

Sheepscombe Primary School

Far End, Sheepscombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 7RL

Inspection dates

26–27 March 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher is relentless in her pursuit for every pupil to succeed. She has provided stability after a period of leadership transition.
- Pupils behave well and take care of each other. There is a strong sense of community and pride from staff and pupils. Parents and carers are full of praise for the school's work.
- The headteacher has introduced a clear approach to teaching and learning. This has led to improvements in the quality of pupils' handwriting, presentation and mathematical fluency.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching and the provision of feedback. Teachers identify misconceptions but are not always precise enough in pinpointing what will improve pupils' progress.
- Pupils' fluency and confidence in mathematics have improved. Pupils are enthused by the new approach. However, the most able pupils are not fully confident in explaining the reasoning behind their answers.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to develop their knowledge in a wide range of subjects. Pupils thrive, both personally and academically, as a result of the varied experiences that the school offers.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. Their understanding of how their roles align with wider school priorities is developing.
- Children, who begin in early years, are well prepared for key stage 1, including in their understanding of phonics. Many exceed the standards expected for their age.
- A significant proportion of pupils join the school either mid-year or in years other than Reception. Such pupils are well supported and are catching up with their peers.
- The needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified. Pupils are making better progress as a result. The rates of attendance for these two groups of pupils are improving.
- Governors have an accurate overview of the school's performance. They are clear about the spending of additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and for the development of sport, but less precise about its impact.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. However, the curriculum in key stage 2 does not allow pupils to consider all of the topics pertinent to their personal, social and health education at an age-appropriate level.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further, by ensuring that:
 - governors evaluate the impact of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and for the development of physical education (PE) and sport more precisely
 - leaders continue to embed practice so that teachers are adept at using assessment to adapt their planning to support pupils' learning
 - middle leaders' skills are developed further so that they can support the headteacher to sustain improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - ensuring that teachers accurately pinpoint the skills that pupils need to develop
 - supporting pupils to be able to explain their mathematical reasoning confidently.
- Improve pupils' personal development and welfare, by:
 - continuing to support pupils who do not attend school regularly
 - refining the programme for the development of personal, social and health education, so that pupils give timely consideration to issues that are suited to their stage of development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has recently emerged from a period of leadership uncertainty. Since taking up the permanent post in September 2018, the headteacher has been determined to provide clarity of purpose and consistency of approach. She is robust and rigorous in her determination to respond positively to the issues raised in the previous inspection. She leads by example and staff, parents and pupils respect this. Consequently, there is optimism about what the school can achieve.
- Leaders and staff are a cohesive team and are united in their purpose to create 'an inspirational setting where all children flourish.' To this end, leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and honest. The 'moving-on plans' have been successful in identifying the priorities for improvement. The headteacher has identified the strengths and weaknesses of staff and is providing the training that they need.
- The headteacher has high expectations for the school and recognises the potential that it has. Her ambition is to retain the unique character of the school and place it at the heart of its community. For example, collaborative projects have been successful in raising funds for solar panels. Pupils have been involved in community events, such as May Day celebrations and those organised by the local History Society.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about taking on greater responsibility in the future. They have accessed relevant training, but are not yet strategic enough in their understanding of how their roles are important to whole-school improvement.
- Staff are developing their skills through focused professional development. They are reflective and open to adapting their approaches to teaching. This, supported by more rigorous monitoring, has improved teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in mathematics. Leaders are focusing on ensuring that pupils receive high-quality teaching and support from additional adults. This has been a key lever for improvement and leaders continue to support where practice needs refinement.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress regularly and work with other schools to ensure the accuracy of assessment information. The needs of pupils who join the school mid-year are quickly identified so that they receive the support they need to catch up. Such pupils make progress from their starting points, but do not always reach the standards expected for their age.
- Leaders identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND and provide suitable support. This is well matched to pupils' social, emotional and therapeutic needs, has improved attendance and is now more sharply aligned to their academic progress. Leaders are more carefully distinguishing between pupils with SEND and those who need to catch up. This means that the support provided is bespoke and more effectively supports pupils to improve.
- Additional funding is used effectively to enhance the experiences that pupils have. For example, the use of the PE and sport premium is innovative and directed towards increasing pupils' participation in both recreational and competitive sport. Recent strategies have created enthusiasm among pupils wanting to represent the school at

local sporting events. Pupils are proud of their performance and their confidence is improving as a result.

