



# Sholden Church of England Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 118749  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 291237  
**Inspection date** 21 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Patricia Davies

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>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	London Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Sholden
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Deal CT14 0AB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 374852
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	109	<b>Fax number</b>	01304 374852
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Jim Sullivan
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Shelagh McPhee
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Sholden Primary is a small village school situated on the outskirts of Deal. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and a very few come from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. When children enter the Reception class their attainment varies but is broadly as expected. Half of the teaching staff have joined the school over the last two years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Sholden is a good school, popular with parents and with strong links with the local church and community. Parents and pupils are quick to praise the school's friendly, family atmosphere and its good care, guidance and support. As one parent wrote, 'The teachers at Sholden take an interest in each and every child... each child is not just a face lost amongst many.' In this encouraging and happy environment children thrive personally and academically. Their good personal development and well-being are particularly evident in their exemplary behaviour and considerable enjoyment of all they do. Pupils' hard work, interest and closely focused attention are common features of all lessons. Their positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their good achievement.

Provision in the Reception class is good so that by the start of Year 1 most children reach standards above the expected level. Indeed, good quality teaching and learning is to be found right through the school. As a result, standards are significantly above average by the time pupils leave at Year 6. The good curriculum is varied and interesting and never more so than in its encouragement of writing. Improving the quality of pupils' writing is a particular passion of the school. The success of the school's approach is to be seen in the exceptionally high results in national tests in English at Year 6 in the last two years. The same concentrated attention has not been given to mathematics. Pupils are not challenged often enough to solve mathematical problems or to use mathematics in the context of other subjects. Consequently, progress in this subject is more variable than it is in English.

Leadership and management are good, with a positive and enthusiastic approach to improvement. New staff members have been ably supported by the headteacher and play an active and influential part in the school's development. The headteacher's comprehensive monitoring ensures that the school has a clear view of its overall performance. Other members of staff are fully involved in monitoring pupils' achievement, but subject leaders and governors do not have the same extensive opportunities to evaluate the outcomes of initiatives in order to have a full understanding of their impact.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more frequent opportunities to use mathematics in other subjects and in problem-solving activities in order to secure consistently good progress in this subject.
- Ensure subject leaders and governors evaluate the outcomes of initiatives so that they are fully aware of the impact of improvements on the quality of the school's performance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good throughout the school and standards are significantly above average by the end of Year 6 across English, mathematics and science. Most children reach standards above the expected level by the end of the Reception Year, particularly in their personal, social, language and literacy skills. Good progress is maintained across Years 1 and 2. The dip in national test results at Year 2 in 2006 was due to disruptions to staffing, and standards in the current Year 2 are above average.

By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6 many attain high standards in English. Considerable attention is successfully directed at improving the content of pupils' writing. This is helped along by an equally strong focus on formal skills, such as punctuation and handwriting. Mathematics has not been developed to the same extent as English and this is reflected in the Year 2 tests. These results have been broadly average over recent years and lower than those for reading and writing. The school is now generating more opportunities for pupils to explore mathematical ideas and take part in activities that are open ended or good fun. Where lessons include tasks of this kind pupils make good progress, but these opportunities are still too few. Consequently, pupils do not make the same consistently good progress across the school in mathematics as they do in English.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The independence and cooperation nurtured so successfully in the Reception class is thereafter reflected in pupils' mature, confident and friendly manner. They are hugely positive about their school. When asked if there was anything they would change to make it even better, pupils answered that they would like more space, but nothing else! Their high levels of interest in lessons and above average attendance are further proof of their enthusiasm for school life. Pupils are polite and always extremely well behaved. They answer questions thoughtfully and listen attentively to the views of others. All these qualities provide invaluable skills for later life. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with a statement of educational need are well integrated.

Pupils are quite clear about the special contribution that school council members and Year 6 prefects make to school life. Younger pupils, for example, spoke with much appreciation of the prefects' support at playtimes. These roles give a relatively small number of pupils a real chance to take responsibility, but similar opportunities are not more widely available to other pupils.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils' attentiveness and cheerful application to their work are marked features of all lessons. These qualities create an industrious and purposeful working atmosphere that is underpinned by good quality planning and well managed activities. Teaching assistants are well briefed and lend good support so that less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities also make valuable contributions to lessons.

