



Sherwin Knight Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118457
Local Authority Medway
Inspection number 291139
Inspection date 21 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Cedar Road
School category	Community		Strood
Age range of pupils	3–7		Rochester ME2 2JP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 338260
Number on roll (school)	250	Fax number	01634 338261
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Gill Martin
		Headteacher	Sandra Sheldrake
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
3–7	21 February 2007	291139

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a bigger-than-average infant school. There is a wide social mix among pupils, but the majority come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Children enter the school with levels of ability which are slightly below those that are typical, particularly in their social and language development. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is around average. Since the last inspection the school has moved into a new building. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed during the last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sherwin Knight is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. It has successfully come through a period of change and pupils have kept up their good level of personal development. This is displayed in their good behaviour, maturity and enjoyment in what parents describe accurately as a 'family atmosphere'.

Pupils' standards are broadly average by the time they leave but all could do better in their writing abilities, which are hampered by weak spelling and narrow vocabulary. However, their attainment in number work is above average and they now meet the standards expected in information and communication technology (ICT); an improved picture since the last inspection. The sound curriculum promotes lots of small-group practical learning, particularly in the Reception classes. In other year groups, activities encourage pupils to gain most basic skills systematically, but their writing skills are not promoted as well. Their social development is fostered effectively through the school.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. Consistently lively teaching motivates them to learn quickly and confidently. They make up ground rapidly, particularly in gaining social and language skills. Their social skills continue to develop well further up the school, but this good start is not built on effectively in other respects, particularly in their writing skills. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but is more effective in the Nursery and Reception classes. In Years 1 and 2, teaching does not always stretch pupils, particularly in their language work.

Pupils enjoy school. They report that they feel safe as they receive good levels of care and guidance, such as how to ask for help when needed and solve difficulties with others. As one pupil remarked enthusiastically, 'I have millions of friends!' Parents also notice the good level of care. One commented, 'The change in my daughter has been amazing – she now loves school'. This reflected the positive views of most parents. The leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear determination to raise the quality of education, such as improving teaching. The governors, while very supportive at an informal level, do not gather enough information about what goes on in school to act as 'critical friends' to challenge the school to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' spelling and range of vocabulary in Years 1 and 2 to help improve their confidence and fluency in writing.
- Improve teachers' skills in setting challenging activities and questions so pupils' abilities are developed further in Years 1 and 2.
- Develop the governors' ability to gather information about the school's work and performance so they help it improve further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

There has been a gradual rise in standards over the past few years as improvements in the curriculum and better monitoring have begun to take effect. They are now broadly average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. The children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. A very practical, independent approach to setting activities gives them high levels of confidence in gaining skills. As a result, children reach the levels expected by the time they start Year 1. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach the expected standards in reading, science and ICT. In number work they achieve well, reaching higher standards than expected. Pupils' written work is hampered by their weak spelling abilities and a narrow written vocabulary. Pupils with learning difficulties integrate well within normal class activities. They receive good levels of help to make sure that they make progress in line with their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and enjoy school because their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They like the freedom to choose in group work and most complete it well. Pupils have mature social skills. They work well both independently and with others. This aids their confidence and self-esteem and prepares them well for their future, although their average key skills limit this aspect of their personal development. Around the school pupils willingly take on small responsibilities. Older pupils, although positive about school, would like a say in what goes on through a school council, and this is under consideration by staff. Pupils know about healthy eating and the benefits of drinking lots of water. They know which foods are best to eat and which to avoid. They like having 'treat Friday' which helps them realise the benefits of eating particular foods only once in a while. They understand the benefits of exercise, and they are helped in this by having extra sports activities in class time. Attendance is satisfactory. The school works closely with outside agencies to persuade a small number of parents to ensure their child attends regularly. The school has satisfactory links with the community, such as the local church, and pupils enjoy raising money for national good causes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but is consistently of higher quality in the Nursery and Reception classes. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement and current work reflect teaching that is typically satisfactory. Lots of practical activities are the backbone of teaching through the school and these are organised effectively. Pupils sensibly choose

