

Shalford Primary School

Church End, Shalford, Braintree, CM7 5EZ

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils, are not doing as well as they are capable of in English and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2.
- The pace of learning in lessons is not always brisk enough and so pupils' progress is too slow.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to learn without the help of the teacher and so they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Marking in all subjects does not does always show pupils how to improve their work.
- Teachers do not always give pupils time to think about and correct work that has been marked so that pupils can move their learning on.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to check each other's work and so understand how to improve their own work.
- Systems for checking and developing the quality of teaching have not yet been fully effective in ensuring consistently good teaching.
- Until recently, governors have not challenged leaders enough about the school's performance or developed a more independent view through gathering evidence for themselves.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear vision of what she wants the school to be like. Plans for improving the school set out the correct areas for development and how these are to be tackled.
- Teaching in the Reception Year is good. Teachers know the children well and plan activities which help them to learn quickly and make good progress.
- The school has raised the achievement of pupils whose circumstances make them eligible for additional funding.
- The school provides a safe, caring environment for its pupils.
- Pupils' attendance is above average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, all of them jointly with the headteacher. In addition, he made several short visits to other lessons and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants, members of the governing body, a local authority adviser and informally with parents and carers.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plans, behaviour records, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- The inspector also considered the views expressed in 19 questionnaires returned by school staff, along with the 14 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Keith Brown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than most primary schools.
- It serves the village of Shalford and surrounding villages.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils receiving extra support through school action is above average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a separate class for children in Reception. Pupils in other years are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in staffing and, at the time of this inspection, there was an acting assistant headteacher in post.
- No pupils are taught in alternative provision away from the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching throughout the school consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring the teaching is always conducted at a brisk pace
 - making sure the good practice in the marking of pupils' work in English and mathematics also takes place in the marking of pupils' work in all other subjects
 - providing time for pupils to think about the work that has been marked and to make the appropriate corrections to their work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to check each other's work, so that they gain a better understanding of how to improve their own work.
- Speed up pupils' progress and raise attainment by providing more opportunities for pupils to learn actively and independently.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure all monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning results in raising the quality of teaching
 - ensuring the governing body becomes more effective in holding the school to account for its work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because too few pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, make good progress over time. This is because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils start Year 1 with knowledge and skills that are generally in line with those expected for their age. By the time they leave, standards in the national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics have been average over the last three years.
- Although numbers are small and abilities vary widely from year to year, many children start at the school with knowledge and skills that are below those typically expected for their age. Teachers know the children well and plan activities that capture their interest. Good progress is made in the Reception Year and, by the time children are ready to start Year 1, most are working securely at the level expected for their age in all areas of learning.
- Recently, the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 has improved. The national assessments at the end Key Stage 1 in 2012 showed significant improvements in the performance of pupils in writing and mathematics. Writing is improving as a result of an increased focus on grammar and spelling.
- The school has tackled weaknesses in reading in Key Stage 1 by introducing a more thorough approach to developing pupils' knowledge of how to link letters to the sounds they make. This has helped boys, in particular, to do well in the 2012 national screening check at the end of Year 1.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' reading skills require improvement. However, this year, older pupils are being taught more effectively to think about the meaning of text and are becoming more confident about reading fluently and on their own.
- Pupils have appropriate calculation skills. They count and subtract accurately. However, pupils in Key Stage 2, in particular, do not think about and check their marked work sufficiently. The school is using the recently introduced teaching of subjects and activities through themes to provide more opportunities for pupils to investigate and record their mathematical work in different subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational make similar progress to other pupils, with an increased number making good progress this year. Their needs are identified early and the work set is matched closely to their ability levels. They receive well-targeted help, as needed, from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The school is developing well-targeted strategies to support the few pupils eligible for extra government funding through the pupil premium. As a result, gaps in attainment and progress between these pupils and their classmates are closing. Small-group work, use of additional information and communication technology (ICT) resources and funding for educational visits, are effective in helping pupils to overcome the barriers they face in their learning.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Lesson observations, the school's monitoring data and scrutiny of pupils' work show that teaching is improving. There is some good practice in most classes. However, there is not enough consistently good teaching, particularly for the pupils in Key Stage 2, to enable good achievement over time.
- Teaching requires improvement where the challenge and pace of learning are not brisk enough. This is typically because the teacher spends too long talking in some parts of the lesson and so pupils' interest wanes.
- Lessons do not always include enough opportunities for pupils to learn actively and independently. There is often insufficient time allocated in lessons for pupils to learn from each other by checking each other's work, so that they can understand better how to improve their own work.
- Pupils all understand the school's 'pink and green' marking system. In English and mathematics especially, teachers increasingly praise high-quality work appropriately and give clear directions on how pupils can improve. Marking in other subjects does not contain as many helpful comments. Teachers do not always give pupils time to reflect on and correct work that has been marked, so that pupils can learn more quickly.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and usually explain clearly what they want pupils to do. Work is carefully modified for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. All classrooms have stimulating displays with clear learning prompts, such as key words or visual examples of what a good piece of writing looks like, or how to quickly solve a mathematical problem.
- Where good teaching was observed, teachers had high expectations and used questions well to check pupils' understanding. They provided well-focused feedback to the pupils. For example, in a high-quality mathematics lesson, the careful planning by the teacher and the well-tailored feedback resulted in pupils in Year 1 and 2 making rapid progress in working out geometric patterns.

