

# Shepherdswell School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110378
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	288651
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Sadler

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	77
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Roger Turney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sandie Jenner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2001
<b>School address</b>	Billingwell Place Springfield Milton Keynes MK6 3NP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 665418
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 698473

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Shepherdswell is a small infant school. The number of pupils on roll has dropped considerably since the previous inspection partly because schools in Milton Keynes have been re-organised. The school shares two specialist units with the partner junior school. These units are for up to five pupils with physical disabilities and a further five pupils that have communication difficulties (autistic spectrum). Pupils come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and their social circumstances are below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than usual. Over half the pupils speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of learning English. In addition, the school has an unusually high proportion of pupils that enter and leave the school throughout the year. In consequence, for example, only half the current Year 2 pupils entered the school at the beginning of the year in the Reception class. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class is below expected levels and their personal and social and communication skills are much less developed than usual. The school holds the following awards: Investors in People, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy School and Sustainable Schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Shepherdswell is a good school with outstanding features. Parents are unanimously supportive. One parent's comments summed up what many parents stated, 'We are delighted with the excellent start the school has provided for our children.' The school has a warm and friendly atmosphere which is under-pinned by the staff's excellent commitment to providing outstanding care, guidance and support. In consequence, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils love of learning and school is evident in their excellent behaviour and their positive attitudes. However, this is not represented in the attendance of children in the Reception class which is poor despite the good efforts of the school. Attendance in Years 1 and 2 is average.

Pupils achieve well in all year groups because the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. They progress well from their below expected levels on entry into the Reception class and, by the time they leave school, standards are in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers provide lessons that are interesting and generally well-matched to the pupils' abilities and this encourages them to work hard and enjoy learning. Lessons are sometimes outstanding because there are high expectations of the pupils and they are questioned well. The school provides well for the many pupils that have learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils that have physical or communication difficulties are integrated very well and the excellent support provided by the teaching assistants enable them to make good progress and enjoy school. In addition, other pupils are highly tolerant of these pupils' difficulties and disabilities. Although the school provides opportunities for pupils that find learning easier, as yet their needs are not always fully met and the school is aware that it needs to increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She is pivotal to the school's success and is greatly admired by the school community. She has a clear vision for the school which is represented through the school's motto, 'Caring and learning together'. At the time of the previous inspection only a few pupils spoke English as an additional language, now it is almost half the school with many of these pupils entering school with little or no English. She has ensured that the school's provision has been flexible enough to enable these pupils to flourish and achieve well. This track record demonstrates that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the number of pupils gaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the attendance of children in the Reception class.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are average in Year 2. Pupils achieve well in all year groups. Many children enter the Reception class with weak personal and social skills. In addition, a significant minority speak little or no English. All children make rapid progress in their social and personal skills which helps them to develop strong and positive attitudes to learning. By the time that they enter Year 1, however, about one third reach expected levels in all areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, the best progress is in writing. Year 2 pupils are able to write extended pieces of work in

interesting ways and using a variety of styles. Until recently, standards in reading were not quite as high as writing. The good efforts that have been put into boosting reading are paying dividends. This has included a strong focus on improving pupils' phonic skills which is helping them to structure their reading. The school is now rightly focusing on increasing the number of pupils who gain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and they show great consideration when working and playing with each other. They thoroughly enjoy school.

Pupils take great pride in caring for their classmates that have physical disabilities and they help them to take a full part in school life. Pupils take on responsibility exceptionally well. They enjoy being buddies to the many new pupils that enter the school and being playground helpers. In addition, they take the school council very seriously and are proud of their efforts, for example, by helping to plan the new playground apparatus. Pupils have a good understanding of staying safe. They know how to care for themselves and their friends when playing on the climbing apparatus, and are very aware of the need to be cautious with strangers. Because the provision to develop the pupils' tolerance and understanding of others is excellent, pupils develop a very good understanding of the wider world and different cultural communities. They willingly raise money for charities. They know about healthy eating and the importance of exercise, though this is not always shown in their packed lunches. Pupils' average standards in their literacy and numeracy skills linked to their well-developed social skills prepares them appropriately for transfer to the junior school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

There is a very positive atmosphere of support and encouragement in the school. This helps to raise the pupils' enjoyment of lessons and their self-esteem. This is a particular focus and success of the effective teaching in the Reception class. Here, staff ensure that the children develop positive attitudes to learning and to each other. Teachers mark work well and guide pupils on how they might improve. Teaching assistants provide excellent support. Working in close partnership with the teachers, they support pupils both in the classes and when they take small groups.