activities and teaching assistants play a key part in supporting pupils, particularly those who have learning difficulties. In the Nursery and Reception classes, lively teaching promotes a wide variety of stimulating activities. For example, children enjoyed acting out different roles in their pretend 'Chinese restaurant'. In Years 1 and 2, teaching builds on pupils' social and decision-making abilities. However, pupils' writing and listening are not as well developed in every class. Not all teachers are as skilled in challenging the pupils to do their best. In all classes, teachers make good use of audio-visual whiteboards to make lessons fun, and computers effectively help pupils develop their skills in number and reading. Teachers are keeping a closer check on pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and are gaining a better awareness of where they need extra help. Teachers give effective guidance to pupils, often verbally, about how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum gives a satisfactory framework for teachers to plan a variety of stimulating activities through the school. It provides well for pupils' personal development. Lessons allow pupils to have a say in planning activities to complete and then being able to review what they have done. This aids their sense of responsibility for their own learning. Weaknesses in pupils' writing, particularly in Years 1 and 2, are being tackled urgently, but changes to planning are at an early stage. The planning and teaching of basic skills is particularly effective in number, reading and more recently, in using ICT in a wide variety of subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Extra class-based activities in music and sport help extend pupils' creative and physical abilities effectively. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, aided by an after-school club held every day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's welcoming atmosphere and good level of concern for individuals mean that pupils feel safe and valued. They know that they can approach any member of staff if they have worries or concerns. Few think bullying is an issue, but they know how to deal with other children who treat them unkindly. Parents receive good levels of information about their child's progress through folders kept outside classrooms. The weekly 'open door' mornings held in classes are well attended and help parents support their child's work and progress. Good links with outside agencies help support vulnerable pupils so they feel secure. The school has improved its systems for checking on pupils' progress and these are beginning to be used better by staff to modify teaching. Targets in writing to help guide pupils have only just been introduced, so not all are clear how they benefit their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have made telling changes for the better. Clear and realistic self-evaluation procedures are now in place. In judging areas such as quality of teaching, they are spot on and want to improve it further. Regular monitoring is giving a clear view of what makes good teaching, but the role of subject leaders in influencing learning is taking time to improve. Priorities in the school's plans for action are clear, appropriate and take account of parents' views. For example, the school responded positively to their concerns about the cost of visits. Teamwork is a good feature and contributes to the caring ethos that pupils and parents notice. As a parent commented, 'My children like school and always talk about it at home. I am highly impressed'. Good levels of information are provided for parents, which many say they appreciate. Governors, while being very supportive informally, do not gather enough information about what is going on in school. This means they cannot easily act as a 'critical friend' to the staff in order to improve the school's performance. In spite of this relative weakness, the senior managers demonstrate a clear commitment to move the school forward and its overall capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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?	3
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	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	3
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?	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.

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	2
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

I'm writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection I carried out recently. I really enjoyed visiting you. I think that Sherwin Knight is a satisfactory school that is improving quickly. The way the headteacher and governors run the school is satisfactory.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- You make sound progress in your work and get near to the levels that are expected.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you do.
- The teachers make lessons interesting, such as talking about those dinosaurs that were seen in the local town!
- Your parents or carers can see how well you are doing if they pop in to school and look at your folders outside the class.
- Group-work activities are usually interesting, such as the pretend Chinese restaurant the Reception children have in their class.
- You all behave well and the school helps you to solve problems with other classmates.
- Your help in raising money for charities like 'Poppy day' is really good.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to make the school a nice place to be and for the school to get even better.

I have asked the school to look at these things to improve:

- To help you get even better at your writing skills like spelling and writing stories.
- To make sure the teachers in Years 1 and 2 really stretch your thinking, especially for those who find some work a bit easy.
- To help the governors to get to know what goes on in school a bit more so they can help the school to get even better.

You can help by taking care when you try to spell new words and by using lots of exciting words in your stories.