- The curriculum has evolved to meet the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. Leaders' planning is informed by pupils' interest and prior knowledge, as well as the requirements of the national curriculum. Leaders have identified what pupils need to know in a broad range of subjects. Pupils' learning is enriched by regular trips and visits. For example, during the inspection, pupils were enthused by their participation in computing club and sewing activities. Extra-curricular opportunities are decided in consultation with pupils.
- Staff have successfully created an environment that has pupils' learning and welfare at its centre. Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Assembly is a time for reflection, to celebrate achievement and to sing together. It is a time to reinforce the shared values that underpin the school, and these are promoted throughout the school environment.
- Pupils value the care they receive and talk about how they are encouraged to understand their social responsibilities, such as through fund-raising activities. They benefit from the many activities organised to develop their personal, social and health awareness. However, the mapping of the key stage 2 curriculum does not ensure that pupils consider all of the topics that are relevant to them at different stages of their development. For example, older pupils had not recently reflected on the dangers posed to them by alcohol and smoking.
- Parents are highly supportive and make a positive choice to send their children to the school. One comment made by a parent reflects the views of many: 'Pupils are happy and keen to go in, are inspired by their teachers and have an excellent community around them.'

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed and proud of their involvement in the school. They give freely of their time and organise events for pupils and the wider community to work together. For example, governors have led events, such as the 'Reading Partnership Project' and the 'Maths Olympics'. These events do much to enhance pupils' engagement and enthusiasm. In addition, governors have initiated the 'What's it like to be...?' project, which gives pupils an insight into possible careers.
- Governors work with leaders to set the vision and strategic direction of the school. They receive regular reports from the headteacher which outline the progress being made towards achieving improvement priorities. They ask appropriate questions and challenge when necessary. Governors visit the school regularly so that they can see first-hand the quality of education the school provides. Their reports are detailed and draw on a range of evidence.
- Governors are aware that the momentum for improvement largely lies with the headteacher. They have therefore supported the school to make the changes needed to build greater capacity to secure sustained success.
- Governors monitor the spending of additional funding. They are clear on expenditure and the actions taken, but are less precise on the impact of these actions. For example, they know how the PE and sport premium is being used, but are not aware of the

effect that this has on the development of pupils' skills.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive appropriate training and all the necessary checks take place to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. Staff know what to do if they have a concern and are informed that action has been taken. They are vigilant in ensuring that the school site is secure and that risk assessments are in place for off-site activities.
- Leaders keep detailed records of pupils who are considered to be vulnerable. They are diligent in ensuring that pupils and families receive the support they need, liaising with external agencies when necessary. The headteacher has attended additional training to support parents' mental health and well-being. The safeguarding governor meets with leaders frequently to review safeguarding information and practice.
- Pupils of all ages can clearly explain how to recognise risks and how to stay safe, including when online. They spoke about events that they have attended which have supported them to understand the dangers present in their everyday lives, for example in relation to fire safety, road safety and the danger of entering building sites. Parents unanimously agree that their children feel safe at school and pupils support this view, saying that the school is 'inclusive and welcoming'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Through targeted professional development and lessons learned from effective practice elsewhere, leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning. For example, pupils' spelling ages have improved and there is a more consistent approach to how teachers provide feedback to pupils.
- Teachers identify misconceptions, but do not always pinpoint the skills that will lead to improved progress, particularly for the most able pupils. For example, when pupils write in a sustained and confident way, teachers do not identify inaccuracies in punctuation. This inhibits pupils' ability to express their ideas fluently.
- Leaders have recently introduced systems to track deficits in pupils' understanding more regularly. Teachers use this information to plan activities that are suited to pupils' starting points. However, teachers do not always adjust their planning sufficiently or move pupils along quickly enough when they need greater support or challenge.
- Reading has been a strong aspect of the school's performance over recent years. Pupils are confident readers, and many have developed a love of reading. For example, they are enthusiastic about their reading club and enjoy the time to discuss their choice of books.
- The teaching of reading is carefully sequenced for those pupils who are less confident, and they can explain how this helps them to improve their skills. Pupils know the expectations for independent reading. The more structured approach to the teaching of phonics is helping pupils to correct themselves and decode unfamiliar words.
- In the past, outcomes in mathematics have been weaker than in reading and writing.

There is now a more structured approach to the teaching of mathematics, which has led to an improvement in pupils' mathematical fluency and confidence. Leaders have sought to create a 'buzz' around mathematics and this was evident during the inspection.

