used in the infant school, so that no time is lost when pupils join the school in Year 3. Reading lessons are very effective in promoting enjoyment of books alongside improving pupils' skills.
- The use of an online mathematics programme for homework encourages and enthuses pupils because they are checking their own progress. The approach is generally well received by parents and carers because of the online workshops available for them to understand the school's methods.
- Pupils apply their literacy, numeracy and computer skills well in their topic work. For example, when pupils researched how to design an enclosure for animals in a wildlife park, they identified that salt-water crocodiles have cannibalistic tendencies, and they took account of this when planning the enclosure for more than one crocodile. This topic also showed pupils effectively communicating their ideas when making presentations to the whole class.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress, but it is not as rapid as that of their classmates. The school has changed its approach this year so that these pupils spend more of their time being taught in class. This is working well and pupils are becoming less reliant on adult support. However, teachers and teaching assistants require further training to ensure that work is always set at a level which builds effectively on pupils' earlier learning and ability.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is checked closely, and pupils know the quality and level of their work because they update their own tracking grids regularly. This helps pupils to be positive about their learning.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils say that teachers make learning fun, and parents and carers responding to the questionnaire were positive about teaching and pupils' progress. Teachers make learning interesting by using a range of lively teaching styles. Teaching is consistently good across the school, and the school's own monitoring records show an increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. This was confirmed during the inspection.
- Teachers manage time expertly. They make sure that pupils are actively involved in contributing to each section of the lesson, for example through role play or by acquiring new knowledge through games. Teachers break up the time with activities such as short-fire starters and mini-summaries which means that pupils sustain their concentration well. The range of resources used, for example individual whiteboards and the computer whiteboard, helps to engage pupils in active learning.
- Lessons have a fast pace, but time is given to consolidation. This is a feature of teachers' marking. For example, in mathematics lessons observed, teachers had identified misconceptions through marking and pupils had a five-minute individual consolidation task to ensure they fully understood. This was assessed by teachers as they walked around the class and pupils were given time to check queries with them.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations that pupils should use their literacy and numeracy

skills effectively in other subjects. While teachers are revising topics to make them more interesting for pupils, they have not fully completed the process of planning the specific subject skills to be developed at each stage, alongside those in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.

- The best practice in marking is in English and mathematics where pupils are expected to respond. In other subjects, such as science, history and geography, marking does not always explain how pupils' subject skills can be developed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, and this is particularly evident in mathematics where there is a greater proportion of outstanding teaching. These sessions are practical and related to everyday situations and are successfully improving pupils' problem-solving skills. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- Teachers' questioning is challenging. The use of question cards and lolly sticks to select pupils to answer ensures that all are paying attention, and teachers tailor questions effectively to pupils' abilities. Pupils are motivated by the award of house points for their contribution to lessons.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning because they enjoy the topics studied and have many opportunities to learn together. Although pupils are becoming independent learners, there are rare occasions when they lack concentration in lessons and begin to chat, so behaviour is not yet outstanding.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are built on a culture of mutual respect. Pupils have a pride in themselves and their school, and the school motto, 'Learn, enjoy, achieve', is well understood. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of the school because pupils respect others. Activities linked to 'London 2012' extended pupils' understanding of cultures around the world and provided the basis for much work, such as three-dimensional sculpture in Olympic boxes.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong. They settle into the school well in Year 3, because they already know some older pupils who are play leaders at lunchtime in the infant school. Such activities provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills, and pupils undertake a range of responsibilities conscientiously.
- Parents and carers are positive about behaviour, and those spoken with said that bullying is on the decrease because it is dealt with really well when it happens. Consequently, there is little bullying. Racist incidents, such as the inappropriate use of language, are extremely rare. Pupils feel safe and care for each other. They understand about risks to their health and safety, such as internet risks, and know how to deal with potential risks outside school.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average, because of carefully targeted support to reduce absence for the few pupils who were previously often away from school.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is highly effective in sharing her aspirations for the school with staff, and other recently appointed senior leaders are already making a significant contribution to school improvement. The school has used local authority support well during this transition and this has ensured that staff have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The work already undertaken to improve teaching has resulted in a strong staff team with the skills and expertise to continue the school's rapid improvement path. However, leadership and management are not yet outstanding because most senior and middle managers are new to their posts, and are still dependent on the headteacher for ongoing advice and support to develop their roles fully.
- The arrangements for managing and improving the performance of staff are an example of best practice within the school. The processes are thorough and used very effectively to decide

teachers' salary progression. Teachers' targets for pupils' progress are matched closely to the differing needs and abilities of each class.

- Training is based on a thorough assessment of whole-school and personal needs. For example, relatively inexperienced teachers have been given opportunities to observe good practice in other classes, helping them to assess pupils' progress, while longer serving teachers are coached to ensure that all teaching is at least good. Whole-school training, for example on phonics and making learning interactive, alongside staff from the infant school, has been very effective in helping pupils to have a smooth transition into the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Changes made to the structure of the governing body and the strengths brought by new governors have ensured that governance is effective.
- Governors focus closely on the impact that school activities and spending have on pupils' achievements; for example, new cabling for information and communication technology has resulted in better progress for pupils.
- Governors have a good understanding of pupils' achievements and how the headteacher is effectively improving the quality of teaching.
- Pupil premium funding has been targeted effectively, its impact evaluated and the performance of those pupils who are eligible for support is improving rapidly; for example, the places provided at the breakfast club have improved attendance and are accelerating the achievement of these pupils.
- Safeguarding procedures meet the current requirements and are monitored by governors.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118436
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	401751

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	475
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martin Day
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephanie Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13–14 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01474 567359
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