

Inspection of a good school: Shenstone School

94 Old Road, Crayford, Kent DA1 4DZ

Inspection dates:

16–17 October 2019

Outcome

Shenstone School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Shenstone is a happy, friendly school where every pupil is known by every member of staff. It is easy to see pupils' enjoyment of school by the smiles on their faces as they arrive each morning. They greet staff eagerly and are keen to start the day with breakfast together.

Staff find out pupils' likes and dislikes and plan a wide variety of activities that meet pupils' individual needs. Staff are ambitious for pupils and celebrate pupils' successes every small step of the way.

Staff are good at making learning fun. Pupils enjoy lessons in the 'Buggingham Palace' sensory garden, workshops to learn life skills and opportunities to take part in events, including Paralympic games with other schools.

Staff keep parents and carers up to date and fully involved in all aspects of their children's learning. Staff help parents to understand and meet their children's needs. For example, they provide resources and training for parents so that pupils can use their communication systems consistently at home and in school.

Pupils behave well. They learn in a place that is free from bullying. Staff respond skilfully to any situations that arise. This ensures that pupils are safe and cared for.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have made many improvements to the school over the last two years. Staff are proud to work at Shenstone and feel well supported. Leaders and governors have high expectations of pupils, staff and themselves.

Staff want pupils to have the very best chances and to be as independent as possible when they are older. They make sure that what pupils learn at Shenstone is purposeful and relevant.

In early years and beyond, the curriculum is well thought out. Pupils follow one of three 'pathways' depending on their needs. This means that pupils have access to all areas of learning and the different subjects taught. Staff skilfully adapt lessons to meet pupils' abilities. Staff use the 'Shenstone Stepping Stones' well to check on pupils' progress. Photographs and teachers' observations capture pupils' many achievements over time. Parents contribute to pupils' journals and share 'wow' stars to record their children's successes at home.

Staff do whatever is needed to include all pupils in school life. Regular whole-school events bring pupils from both sites together, such as the harvest festival and when pupils all wore yellow to mark World Mental Health Day. Older pupils take part in an impressive residential trip.

Over time, pupils become increasingly confident and skilled in communicating with others. For some, this may be saying their first word, for others it may mean choosing from a much wider range of pictures than before. Parents are pleased with their children's progress since joining the school. There is room to make this aspect of the school's work even better. Pupils do not always get the chance to try their communication methods in a range of situations, such as in the playground. Sometimes, staff do not make the best use of incidental opportunities to promote pupils' communication skills.

Staff understand how to support pupils' pre-reading skills. Leaders call this the 'pathway to phonics'. The school's phonics programme is new and needs time to embed. Some staff need further training to ensure that they teach phonics accurately. Leaders have plans in place to review the reading books that are used for phonics because these are not always well chosen to match the sounds that pupils know.

The youngest children are very well supported. The early years staff work together with other staff, including therapists. Regular and high-quality communication with parents means that children's needs are met. Parents told us that the school really makes a difference to their lives. For example, breakfast time at the start of the school day has helped several pupils to use cutlery for the first time. This has improved mealtimes at home and, for some, led to families being able to eat in restaurants together.

Pupils love coming to school and behave well. Bullying does not happen, but staff are alert to the ways that pupils' behaviour may affect others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm. Leaders respond to any concerns quickly and, when necessary, make referrals to the local authority. The systems are robust for logging and monitoring concerns about pupils.

Leaders and staff create 'individual management plans' for each pupil. These take into account pupils' specific needs, including those that relate to pupils' welfare. Staff update these when circumstances change. The high levels of care and vigilance ensure that staff

do their very best to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Over the past year, leaders have worked effectively to research and design a programme for teaching phonics. It is at the early stages and needs to be embedded. Leaders need to ensure that all staff who teach phonics have the skills and knowledge required to deliver it consistently well. Currently, some of the reading books that are used for phonics are not fully appropriate because they include sounds that pupils have not been taught. Leaders should implement their plans to review and organise the books that are used for phonics so that they match the sounds pupils know.
- The speech and language therapists have worked well with staff over the past two years to develop the communication curriculum. Overall, staff promote pupils' communication skills well. However, there is still some more work to do on this. Staff do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to generalise their communication skills, such as at different times of the day, including out in the playground. Leaders should build on the good programme of professional development, including training from the speech and language therapists, so that staff make better use of chances to develop pupils' communication.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Shenstone School, to be good on 19 September 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144041
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10124652
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Janine Wooster
Headteacher	Lori Ann Mackey (executive headteacher)
Website	www.shenstone-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Shenstone School is a special school that caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties. It has two sites. The Sidcup site is for children in early years and pupils in Years 1 and 2. The Crayford site is for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- The senior leadership team comprises the executive headteacher, head of school, two deputy headteachers and an assistant headteacher. Leaders work across both sites.
- The school converted to become an academy in September 2017. It is part of the Kemnal Academies Trust.

Information about this inspection

- We met with senior leaders, representatives of the multi-academy trust and members of the governing body. We met with curriculum leaders and a range of other staff. We spoke with teachers, teaching assistants and speech and language therapists about pupils' learning and welfare.
- We spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. We met with parents and analysed their responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey.
- This inspection focused in detail on pupils' communication, reading, mathematics and

personal, social and emotional development. In these subjects, we met with leaders, spoke to staff, visited lessons on both sites and looked at pupils' learning journeys (records of pupils' work and achievements).

- We checked the single central record of staff suitability. We met with the designated safeguarding leader and spoke with staff about the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- All three of us spent time on both sites.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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