

Shefford Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109975
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	288553
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Mary Harwood
Headteacher	Mrs Gaynor Zimmerman
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2005
School address	Wantage Road Great Shefford Hungerford RG17 7DB
Telephone number	01488 648657
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

Shefford is an exceptionally small rural primary school. The pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. A smaller proportion than average is entitled to free school meals. Around a third of the pupils have learning difficulties and or disabilities, which is higher than average, and three pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The school is federated with Chaddleworth St Andrews CofE (VC) Primary School and the schools share a governing body, headteacher and senior leadership team. Both schools were inspected at the same time as part of a coordinated inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Shefford is a good school which lives up to its motto, 'Every child matters and every second counts.' The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of the whole school team to her vision of excellence and enjoyment in education have ensured that school improvements have gathered pace resulting in rising standards in all areas.

When children start school, most have skills which are lower than those expected for their age. As a result of well planned provision and good teaching, they settle well and make good progress, reaching the standards expected for their age by the end of the year. The school sets high expectations for the attainment of pupils. Over several years there has been a steadily rising trend in standards throughout the school. By Year 2 standards are broadly average and by Year 6 attainment last year was above average. Accurate and rigorous assessment information and the work in pupils' books indicate that most pupils are making rapid progress and achieve challenging targets.

A key factor in the good achievement is the high priority placed on ensuring that all pupils enjoy school, feel safe, well cared for and valued. As a result, personal development and well being of pupils are good. Pupils of all ages value their friendships across age groups. Relationships and behaviour in and out of lessons are good. Pupils are given good care, guidance and support, are confident that their concerns will be dealt with quickly and understand clearly what they need to do to improve.

Teaching and learning are good with well planned lessons which have clear objectives, and interesting activities. Good attention is paid to the different ages and abilities of the pupils. As a result pupils are gaining confidence in their achievements and understanding of what they need to do next to improve. However, there is further scope for more pupils to achieve at higher levels and there are some missed opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and solve problems. Good teaching is supported by a well planned curriculum which meets the needs of most learners and sparks their interest and enjoyment in learning.

The headteacher has built a strong team who share her vision and are fully committed to improving the all round education for each child. There is a good understanding of strengths and areas for development in the school. Systems for ensuring strong, shared senior management, including administration, are working well across the federation. The next step is to develop the roles and responsibilities of subject coordinators, share good practice and ensure consistency across the schools.

The school's successful track record of improvement since the last inspection allied to good self evaluation, high aspirations and sense of purpose indicates that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the challenge for pupils, particularly the more able, and enable pupils to use their own initiative to solve problems.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to share good practice and ensure consistency across the federation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Children arrive at school with skills which are below those expected for their age especially in communication, language and personal development. They make good progress so that by the end of the year most reach the goals expected for their age. The small number of pupils in each year group makes comparisons difficult but the trends are very positive. Since 2004 there has been a steady upward trend in attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are achieving broadly average standards and throughout the school standards are rising so that by the time pupils left Year 6 in 2006, attainment was average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Unvalidated 2007 data indicate that the small number of pupils involved have made very good progress from lower starting points, although few have achieved at the higher levels. Good use of assessment information is linked with well focused support for individual pupils. There is further scope to increase the challenge, particularly for more able pupils, so that more of them achieve at the higher levels. There is good evidence of high standards across the foundation subjects, particularly art and design technology.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, pupils of all ages show kindness and respect for each other and get on well together regardless of age and ability. They are sensitive to the needs of others. A strong house system, where pupils of all ages have regular opportunities to meet together, discuss issues and plan regular events such as assemblies, contributes to the strong community ethos. As a result, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know how to stay safe and healthy and participate enthusiastically in many physical activities at playtimes, in lessons and in after school clubs. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is generally good. Illness and occasional holidays taken in term time mean that this year attendance is just satisfactory.

