



Shalford Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114844
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290055
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Helen Ranger

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church End
School category	Community		Shalford, Shalford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Braintree, Essex CM7 5EZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01371 850336
Number on roll (school)	74	Fax number	01371 851284
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Peak
		Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Disley
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	6–7 December 2006	290055

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school serving the area around the village of Shalford. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than average, and very high in some year groups. When children start their Reception year, their knowledge and skills vary widely and are often below expected levels because of weaknesses in language and communication. A higher than average proportion of pupils joins the school part way through their primary education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Shalford Primary is a satisfactory school. Pupils do well in their personal development and their academic achievements are satisfactory. They have mostly reached average standards by Year 6 in recent years. Currently, good provision for the youngest children is ensuring rapid progress for children in Reception and Year 1. In the rest of the school, pupils' progress is sound overall, although it is too patchy because of variations in the quality of teaching. This means that more capable pupils are sometimes not stretched enough. The curriculum is satisfactory, however, it has benefited from improvements to provision in information and communication technology (ICT). Although it is not always planned rigorously enough to ensure that the more capable pupils are introduced to the skills that will enable them to reach higher standards. The quality of education and the school's overall effectiveness are satisfactory. In the main, teaching and learning are sound but there is some inadequate teaching. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying this weakness. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They respond well to activities that help promote safe and healthy lifestyles. They contribute well to both the school and village communities and have sound foundations for the next stage of their education. Attendance is satisfactory. The school has made good progress in its efforts to discourage families from taking term-time holidays. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good and there are effective arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties which ensure they make sufficient progress alongside their classmates. The school has introduced a good range of systems for sharing with pupils how well they have done in lessons and, when these are used well, they involve pupils effectively in knowing how they have done and how to improve. The systems are not used consistently well in all classes and this is an area for improvement.

Leadership, management and the value for money that the school provides are satisfactory. The headteacher is hardworking and has the respect of parents and pupils. There has been a larger than usual number of staff changes recently, for reasons outside the school's control, and this has led to a heavy workload for the senior staff. They have adopted a collaborative method of monitoring subjects and teaching that is sound in determining the strengths and areas for improvement. Governance is satisfactory. While the school's view of its effectiveness is adequate, it is based too much on its aspirations for the future and not rooted securely enough in how well its current pupils are doing. Parents' views of the school are mostly very positive and they especially value the family atmosphere and the quality of day-to-day care. The school has a good partnership with parents and with other local schools and makes good use of local authority advice in its continuing development.

The current team of staff and governors has maintained a satisfactory standard of education since the last inspection. They have had a positive impact in important areas,

such as pupil assessment and the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage, and show a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good in all classes.
- Provide sufficient challenge for the more capable pupils to reach higher levels of attainment.
- Check that the arrangements for marking and setting targets with pupils are implemented effectively.
- Ensure that the systems that check how well the school is doing take fuller account of how far initiatives improve pupils' achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' overall progress is satisfactory. The youngest join Reception on a termly basis and often have a very short time in the Foundation Stage of their education. This term's intake is doing well in all areas of learning as a result of good teaching and is on course to reach the levels expected by the end of Reception. In most recent years, by the end of Year 2, pupils have attained average standards. Standards fell sharply in 2006, particularly because the year group had an exceptionally high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Achievement was satisfactory but no pupils reached the higher Level 3 in reading, writing or mathematics. The pupils presently in Year 2 are making sound progress.

By Year 6, pupils have reached broadly average standards in recent years in the national tests. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and most reach at least Level 4. However, in 2006 a much lower than average proportion of pupils reached Level 5 in English and science. As a result, several of the school's targets were not met. However, the small numbers of pupils in each year group are small and test results must be viewed with a degree of caution. The school's tracking of individuals' progress shows quite large variations from year to year. These reflect the varying quality of teaching between classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is a strength of the school. Their personal development was reflected well in an assembly where pupils' celebrated their own and others' achievements, and demonstrated their good behaviour and respect for others. Pupils generally enjoy school and say it is 'like a big family', although they are less enthusiastic about lessons where they are not involved enough in practical activities that challenge them to do their best. Pupils have good awareness of how to stay safe and what to do to stay fit and healthy. They successfully help to organise the school council and