Teachers plan lessons well and they are generally skilled at matching the work to the different needs of the pupils, particularly those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. In addition, higher attaining pupils are sometimes taught separately to help to speed their progress such as by the withdrawal groups for reading. The headteacher is conscious that staff need to do more to extend the number of pupils that attain the higher levels by consistently having high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. This does occur in some lessons. For example in an excellent Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher questioned the most able pupils very effectively.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

In the Reception class, stimulating activities encourage children to learn by playing and exploring together. These are planned well to include experiences inside and outside the classroom and across all areas of learning. This helps to develop the children's personal and social skills and their speaking and listening skills well. Staff are conscious that the Year 1 curriculum needs to be adapted to enable an even smoother transition from Reception.

The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 is of good quality, meets requirements and has been adapted particularly well to meet the needs of Shepherdswell pupils. For example, learning is promoted well by making links between different subjects, and pupils enjoy practising skills taught in ICT in other work such as their study of the local environment. In addition, teachers are skilled at including literacy work in topics being studied in geography and history. The curriculum is enhanced well by a good range of additional visits and visitors to the school and with a particularly strong range of extra curricular activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school's outstanding commitment to care and support of pupils is reflected in its excellent arrangements for receiving the many pupils that enter the school during the school year. Almost all of these speak very little English and some are refugees that have suffered substantial trauma. In addition, pupils with physical or communication difficulties are supported exceptionally well from the moment that their taxis bring them to school until they leave for home. The school has good arrangements in place to boost attendance including first day calling on absence, tracking pupils' attendance and also having awards ceremonies each term for good attendance.

One pupils' comments reflected the school councillors' view, 'Teachers help us to stay safe and all the adults care for us.' All current regulations for protecting and safeguarding pupils are met and exceeded. Parents are encouraged to work with the school to support their children's learning. This includes classes for Somali mothers who are helped to learn how to help their children. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and this enables that any pupils who are potentially underachieving are identified quickly and support programmes put into place. The ensuing data is generally used well to set challenging targets for pupils' progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's leadership and management are excellent. She has ensured that the school has improved very well since the previous inspection. For example, the impact of the improvement project to raise standards in reading has brought positive benefits. Governance is good with governors supporting the school well. The recent arrangements for them to make systematic visits to classes is enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of teaching and learning. There is a deep commitment to ensure that all the pupils are included in all the school has to offer and also to improving achievement. Because of the needs of the pupils, the school has complex and increasing partnerships with education, health and social services personnel. As well as managing all these partners, the school has taken the lead and become the hub for

the local network's extending schools initiative. The school has well organised, regular and effective processes to monitor its work. Its good self evaluation has enabled staff to have a good sense of its strengths and needs. Although subject leaders contribute to this process by checking pupils' progress and teachers' planning this has not included them in the monitoring of other teachers' lessons.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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**

11 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shepherdswell School, Milton Keynes, MK6 3NP

I really enjoyed visiting you when I came to inspect your school. Thank you very much for the friendly way you welcomed me and for your help in finding out about the school.

Both you and your parents told me that you love coming to school and that you feel safe and well cared for. I am not surprised. Yours is a good school and everybody who works there tries very hard to help you to do well. Your teachers are good and work hard to make sure that lessons are made interesting and exciting. The headteacher has done an outstanding job in making sure that you can all work and play together in such a friendly way. I was very impressed with your behaviour which is excellent. I was also very impressed about the way in which you take care of your classmates.

You work hard in lessons so that you learn lots of new things. Your teachers know that they can particularly help you to make even more progress by setting more challenging tasks for those of you that find learning easy. Your parents can help too, because the attendance of the children in the Reception class is poor. Perhaps you can encourage your little brothers and sisters to attend more regularly as you do in Years 1 and 2.

You are really lucky to go to Shepherdswell. It is a very friendly place where everybody wants the best for you. Thank you once again for being so helpful to me.

With very best wishes for your future.

Keith Sadler Lead Inspector