



Sharmans Cross Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104049
LEA Solihull
Inspection number 277055
Inspection dates 21 February 2006 to 22 February 2006
Reporting inspector Linda Rockey HMI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Sharmans Cross Road
School category	Community		Shirley
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Solihull, West Midlands B91 1PH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7052379
Number on roll	360	Fax number	0121 7057542
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David G Green
Date of previous inspection	27 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Angela Henderson

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Introduction

This was a single inspection event carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, two Additional Inspectors and a Child Care Inspector.

Description of the school

Sharmans Cross Junior School is larger than average and situated in Shirley. It serves a relatively advantaged area of Solihull and few children receive free school meals. The majority of children are from a White British background, although 13% have a minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs is below the national average; however the proportion of those with a statement of special educational need is higher than that found nationally. In December 2005, the school was given a Healthy Schools Award.

The school offers an after school club in partnership with a private company.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school has a more generous view of itself than inspection evidence reveals. Although children reach high standards, their progress is only satisfactory when compared with children of similar high starting points. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of them and some of the work planned is not sufficiently challenging. In addition, many children are not aware of their targets or how to improve their work.

In reaching this judgement, the inspectors recognise the school has some considerable strengths as well as areas needing improvement. Children enjoy coming to school and their attendance is outstanding. They are secure and well cared for. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. The personal development of children is effective because the school has good systems in place to support them and their views are valued. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about what the school provides. Several used the questionnaire to communicate how much they value the committed, hard working and dedicated staff team. The curriculum is sound with a good range of enrichment activities, which add to children's enjoyment of learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and deputy have worked hard to develop a more creative approach to learning. They have successfully created a cohesive staff team and are working to develop the role of the subject leader. However, school self-evaluation is not sufficiently focused on how well children are doing. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision does not systematically identify strengths and areas for development. Governors support the school well but do not hold the school to account for the progress children make in their time at the school.

The school has taken effective steps to improve since the last inspection and has demonstrated the capacity to improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure expectations are high enough for all children and provide them with more challenging targets
- Track the progress of children more effectively and make better use of baseline information
- Improve leadership and management by a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation and ensuring the governing body holds the school to account for children's achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In 2005, the children's performance in the national tests was well above average. Indeed the school has a history of high standards in all core subjects; English standards have been exceptionally high since 2001.

Children's progress is satisfactory. The school has a more positive view because its analysis and interpretation of performance data are not rigorous enough. When children start the school in Year 3, many have already reached higher standards than found nationally. By the end of Year 6, overall standards in English, mathematics and science are high but children's progress is no better than expected nationally from children with the same starting points.

The targets the school sets for children in Year 6 are not high enough. Although the school has recognised that children's progress in mathematics has been relatively weak compared to that in English and science over the past three years, not enough has been done to improve it. In 2005, the targets set for English were exceeded but in mathematics the targets were missed.

The progress of minority ethnic children is satisfactory. However, children with special educational needs achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development is good. The school rightly judges this to be an area of strength. Children behave well, enjoy lessons and have sensible attitudes to their work. They are courteous and polite. Attendance is excellent. The quality of relationships is very good and children clearly feel safe in school. They are confident to approach adults for support or use the 'worry box' to give details of their anxieties. Children have few concerns about bullying and they report that the school deals with any incidents effectively. In school, children willingly take on a range of responsibilities, which they carry out diligently. These include organising regular cake stalls, and acting as play leaders, Early Bird mentors and buddy readers. Children are actively engaged in raising funds for charity. The school is involved in the local community, and, for instance, the choir regularly represents the school in local events.

Children have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives, and they benefit from the good opportunities provided by the school for exercise and sport. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, their awareness of cultural diversity is now successfully developed through planned topics and a variety of most appropriate visits.