Pupils of all ages happily take on responsibilities such as school council members, house captains and classroom Helping Hands. They feel valued and know that their views are taken seriously. Important personal skills, such as team working and cooperation, are well developed. Pupils respond well when they have opportunities to demonstrate their organisational skills, such as in the management of the regular charity coffee mornings. Improving standards in key academic skills and good personal skills mean that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teaching is good and some outstanding practice was observed during the inspection. Teachers know each pupil very well and relationships are good. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and behave well. Where pupils have particular learning or behavioural difficulties, staff manage these skilfully and sensitively. Teachers make sure pupils know exactly what they should be achieving in each lesson and provide very good feedback so that pupils know how well they are doing. Support assistants provide well targeted support. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together and develop their speaking and listening skills. There are fewer

opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and solve problems which restricts the challenge, especially for more able learners. Teachers and assistants use good questioning techniques. For example, in a Foundation Stage literacy session, children enthusiastically joined in telling the story with actions and the teacher skilfully directed questions about vocabulary and story techniques to extend the learning of particular children. Teachers have developed vibrant learning environments which both support and celebrate the learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for the youngest children is well organised with lively learning opportunities both inside the classroom and out. Their needs are met well and they make good progress in all areas. Throughout the school the curriculum is well balanced and well planned to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Links are made between subjects to enhance the learning and the pupils recognise that this makes the learning more relevant and enjoyable. As one told the inspector, 'Teachers don't just do geography from a book, they might use art in the lesson and it helps us learn better.' The school is involved in regular projects with other schools, covering a range of subjects for pupils with particular talents to further develop their skills and abilities. Specialist teachers are used to enhance provision, for example in sport and modern foreign languages. The curriculum for personal, social, emotional and health education is very good and contributes to positive outcomes in these areas. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors, clubs and residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support are good. Pupils are well looked after and there are good, well managed systems for safeguarding pupils, child protection and health and safety across the school. The school makes effective use of outside agencies to provide specialist support and advice. Systems for monitoring and supporting pupils with additional learning needs are thorough and well managed and ensure that these pupils make good progress. Academic guidance is very strong. Pupils' work is consistently well marked so they know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. They know their targets and what they are aiming to achieve. There is scope to involve pupils more in assessing and evaluating their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is exceptional and her drive, enthusiasm, passion for improvement, clarity of vision and commitment to children are recognised and appreciated by staff, governors, pupils, parents and local authority colleagues. She has gathered, motivated and developed a team which shares that vision and sense of purpose. That the federation is developing so successfully and rapidly is testament to her expertise and sensitivity in managing two schools in different, but equally challenging, circumstances. Senior leaders work well together undertaking monitoring, demonstrating good practice and providing good quality support. As a result, provision is improving and standards are rising both academically and in personal development. The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders are still developing and there is potential for them to share their skills and expertise across the federation and have even more impact on evaluation and improvement.

The school is establishing strong partnerships which enhance the provision and have a positive impact on the achievement of pupils. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and improvement planning is practical and well focused on outcomes for pupils. The governing body provides good support, is knowledgeable and well informed.

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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?	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	2
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	3
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	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?	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?	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	2
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

13 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shefford Church of England Primary School, Hungerford, RG17 7DB

As you know I visited your school recently to find out how well you were doing. I really enjoyed my time with you. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming, especially those of you who gave up your playtime to talk to me.

You told me your school has improved over the past few years and is now a good school. I agree with you. Here are some of the main things I liked about your school.

- Your and your teachers' hard work is paying off and you are reaching much higher standards in your work. Well done!
- As well as improving in English, mathematics and science, you do some very good work in other subjects. The 'Take one Picture' work is lovely.
- Everyone in your school takes good care of each other.
- You enjoy your lessons because your teachers and other adults plan well and they give you opportunities to discuss ideas, act things out and link the learning across different subjects.
- The teachers mark your work well and give you good feedback so that you know how you can improve your work.
- You have very good opportunities to take part in lots of different activities in school, in the community and with other schools, especially Chaddleworth.
- Your headteacher is excellent and is doing a really good job of leading and managing both of the schools in your federation.

I know Mrs Zimmerman, the staff and governors are determined that the school will become even better so here are two things I've asked them to improve.

- Set you more of a challenge in your learning, particularly for those of you who learn faster through problem solving activities.
- Make sure that subject leaders are able to share their good practice across the federation so that both schools improve together.

Thank you again for helping to make my time in your school so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald HMI