

Shenstone School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101486
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	286078
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Passey
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Aldcroft
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	94 Old Road Crayford DA1 4DZ
Telephone number	01322 524145
Fax number	01322 523551

Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Shenstone is located in Crayford and provides for a small number of pupils from other authorities in addition to those from Bexley. On entry all pupils are working well below the nationally expected levels. Pupils have statements of special educational need for their severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, including those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those with severe medical needs. Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds and a quarter are eligible for free school meals. Just under a half of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being from Black African family backgrounds. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of English acquisition and there are nearly twice as many boys as girls. The school works closely with mainstream schools supporting them in the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs. The school has achieved National Awards for Healthy Schools and is an Investor in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features ensuring a good quality education is offered to all pupils. The dedicated headteacher and deputy clearly demonstrate that pupil achievement and their care and welfare are at the heart of decision making. Together with a dedicated team of teachers and support staff they have a strong commitment to school self-evaluation and improvement. The school is aware of what improvements are necessary to support and meet the ever increasing complex learning and medical needs of the pupils. Staff feel confident that their views are considered and there are excellent opportunities for further professional development to ensure that they have the skills needed to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, morale is high. A parent, reflecting the views of many, wrote, 'Top marks all around. I could not think of a better school for my child. This comes down to the staff's constant hard work and dedication'.

Pupils' standards are well below the national average. Given their starting points, and the barriers to their learning, the achievement and progress of children from the Foundation Stage through to pupils aged 11 is good. This is because of the excellent relationships, good teaching and the excellent care and support they receive for their individual needs. Children in the Foundation Stage get the best possible start to their school life and make good progress overall, particularly in their communication skills and physical development. As pupils get older they develop confidence and continue to improve their communication and self-help skills that effectively prepare them for secondary schooling.

Pupils have challenging personal targets, which most achieve successfully. Progress data is analysed and appropriate and innovative improvement strategies are implemented to help improve pupils' learning. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those whose first language is not English. Overall achievement in the school is good. Pupils' personal development is good. They have excellent attitudes, enjoy school and many understand the importance of keeping safe and leading a healthy lifestyle. Racial harmony is evident throughout the school and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. They learn useful skills through their involvement in a range of fund raising activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they make very positive contributions to the community.

The curriculum offers a broad and mainly relevant range of learning activities that meet the needs of most groups of pupils. However, the school is aware of the need for subject leaders to monitor and develop the curriculum to ensure it meets the ever increasing complexity of pupils' learning needs. Visits into the community and visiting specialists effectively support pupils' learning. There are opportunities to work alongside mainstream peers whenever it is seen to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school offers valuable support to pupils and staff in mainstream schools, which is well received. Parents are very supportive of the school. One wrote, 'Thank you for creating an enjoyable and stimulating learning environment for our son to thrive in'.

Governors are aware of school developments and are involved in some aspects of strategic management. However, their monitoring is primarily through receiving reports and presentations and there is no process of systematic school visits. Overall, good processes of self-evaluation, leadership and management are having a positive impact on learning which is leading to improved chances for pupils to achieve. Although development planning arises out of self-evaluation, it

does not always make clear what strategies are employed to achieve the desired results. However, there is no doubt that the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the strategies for improvement are clearly identified in all planning and that effective methods are used by staff and governors to check on the school's success.
- Ensure the role of subject leaders is fully developed in monitoring and developing the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well below average because of the severity of pupils' learning difficulties. Despite these difficulties, their progress and achievement are good in relation to their challenging individual targets. Children in the Foundation Stage make good overall progress and older pupils learn to become more confident, independent and self aware. Pupils' progress is tracked and information from data confirms that the great majority make good progress and achieve well as they move up the school.