The school successfully develops in its children a range of personal skills such as perseverance, independence and teamwork as well as high standards in literacy and numeracy. This is preparing them well for their next stage of education, as well as later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. This ensures that most children make steady progress through the school. There are some clear strengths in the teaching. There are good relationships between staff and children and this helps children to tackle their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers are open to new ideas and have worked effectively on the recent school initiative to improve children's learning skills. Teachers support each other well, with those in parallel year group classes working together to prepare lessons. They plan interesting activities, so consequently children enjoy their work and try hard. The support for children with special educational needs is good and underpins these children's good progress. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to this work.

There are three areas where teaching could be improved. Teachers do not always expect enough of children who are working at or above the levels expected for their age. As a result, children's progress is satisfactory, rather than any better. Teachers do not give children clear enough guidance on what they need to do to move forward. This is because the marking of children's work is not always as helpful as it could be and children are not given clear information about what the next steps in learning are. Teachers have a good deal of information about the standards reached by children, but are not using this to tease out whether children's progress is good enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Many aspects of provision are good, but sometimes the work planned does not match children's capabilities and is not challenging enough. Nonetheless, the school is working on some innovative projects to make learning more exciting and interesting. These include planning to develop children's learning skills (Building Learning Power), which is also preparing children effectively for their future life beyond school. This year there has been some interesting work that encompasses several subject areas. The Year 3 'dragons' project is a good example of this. All these initiatives ensure that children enjoy learning and gain self-confidence. The programme for the development of children's personal, social and health understanding is particularly strong and helps children to stay healthy and safe. Provision for work in some subject areas, especially music and physical education, is especially good. Good use is made of specialist teachers, for example, French is taught in addition to other subjects in Year 6. Work in lessons is enhanced effectively by visits and visitors and a good range of after school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support are good. The school ensures that children are kept safe at all times. Regular checks are made of the building and grounds and risk assessments are routinely completed. Child protection arrangements are secure and there are good arrangements for the administration of first aid. Staff are mindful of the need to support children's development as well rounded people. They know individual children well and are sensitive to their personal needs. There is a good programme in place to ensure that children develop their personal skills well. As a result, children, especially those with special educational needs, feel well supported and safe. However children are not given clear enough guidance about how they can move forward academically. The school is at the very early stages of setting children individual targets for them to achieve in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is effective in creating a positive and caring atmosphere. There is a clear sense of teamwork amongst the staff and an impressive commitment to improvement. The introduction of the Building Learning Power (BLP) programme is having a definite impact on the development of children's learning skills; it is helping them to become more resilient, reflective, and able to persevere. The majority of parents are very pleased with the school and hold the headteacher and staff in high regard.

The school's self-evaluation is clear and coherent. A good range of evidence has been gathered about the school's performance. However, there is insufficient focus on whether children are doing as well as they should as they move through the school. Although the role of subject leader is developing, there is a lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation to determine the impact of initiatives on children's learning. The improvement plan details clear actions linked to its priorities, but success criteria are not sharp enough and so it is unclear how progress against the actions will be measured.

The governors are well organised and involved in the life of the school. The 'governor of the month' system is an effective way of getting to know what is happening in the school, providing a useful means of reporting back to the full governing body. However, governors do not hold the school sufficiently to account for the progress children make as they move from Year 3 to 6.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited Sharmans Cross. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. Everyone we spoke to was really helpful. We were particularly impressed by the way you work and play together.

These are the things we liked about your school:

- We were delighted with your attendance! Lots of you hardly ever miss school.
- You explained that you enjoy school and get plenty of exercise in the different sports club activities.
- The BLP programme is helping you to develop maturity and become responsible young people.
- You told us that you feel safe and that there is always someone you can go to if you need help or have concerns - some of you said that using the 'worry box' had made a real difference.
- You behave well. We were told that people often make positive comments about your behaviour when you are out and about on school visits.

There are three things we have said the school needs to improve:

- We know you reach high standards but we think some of you could do even better. We have asked the teachers to set you more challenging targets.
- Teachers need to keep a closer eye on whether you are making enough progress.
- The headteacher, staff and governors must keep a better check on how everyone in the school is doing.

We enjoyed meeting you and wish you well for the future.