



Shears Green Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118265
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291068
Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Denise Morris

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Packham Road
School category	Community		Northfleet
Age range of pupils	4–7		Gravesend DA11 7JF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01474 566700
Number on roll (school)	360	Fax number	01474 566700
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Gary Reading
		Headteacher	Sue Walker
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large infant school takes children from an increasingly wide catchment area. Because of this the attainment of children on entry to the school is decreasing. The numbers of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who use English as an additional language are average but showing signs of increasing.

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. Its key strength is the way in which it promotes the good personal development of children through outstanding care, support and guidance. Because of this, children behave well, develop very positive attitudes to learning, and show outstanding enjoyment of their school life. They have close links with the community and constantly raise funds for many different charities. They lead exceptionally healthy lifestyles and show good understanding of healthy foods. This results in children being well prepared for their futures.

Standards are broadly average. Children achieve well in all areas of the school. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is below national expectations but, because of good progress, children achieve well. By the time they leave Year 2, standards are average overall but less good in mathematics than in English and science. The number of children achieving the higher levels in National Curriculum tests is increasing because of good teaching and exciting activities, resulting in good progress. Children across the school benefit from good teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants make very good use of resources and creative approaches to keep children interested and promote enjoyment in learning. The curriculum is good. The good range of extra-curricular experiences is well attended. Overall attendance at the school is close to the national average. The outstanding care provided by the school ensures that children are safe and secure. Children's work is regularly assessed and high quality tracking and monitoring systems highlight any area of underachievement so that it is quickly dealt with. Day-to-day marking of children's work, however, is not always as rigorous as it could be, resulting in some instances where children do not know how they could improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school, which is shared by senior staff and governors. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and managers are diligent in carrying out their tasks. Monitoring of the school's work is rigorous and has led to changes that have improved provision and the achievement of the children. Managers are successfully working hard to improve overall attendance. Governors are supportive of the school and are fully involved in its work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics to ensure that all children achieve as well as they do in English and science.
- Improve the quality of marking in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics, to ensure that all children understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in all areas of the school. When they enter Reception, standards are below national expectations, particularly in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal development. They make good progress in Reception because of good teaching and exciting activities, so that, by the time they enter Year 1, the vast majority have achieved the nationally recognised goals for children of their age in physical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. For example, children in Reception were able to create a circuit using batteries, wires and clips, and explain what they were trying to achieve. In Year 1, they build on their skills and achieve well, so that by Year 2 all groups of children make good progress, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and children who use English as an additional language. Overall, they attain above average standards in science, broadly average standards in reading and writing and just below average standards in mathematics. The good progress in science follows good practical learning opportunities in which children have opportunities to explore and experiment for themselves. Good progress in English, particularly writing, is a result of a whole-school focus in which teachers have successfully implemented many creative activities so that children want to write. This has led to rising standards and improved self-esteem. The number of children achieving the higher levels in the standardised tests is improving overall. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory. Children do not always know what they need to do to improve their skills in mathematics because day-to-day marking is not as helpful as it could be. It is also because work in mathematics is not always extended well enough, particularly for the most able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. They benefit from good provision, which helps them to gain good awareness of the wider world. Outstanding social development is underpinned by exceptionally good opportunities to develop friendships and work together well in class. Children respect and care for each other well and show respect to adults. Attendance is not as good as it could be although it is close to the national average. There is an ongoing programme to improve attendance through contact with parents and awards, such as the 'attendance teddy', which children enjoy receiving.

Children show very good awareness of healthy lifestyles. This is because they are effectively taught to understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Children say they feel safe at school. A flourishing school council enables children to take an active role in the way the school is run. It has a good track record of making useful suggestions to improve the school, such as making staff on duty more visible in the playground by wearing coloured jackets. Children's support for the wider community is reflected in the numerous thoughtful charity appeals, visits to local senior citizens' organisations and participation in an art project with a neighbouring secondary school,

and the fact the children choose not to bully. Children work well together in teams, which contributes effectively to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good because work is matched to children's abilities in almost all lessons. Teaching is particularly good in English. In writing, for example, children are helped to understand how what they have to do is linked to the next steps in their learning. As a result, children enjoy their work and make good progress in lessons. Children with learning difficulties or physical disabilities also make good progress because well trained teaching assistants effectively support them. Teachers assess pupils' work carefully and use the information to set challenging targets for improvement. However, marking and the use of the final part of lessons when work is evaluated, do not consistently engage all children, particularly the most able, in improving their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Recent changes to the curriculum to ensure children are more actively involved in learning have been effective and standards are rising as a result. Children write for a variety of purposes in different subjects. In history, for example, children improved their letter writing by composing a letter home from a Crimean War soldier. Interactive computer programs are well planned to support learning. Children's learning is enriched by an extensive range of additional experiences provided through visits to places of interest and visiting musicians, specialist sports teachers and people from different cultures, such as Native Americans. A good selection of sporting and cultural clubs and other after-school activities contributes to children's enjoyment of school and their good spiritual and cultural development. The curriculum does not always provide well enough for the highest attaining children, particularly in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Comprehensive procedures for children's safety and welfare, effective procedures for tracking and guiding children's progress and excellent relationships with other agencies and parents are outstanding features of the school's work. They are also significant factors in promoting children's emotional and physical health and good behaviour so that they feel safe, are free from bullying and benefit from all that the school has to offer. Road and fire safety is systematically taught so that children are clearly developing a proper awareness of risks and how to deal with them. Excellent links with other agencies such as the school health, psychological and educational welfare services, as well as with the junior school are used well, both to support children and parents

and to provide staff with additional expertise to meet particular needs. An example of this is the availability of play therapy now provided by a member of the staff for those children whose development in this area is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. As a result, standards show a steady upward trend despite a gradual fall in the attainment of children on entry to the school. Over the past three years there has been a modest increase in how well children achieve. This is as a result of carefully structured programmes and rigorous tracking of standards. The regular and consistent monitoring of teaching and learning has resulted in a reorganisation of staff recently that is beginning to have a positive impact on learning and has strengthened the quality of teaching across the school. The strong senior management team shares the clear vision of the headteacher, and all are working successfully towards a common goal. Good procedures have successfully been implemented to improve standards in writing following an analysis of results in 2005. There is clear awareness that the same needs to happen in mathematics where standards have not risen as well as they have in science and English because procedures to do so are in the early stages of implementation. Governors are supportive of the school's work, and are regular visitors to it taking on responsibility for a number of areas. The school's awareness of its own strengths and weaknesses is good and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The senior staff work closely with local partnerships and are doing all they can to improve attendance. Resources, including staffing are well used to foster improvements. The school has demonstrated its ability to bring about change, for example in writing and in the quality of teaching, and consequently has good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	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.

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

Thank you for all your help on our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and you told us lots of good things about your school. We think your school is a good school.

We believe that you enjoy school very much and you work hard. You do well in your lessons so that you make good progress in most of your learning. You have lots of exciting things to do at school and you behave well. Teaching is good. Your teachers take very good care of you and help you to learn well. Your headteacher and other leaders work hard to do the best for you that they can. There are two things that we think the school could do better in and you could help to improve these:

- You could do better in mathematics. You can help by always working hard in your lessons.
- Your work could be marked better so that you know how to improve it.

Thank you again and good luck for the future.