Pupils are captivated when activities are particularly imaginative and inventive. Such an approach in Years 1 and 2 provided outstanding preparation for writing about a trip to Africa. High interest and rapt attention were assured by the opportunity to board the 'aeroplane' and watch and discuss in-flight information about Kenya. Exciting teaching strategies of this kind are not routinely adopted in mathematics. Text book work, for example, does not give pupils the same interesting and challenging context in which to use their mathematical knowledge and explore new ideas.

Pupils appreciate the support and help they receive during lessons. Questions often probe and extend their learning further and work is regularly checked. Feedback in pupils' books is supportive and encouraging but does not always give pupils key information for improving their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Lively displays illustrate a well-rounded curriculum. The profile of individual subjects is raised when staff focus on one in particular over the course of a week. This approach has helped to promote the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Music has been considerably boosted by the appointment of a specialist teacher. Many links have been created between subjects to make learning more interesting, but these are stronger for English than they are for mathematics. Reception children benefit from a careful balance of activities they can select for themselves alongside focused teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

To compensate for limited accommodation for physical education, the school makes good use of local facilities for gymnastics, swimming and games. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Sporting opportunities, including fixtures with other schools, and attention to healthy eating, ensure pupils have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils gain a strong appreciation of western culture and traditions. They learn about other religions and ways of life through studies in religious education and geography, but the school is aware that it could do more to extend pupils' experience of other cultures.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Written responses from parents show their highest level of satisfaction with this aspect of the school's work, especially in relation to its pastoral care. There is sensitive and well planned support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with a statement of need, including close liaison with outside agencies. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and pupils know their welfare is valued and nurtured. The good role models provided by staff and prefects ensure pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in school.

Careful tracking of pupils' progress ensures that those in need of additional support are identified early. Timely intervention guarantees that those with learning difficulties get the help they need so that they make the same good progress as others. Targets are challenging for Year 2 pupils and current standards show that they are on course to meet them. Those set for Year 6 are cautious and could be more challenging. Targets were exceeded in the 2006 national tests and the work of the current Year 6 indicates that they are set to outstrip them again this year.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

At the forefront of this strong community is the commitment and vigour of the headteacher. She plays a central and extensive part in monitoring and influencing the school's performance and inspires the enthusiastic teamwork among staff. The school is well placed to bring about further improvement. The skills of new staff have been successfully developed so that pupils continue to achieve well academically and personally. Regular discussion with staff about assessment data ensures that all are accountable for pupils' progress. New subject leaders are already actively involved in developing their areas of responsibility. The small size of the school successfully lends itself to informal communication, which gives staff much valuable information. In addition, subject leaders have some good opportunities for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. This information is used for planning further improvements. Nevertheless, formal monitoring by subject leaders is not yet extensive enough to check in full how effective initiatives have been. This is true of the special weeks when teaching focuses on particular subject areas, for example, and for mathematics.

Resources are used and deployed well. Governors are highly supportive of the school and have well organised systems for consultation and feedback. Governors readily challenge the school to support improvement when necessary, but are aware that they could do this more rigorously if they evaluated the outcomes of the school's work in greater detail.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<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?	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

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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### 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>	2

<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.

## 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	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 your warm and friendly welcome when I visited your school. It was a pleasure to talk with so many of you and many thanks to those who took time to meet with me. Yours is a good school and you and your parents clearly think so too. It was good to hear that there was nothing you wanted to change about your school, although I know you would like a bit more space!

Here are some other important things about your school:

- Your huge enjoyment of school, your hard work and excellent behaviour were to be seen in every class.
- You all achieve well because teaching is good, particularly in English where you learn to write imaginatively and also to use good punctuation and handwriting!
- Even though you are a bit short of space the school does all it can to make sure that you do not miss out on activities, particularly in sport.
- All the adults take good care of you so that you feel safe and happy.
- The staff are always looking for ways to make things even better for you. Here are some things your school has been asked to do to make your education even better:
- Give you lots more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics and use mathematics in other subjects.
- Make sure that staff and governors look really carefully at the new things they introduce so that they know how successful they have been.

With very best wishes for the future.