events such as a stall at the recent bazaar to boost their council funds. Pupils' satisfactory academic standards, combined with their mostly good social skills, are a sound preparation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan interesting activities that promote pupils' enthusiasm. They work closely with the teaching assistants to ensure good levels of individual help for pupils, especially those with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, the quality of teaching and learning ranges from that which is outstanding to a small amount that is inadequate. In the outstanding elements of lessons, not a minute is lost in keeping pupils motivated and suitably challenged. They are given clear learning objectives, detailed feedback on how well they are doing and clear guidance on the next steps. Where teaching is inadequate there is too slow a pace to lessons, low expectations of work and behaviour and poor communication with pupils about how they are getting on. The school has good systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress but the information gained is used inconsistently by teachers in planning lessons. It often helps teachers to build systematically on pupils' previous skills and knowledge but is sometimes not used to establish which pupils need additional challenge in their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum maintains a satisfactory balance between subjects and caters adequately for the needs of the mixed-age classes. There is good attention to all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. In all age groups, there have been good improvements in levels of ICT resources and in how activities are planned to promote pupils' computer skills. There is not enough attention to planning for the more able pupils or for those with particular gifts or talents. There is a good range of activities that promote pupils' personal, social and health education. The school provides a reasonable range of clubs and visits for its size. It offers parents a good range of opportunities to work in partnership in their children's learning, such as meetings about aspects of the curriculum but the school is often disappointed by the response from parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils and parents are rightly satisfied with the quality of pastoral care that is provided. The school is rigorous in safeguarding its pupils' health and safety. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported effectively. The improving arrangements for assessing pupils' progress have led to teachers agreeing good target-setting and feedback systems that include pupils reflecting on their own learning. As with the

overall assessment systems, these arrangements are not used consistently enough to have a better than satisfactory impact on standards. For example, teachers' written comments on pupils' work are often cursory and pupils understandably say they do not find them very helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is welcoming to parents and pupils from all backgrounds. It is coping well with its recent staff changes and has appropriate plans to induct new staff and improve the practice of its existing teachers. It is well aware of where teaching needs to be improved if standards are to rise. The budget has been managed well this year to release the headteacher from regular classroom commitments so that she can oversee current staffing and premises priorities. These include exciting plans to develop the accommodation and provision for the youngest pupils. The school is making effective use of the support of local authority advisers and consultants, particularly in its efforts to raise standards in English and mathematics. The governors are supportive and attend meetings regularly. Their chairman is active and works closely with the headteacher, but governors are too reliant on the headteacher and staff for their information about the school's effectiveness, rather than questioning or challenging this for themselves. The main improvement plan is comprehensive but lacks clear indications of how the success of initiatives will be measured, for example, from evidence of improved standards.

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?	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	3
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	3

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	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

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

8 December 2006

Dear Children

Shalford Primary School, Church End, Shalford, Essex, CM7 5EZ

Thank you for your welcome when I visited you recently. A particularly big 'thank you' goes to the children in Class C who gave up some of their time to tell me about your school. This letter is to let you know some of the most important things I discovered during my visit.

You told me that you enjoy school and I saw you getting on well together. Your parents are right to be happy with the way the school cares for you and encourages your good behaviour. I think that the children in Class A get a really good start to school and the youngest ones settle very quickly. This is helped by the older ones who look after them around school and in the playground. Your teachers give you interesting things to do in lessons that help you to reach the levels in subjects like literacy and numeracy that are expected for your age. However, some lessons are better than others and I have asked the staff to make sure that all your lessons are good. This will include making sure that those of you who find learning quite easy are 'stretched' enough in your work.

The teachers have good ways of checking how much progress you are making. I would like them to mark your books and use your targets in ways that make sure you all understand how well you are doing and what you need to do next in your work.

Mrs Disley and the rest of the staff are working hard to make sure that you all do well, in spite of the changes of teachers that you have had. I was impressed with the achievements you shared in assembly, such as the merits and certificates you had earned. Your singing and recorder playing made the assembly I saw a very enjoyable experience.

Best wishes to you all

Mrs Helen Ranger (Inspector)