

Shelton Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109471
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288388
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marian Palmer
Headteacher	Mr James Smart
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002
School address	Lower Shelton Road Marston Moretaine Bedfordshire MK43 0LS
Telephone number	01234 768269
Fax number	01234 768269

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Shelton Lower School is much smaller than average, although it has doubled in size since the previous inspection. Fewer pupils than the national average are eligible for free school meals and virtually all speak English at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average but higher in some year groups than others. Attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception class covers the full range, but overall is at the expected levels for children of that age. The school is organised into three classes. Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils are in the first, Year 2 and 3 in the second and Year 4 in the third class. Two of the classes are taught by teachers as a job-share.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education and, overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily academically. They reach average standards and are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Achievement in reading is consistently good throughout the school. There is greater variation in achievement in regards to writing and mathematics, which is good at times but is generally satisfactory. Achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. This is due to the good, careful monitoring of their progress and consequent support given. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, personal and social development and well-being is good and a strong feature of this small, caring school. Links within the local village are excellent and enhance the richness of the curriculum, which is good. This contributes effectively to community cohesion. The links also provide opportunities for pupils' personal development very well. Care and welfare are good and pupils are particularly well supported in their personal and social development. The curriculum is good and is enriched effectively by a good range of extra activities, both in school time and after school.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good and, as a result of his achievements, the school shows a good capacity to improve. He has led the school successfully as it has doubled in size and, with the strong support of staff and governors, has managed the development of the site, building works and consequent reorganisation of classes effectively. The headteacher has a good awareness of the strengths of the school and a clear vision of how to improve it still further. Inspection judgements confirm that the headteacher's evaluations are accurate. However, the leadership of subjects is currently only satisfactory as some teachers are relatively new to their role, in particular the leaders of mathematics and English. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and have identified their need for further training so that they can more formally monitor some aspects of school provision.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage where children achieve well. It is also good throughout the school for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for the teaching of reading. There is more variation in the quality of teaching in mathematics and writing, which is good on occasion but satisfactory overall. Too many lessons in these subjects set similar challenges for all pupils irrespective of their differing ability. Lesson introductions are too long on occasion and the pace of learning slows as a result. Marking is regular and accurate but opportunities are often missed to explain to pupils and their parents or to other staff members exactly what pupils each need to do next to improve. The school is aware of this and has highlighted the development of marking and use of assessment information as areas of priority for the coming year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics becomes consistently good.
- Improve the pace of learning in lessons by matching tasks more accurately to pupils' current learning needs.
- Implement the new marking policy throughout the school and share with pupils and their parents what the next step is for each pupil to master in English and mathematics.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall attainment on entry varies year on year due to the small size of some year groups, but generally it is average. Children settle well into the Nursery and Reception class and make good gains in their learning alongside pupils in Year 1. Progress and achievement are satisfactory overall in Years 2 to 4 and by the end of pupils' time in Key Stage 1 and Year 4, standards are average. Throughout the school, progress and achievement in reading is consistently good. In writing and mathematics, standards are less consistent and, while they are good at times, they are satisfactory overall. The school has highlighted writing and mathematics as areas of focus for improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well because of the careful tracking of their progress and the good support they are given as a result of this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Through the school council, pupils make a real contribution to the school's development. They enjoy raising funds for charities and taking part in other community activities, such as organising a grandparents' day. Pupils learn how to cooperate with others in groups during lessons and in after-school activities. These activities also help them to develop healthy lifestyles. They become mature young people who get on well together and understand right from wrong. Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and make the most of sport and other activities on offer. Attendance is good and is carefully checked. Links with other schools and agencies are good and make a positive contribution to pupils' social and emotional development. Sound basic academic skills mean that preparation for pupils' future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress due to the good teaching they receive. Teaching of reading is good throughout the school and a strength. Teachers work hard and manage classes effectively, resulting in a pleasant atmosphere and good relationships. Pupils really enjoy school. Assessment procedures are good, but the best possible use is not always made when teachers plan subsequent lessons of the information gathered. The school has good systems to monitor pupils' progress in English and mathematics. However, too many lessons set similar challenges for all pupils in writing and mathematics, irrespective of their differing ability. Marking is regular and accurate but opportunities are often missed to explain to pupils, their parents or other staff what pupils need to do next to improve. The school is aware of this and has highlighted the development and use of marking as a tool for improvement as an area of priority for the coming year.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Planning of lessons ensures that pupils of all abilities have plentiful opportunities to learn skills that will serve them well, such as using computers, and how to stay healthy. However, planning to match each pupil's needs more specifically is an area for improvement. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in relation to its size. Pupils benefit from a good range of sporting and other activities. This includes the opportunity to join in with gardening and learning to play an instrument. Links with other providers of activities make a very positive contribution to what the school can offer and to the consequent progress and personal development of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with good care and support and satisfactory guidance. Staff are strongly committed to caring for the pupils and to promoting their safety. Pupils know what to do and who to turn to if they have a disagreement or a problem. The school caters well for pupils' personal development and gives them a strong sense of responsibility for one another and a belief in the importance of the school community. There is a good emphasis on helping learners to appreciate the value of healthy eating.

Teachers monitor pupils' progress effectively. At the start of lessons, pupils are often told what, in particular, the aims of the lesson are. Teachers give pupils targets to improve their work, but these are not always explicitly explained to pupils and their parents, and reminders are not always followed through in marking of work. The school acknowledges that it needs to involve pupils more actively in deciding what they need to do next to improve their work. It has formulated a new marking policy which is due to be implemented shortly. Pupils at risk of making slower academic progress for whatever reason are identified swiftly. The school makes good use of outside agencies in providing well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and makes appropriate provision for those with English as an additional language.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher leads the school well and has a good awareness of its strengths and areas for improvement. Together with the governors, he has managed the recent growth in the size of the school very effectively. However, the leadership and management roles of subject co-ordinators are at varying stages of development. This is due in part to the recent appointment of some teachers to their roles. The literacy and numeracy coordinators are currently attending training, run by the local authority, for managing their subjects. The governing body offers good support to the school and knows it very well due to governors' regular visits and active participation in all activities. They have, rightly, identified the need to develop their formal monitoring skills as part of the drive to raise standards further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
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	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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 Children,

Inspection of Shelton Lower School, Marston Mortaine, Bedfordshire MK43 0LS

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited recently and for being so polite and friendly. I know you are proud of your school.

What I liked most about your school.

- You enjoy lessons, because school is a happy place and you come to school regularly unless you are really ill.
- The teaching you receive is helping you to make really good progress in learning to read.
- Those of you who find learning more difficult are given very good help.
- Teachers set clear rules for you and help you to behave well.
- You are taught about how to be healthy and take care about what you eat.
- There is a good range of extra activities, like gardening, which I know that you really enjoy.
- There are good links with other groups and excellent links within the village that make your school even better.
- Your headteacher knows what to do to improve your school still further. He has already identified the things the school needs to do to next.

What I have asked your school to do now.

- I have asked the teachers to help you do even better in your work, especially in writing and mathematics, and to make sure you have work that is neither too easy nor too hard.
- The marking of your work needs to give more help to you and your parents to know how well you are doing and how you can improve.

I really enjoyed talking to you about school and watching you work. I wish you all well for the future and hope you have a lovely summer term.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Barnes Lead Inspector