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

- The school has a calm atmosphere and there is very little disruption to learning. Relationships are positive throughout the school, and pupils listen carefully to adults and to each other.
- Pupils are eager to learn, enjoy everything the school offers and take part wholeheartedly. The parents and carers who offered views raised no concerns about pupils' behaviour.
- Attendance is consistently above average. Pupils are punctual and break-times end promptly so that lessons start on time. Pupils play energetically, but with due regard for each other's safety.
- Older pupils take their extra responsibilities seriously. They enjoy being house captains and acting as play leaders at lunchtime. The school council is influential and has raised considerable amounts of money for charities, as well as advising on how playground equipment should be used.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying, including prejudice- and cyber-based bullying. They say that bullying takes place very rarely and they are confident that

staff would deal effectively with any situations that arose. The school conscientiously records these very rare occurrences and the action taken.

- Pupils say they feel safe at school. It provides a safe and secure environment that is valued and appreciated by all pupils. Parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- This is an improving school, but the rate of improvement has not been fast enough to raise its effectiveness to good. This is largely due to considerable staffing changes over the last few years, which have resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching that have in turn held back pupils' progress.
- Many strategies are still 'works in progress' and there has not been time for them to show full impact. For example, procedures for checking and developing the quality of teaching, including frequent lesson observations by leaders and ongoing training for all staff, are becoming more robust and are now underpinning current improvements but have not yet been fully effective in ensuring consistently good teaching.
- The headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure that the current temporary staff, including the acting assistant headteacher and teachers who are job-sharing, communicate better with one another and focus more effectively on improving the quality of teaching. Staff morale is high.
- Governors and staff share the headteacher's determination to rapidly improve the school and ensure that all pupils achieve what they are capable of.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. Plans to improve the school correctly identify what needs to be done. The school is refining its system for staff to track pupils' progress. This is starting to be used more effectively to identify pupils who need additional support to close gaps in their learning compared with that of most other pupils.
- Checks on teachers' performance and the decisions about their salaries are being used increasingly well to help staff meet the school's raised expectations for better teaching and achievement. Although improvements are not fully secured, there is some evidence of pupils' faster progress, and current attainment data show better performance than for previous years.
- The recently introduced teaching of subjects and activities by linking them together through topics is well matched to pupils' learning needs and is motivating them to learn more quickly. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn actively and independently. Pupils say they enjoy the regular 'theme' days. On a recent 'Shrek' day, for example, pupils learned a lot about the characters and stories in the author's books, mathematical calculations and the design of theatre sets.
- The school offers a wide range of well-attended art, cookery, dance, music and sports activities, as well as visits and visitors. These all promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The local authority offers effective support to the school's leaders through the direct contact of the school improvement adviser. Governors noted that local authority induction training has given them a good insight into the role of governors.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are increasingly holding the school to account. They are improving their ability to challenge leaders. They now compare the school's performance with that of other schools, and are aware that there is more to be done to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment. Governors are increasingly asking searching questions, as their analysis of the school's data becomes more robust. Some governors are visiting the school more frequently, so that they know more about aspects of its day-to-day teaching and performance. However, until recently they relied too much on the information provided by the headteacher. The headteacher's performance targets are set appropriately by the governing body. They are increasingly ensuring that the salary progression of staff is justified. Governors know about the use of additional funds from the pupil premium to improve the achievement of the pupils entitled to it. The school's safeguarding arrangements are rigorously checked by the governor who has responsibility for pupils' safety. As a result, safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements.

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	114844
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	401472

This inspection of the school 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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Moss
Headteacher	Kate Ward
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2010
Telephone number	01371 850336
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