- While the teaching of mathematics is much improved, the legacy of weaker teaching means that there remain gaps in some pupils' understanding and skills. Where teachers' planning is not adapted to overcome this, pupils make weaker progress because they are not secure in basic concepts. The most able pupils are not always able to demonstrate their methods or articulate the reasoning behind their answers confidently.
- The quality of pupils' writing continues to improve. Pupils can clearly explain the 'Sheepscombe sentence' and their application of this concept enhances the sophistication of their writing. Pupils can write successfully for a range of audiences and purposes, using rhetorical techniques and adapting sentences for effect. The work seen in books illustrates that pupils are confident, independent writers.
- Parents say that they are well informed about their children's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff provide a variety of experiences for pupils to explore their environment and be part of their community. All pupils participate in an award scheme which requires them to be involved in a community service project. The 'forest school' provides plentiful opportunities for pupils to benefit from the school's location.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is integral to the school. Pupils exemplify the ethos of the school in both their outlook and in their interactions with each other. They value their 'family groups' and enjoy contributing to the tally of family and values points.
- Pupils can discuss moral issues and consider current issues. For example, they have recently considered the workings of the justice system. The school council is regularly consulted about how the school can improve further. Through this, pupils understand the concept of democracy and can relate this back to their work on the Ancient Greeks.
- Pupils value the inclusive nature of the school and respect diversity. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain, but are less confident on how to protect themselves from those who might try to influence them with extreme views.
- Pupils are strong advocates of the school. They say that they know whom to speak with if they have a concern. They know to 'Ask, Tell, Send/Fetch' and are confident that teachers will 'definitely sort it out'. Older pupils take their prefect roles seriously and look after younger pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are overwhelmingly polite and courteous. They demonstrate their good manners both in class and as they move around the school. During social times, pupils, across age groups, play together or take the time to sit and read.
- Pupils work cooperatively and their attitudes to learning, and to each other, are positive. Occasionally, a few pupils are less attentive when planning is not tightly focused or where explanations are not clear.
- Teachers provide effective support for pupils when, on rare occasions, they deviate from the expectations of staff. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions for the last three years or fixed-term exclusions for the last two years.
- The rate of absence has been an issue for the school in recent years. Leaders are now challenging this by working positively with parents to explain the link between improved outcomes and attendance. As a result, attendance overall is improving and is close to national figures. Leaders are aware of pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should, and their actions are beginning to reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- While cohort sizes are small, variability in the quality of teaching and learning in the past has affected outcomes by the end of key stage 2. Not enough pupils have achieved the expected standard in combined reading, writing and mathematics over the last three years and no pupils have achieved the higher standard.
- From their starting points, by the end of Year 6, pupils make progress in line with the national average in reading and writing, but this has been weaker in mathematics. Due to better teaching, this is much improved for current pupils. The evidence presented indicates that the majority of pupils are on track to achieve the standards expected for their age in all three areas, with many exceeding these. This includes pupils' competency in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils who have attended the school since Reception perform well. However, over a third of pupils arrive from elsewhere, many previously at alternative provision or who have been taught at home. While these pupils are welcomed and make progress during their time at the school, they do not always catch up quickly enough to reach age-related expectations.
- Most children who join the school in Nursery or Reception perform well by the end of the early years phase. They reach the standards expected for their age and many exceed these in all areas of the curriculum.
- Current disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND are making better progress because of improved teaching and the support they receive. Disadvantaged pupils, both current and in the past, make progress that is similar to that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have improved the school's approach to phonics teaching. Current pupils in

key stage 1 have a secure understanding of the sounds that letters represent, and outcomes of the phonics screening check are improving as a result.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children join the Reception class with skills that are in line with those that are typical for their age. From these starting points, children get off to a strong start in their school career. The majority of children achieve, and increasingly exceed, a good level of development. Children's work reflects the effective progress that they make in their all-round development.
- Leadership of this phase is developing. The newly appointed early years leader is well placed to take over the overview of the provision, due to the effective support she has received from the headteacher. Leaders assess children's skills regularly and plan children's 'learning journeys' according to both interests and skills. Staff use the learning environment well, continuing to improve this to promote good-quality, independent learning.
- The atmosphere in the Reception area is warm, welcoming and stimulating. Children are motivated by the activities planned and show both initiative and curiosity to further their understanding independently. For example, children were interested in where water travelled in their bamboo water system. They experimented with adding water more slowly when it flooded over the edge. Children persevere to complete tasks, are interested in the work of their peers, and are proud of their achievements.
- Staff enhance children's learning by asking them questions while they play. Teachers and additional adults have the skills to pose probing questions to children to extend their imagination and develop their communication skills. Such questions serve to clarify children's thinking and organise their actions.
- Arrangements for transition into the early years setting are well managed. These are supported by visits to pupils' homes before they begin school. Staff engage well with parents so that they are informed and involved in their children's learning. Children work alongside key stage 1 pupils, which means that there is a smooth transition into Year 1.
- All welfare requirements, including paediatric first aid, are in place.

School details

Unique reference number	115534
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10053000

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elisabeth Skinner and Lynsey Willis (joint chairs)
Headteacher	Victoria Barron
Telephone number	01452 813852
Website	www.sheepscombeschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@sheepscombe.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2018

Information about this school

- Sheepscombe Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher was appointed to this post permanently from September 2018.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. The school has four of the 17 ethnic groups set out in Ofsted's Inspection Data Summary Report.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is higher than in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school either mid-year or at points other than in Reception is higher than is typical nationally.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised pupils' written work. Observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum and pastoral leaders. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' records.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding (including the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium), and the curriculum were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, in lessons, at lunchtime and breaktimes, as well as around the school site.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with several parents to seek their views about the school. They considered 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, together with 37 free-text responses, six responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 12 responses from the pupil survey. Two letters that were sent to the lead inspector were also taken into consideration, one from a parent and one from a pupil.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Rowley

Ofsted Inspector

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