Through thorough individual assessment of need, the school ensures that no group of pupils fares less well than any other. In classes, pupils' progress is being thoroughly monitored and recorded, and information used in the planning of further work. The school ensures that pupils' efforts and achievement are celebrated at every opportunity within class and the school community.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of themselves and others and they are well supported to make personal choices and become as independent as possible. There is a very positive learning environment and pupils gain great enjoyment from their lessons and other activities. Pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance is good and any absence is primarily a result of poor health. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. They raise money for charities and are involved in recycling initiatives. Pupils feel safe and many understand healthy lifestyles. They acquire essential learning and personal skills that help to prepare them for when they transfer to secondary education. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This provision is an integral part of the everyday life of the school. Pupils enjoy the strong provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education, and take part enthusiastically in the various additional opportunities that are arranged outside school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning because activities are made interesting and they receive effective individual support ensuring they make good progress. This encourages confidence, communication (good listening and speaking) and independence. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and are consistently good across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants are keen to improve their skills and practice, and enthusiastically take up opportunities for

further professional development. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils' personal development, communication, care and medical needs are fully met so they can get the best out of their learning opportunities. Resources, including information and communication technology are effectively used to support learning. Some teachers are more aware than others of the constant need to adapt and refine their curriculum planning to ensure the learning needs of all groups of pupils are fully met. There is a positive ethos of reward and celebration of individual effort and achievement. Good team work between teachers and support staff very positively supports learning and pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and offers a broad range of experiences that support pupils' good personal and academic development. In the Nursery and Reception class there is a good emphasis on developing independence, personal and social skills. Communication skills are emphasised throughout the school. Personal, social and health education, and citizenship effectively support pupils' growing self-confidence and understanding of the world around them. Classroom displays, artefacts, visits and visitors positively enhance pupils' learning experiences. Strategies like 'Brain Gym' make learning fun. There are good opportunities for physical activities, including swimming, and the curriculum fully supports healthy living. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of additional opportunities, including lunchtime clubs and visits into the community. The school is aware of the need to increase the relevancy of curriculum opportunities to ensure that all pupils are being effectively prepared for the next stage of their learning. The school and a number of parents are concerned about the lack of regular speech therapy support which the school is doing all it can to remedy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Efficient school procedures and consistent practice keeps pupils safe and secure while encouraging them to make choices and acquire the skills of independence. There are clear and effective procedures for safeguarding pupils which are understood by all staff. Effective team-work ensures that there are dependable approaches and support for all pupils and personal dignity is respected at all times. Pupils receive good individual guidance, based upon close monitoring and assessment that ensures that they make good progress in their personal and academic development. Effective partnerships with support agencies ensures that the specific needs of pupils are well met. The partnership with parents and the communication between school and home are excellent. A parent wrote, 'The staff are enthusiastic and caring and we cannot praise the school highly enough'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy are very well organised, methodical in their practice, and give good guidance and encouragement. Self-evaluation involves the whole school and there is a clear focus on improvement and pupil achievement. The impact of everyone's work is reflected in the excellent care and support and good personal development of pupils and the good progress they make. Learning and teaching are regularly monitored and the support and guidance for teachers and teaching assistants to improve is

excellent and very well supported by opportunities for further development and training. Curriculum leaders are clear about their responsibilities, but are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and developing the curriculum. The school works very effectively with external agencies and consequently, appropriate support is co-ordinated to meet pupils' specific needs. The governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are kept fully informed of school developments. However, there is little first hand involvement other than during the official meetings.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shenstone School, 94 Old Road, Crayford, DA1 4DZ

Thank you for welcoming me into your school, I had an enjoyable time visiting your classes and watching you work. I noticed that you really enjoy coming to school and meeting your friends, teachers and support staff. I agree with you and your parents that your school is good. Staff support your needs and ensure that you make good progress in your learning and personal care. The school knows what it has to do to make things even better for you and you can help by concentrating on your 'good listening' in lessons and always behaving the best that you can.

I particularly liked the fact that:

- all staff care and support you exceptionally well
- you get on really well with each other and all adults
- you learn to do things for yourself and you are friendly and polite to everyone
- you really enjoy your lessons and make good progress
- you get involved in helping people less fortunate than yourselves
- communication between the school and your home is excellent
- the school works very well with other people to ensure you receive the support you need
- your headteacher is always looking at how the school can improve and with all the adults in the school, is working hard to help you make even better progress in the future.

There are a few things the staff know they can improve upon:

- they need to make sure that in their planning they say exactly how they are going to improve different aspects of the school
- they need to keep a close watch on what you are learning to make sure that it is always meeting your individual needs and preparing you for your future.

Once again, thank you for being so friendly and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Smith

Lead inspector