



Shiplake Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123203
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292609
Inspection date 8 January 2007
Reporting inspector Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Memorial Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Shiplake
Age range of pupils	4-11		Henley-on-Thames RG9 4DN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0118 9402024
Number on roll (school)	192	Fax number	0118 9406130
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Miss Rachel Head
		Headteacher	Mrs June Bishop
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This popular, oversubscribed school serves a relatively advantaged area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few are learning English as an additional language. There are fewer pupils than average with learning difficulties, although the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Need is higher than usual.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Shiplake is a good school with outstanding features. Excellent leadership and management, and high levels of care, support and guidance, ensure that pupils achieve well academically and make excellent progress in their personal development. Parents show excellent support for the school, one reflecting the views of many when commenting, 'I will always be hugely grateful that my children have had the privilege of going to Shiplake School'.

The school places a very high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe from harm and able to achieve their potential. Pupils appreciate the help they get. They work extremely hard, are enthusiastic about their learning and their behaviour is exemplary. Relationships with staff and amongst pupils are very positive, so that lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils have a well developed understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle and enjoy the opportunities for healthy eating and energetic play. They make a significant contribution to their school and the wider community through, for example, their influential school council, participation in local events and fund-raising. Good progress in literacy and numeracy, and a good understanding of citizenship, mean that they are well prepared for their future lives.

Pupils' attainment is usually above average when they first join the school, although it varies from year-to-year. Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class because of the excellent provision. As a result, the vast majority reach the goals expected of them by the end of Reception and a good proportion exceed them. Good teaching in Years 1 to 6 ensures that pupils make good progress and reach above average standards. Pupils do particularly well in science and, in 2005, the national test results for eleven year olds were exceptionally high. This success is largely because the school reviewed its approaches and has ensured that lessons are firmly based on practical activities. Pupils enjoy immensely this first-hand experience, 'especially,' as one pupil put it, 'the explosions!', and teachers have a very good understanding of how pupils learn scientifically. Some year groups contain pupils with significant learning needs. A combination of sensitive and supportive teaching, careful monitoring and very close links with outside agencies means that the pupils make very good progress.

Exceptional leadership from the headteacher ensures that there is no complacency. Very well supported by the deputy headteacher, senior staff and governors, she has created a strong staff team who are clearly focused on improving the quality of provision. A very close check is kept on teaching and learning, so that the leaders have a very accurate view of what is working well and what can be improved. For example, the school recognises that pupils could do better in writing and has focused on raising the attainment of boys and those pupils who find writing difficult. This work is proving to be effective, although there is still more to be done. In particular, the school is rightly concentrating on providing pupils with more opportunities to write in other subjects and ensuring that more able writers are challenged to reach the higher levels. Occasionally, more could be expected of these pupils. The school leaders are exceptionally well placed to achieve the improvements they seek.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the challenge for more able writers and provide more opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their generally favourable starting points, pupils achieve well and reach above average standards because they are taught well and are highly motivated. This is reflected in the national test results for pupils in Years 2 and 6, which have been significantly above average in recent years. An expected dip in results in 2004, due to the nature of that cohort, was followed by a rise in 2005. This represented a good level of achievement for those pupils and results improved further in 2006. Indeed, the results for science improved on the already exceptionally high performance of the previous year. A significant proportion of the current Year 6 have joined the school in recent years. Whilst this group is performing at a lower level than that seen previously, they are achieving well, making good progress and standards are above average. The school's analysis of test results revealed that some boys underperformed in writing and, in Year 2, too few pupils reached the higher Level 3. This is particularly noticeable when set beside pupils' very strong performance in reading. Attempts to make writing more enjoyable and meaningful are proving successful and boys and girls achievement in writing is good. The school rightly recognises that, on occasions, the progress of more able writers slows when they are not fully challenged and is taking effective steps to tackle this. The very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. This has a significant impact on their learning, progress and standards. Pupils' very high levels of enjoyment are reflected in above average attendance rates. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are highly motivated and keen to do well, so that lessons invariably run smoothly. From the time they join the Reception class, children learn to work alongside others, take turns, share and listen respectfully. Children thrive in this supportive atmosphere and their excellent progress in their personal development continues across the school. A strong Christian ethos underpins all of the school's work. Pupils' spiritual development has improved considerably since the last inspection. In lessons and assemblies, they learn about the wider world and gain respect for those who have views or beliefs different from their own. Pupils take every opportunity and make an outstanding contribution to the school's smooth running by taking on extra responsibilities, for example by applying to be 'playground helpers'. They take their role as school councillors very seriously and are proud of their achievements, for example, when designing the impressive 'friend ship'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and are instrumental in pupils' good progress. Lessons run smoothly because teachers are well prepared and enjoy excellent relationships with pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and they help pupils to reflect on this during and at the end of lessons. Work is generally matched well to pupils of different ability although, occasionally, more could be expected of more able writers. A close check is kept on pupils' progress. Skilful questioning encourages pupils to think deeply and teachers use their responses well to check on their understanding and tackle any misconceptions. Assessment is particularly effective in Reception and this information is very well used to plan the children's next steps in learning. Across the school, marking is generally used effectively to inform pupils about their progress, although inconsistencies mean that some opportunities are missed. Pupils who need extra help, in particular those with learning difficulties, are very well taught by teachers and support staff, so that they make very good progress towards their particular targets. Teachers knowledge and confidence in science are major factors in pupils' success and enjoyment of the subject. Interactive whiteboards, some of which are new, are used well to aid explanations and capture pupils' interest.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that successfully promotes pupils' all-round development. Improved planning for personal, social and health education has contributed to their excellent progress in this important area. Staff work hard to provide interesting and exciting activities. An increased emphasis on practical work in science has been instrumental in pupils' very good achievement and high levels of enjoyment. Links between subjects, including the use of information and communication technology, are improving. The school rightly identified the need to make writing more meaningful and interesting by providing real-life and exciting opportunities for writing in order to raise standards and is focusing its attention on increasing opportunities for writing in other subjects. A very good range of visitors and visits, including a residential experience of Year 6 pupils and involvement in local festivals, enhance pupils' enjoyment and enrich their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support are significant strengths of the school. They make a major contribution to pupils' sense of well-being and this means that they enjoy school and are ready and able to learn. A very close check is kept on those who are potentially vulnerable. Procedures for child protection are very thorough and

robust, comprehensive checks are made to identify the risk involved in activities in-and-out of school and all staff and governors receive the necessary clearance. All adults support pupils' personal needs very well. Very good provision for those with special educational needs, learning difficulties and disabilities, means that they make brisk progress. Excellent links with parents and a wide range of external agencies support this. Pupils of all ability receive excellent academic guidance. They have a clear understanding of how they can improve and older pupils, in particular, are fully involved in setting their own targets. Parents and pupils are appreciative, one parent praising 'the caring, enthusiastic approach of the staff'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The excellent headteacher has a clear vision for the school's continued improvement, which is shared by staff and governors, and has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and progress. Self-evaluation is exceptionally rigorous and accurate and the outcomes are used systematically to identify and tackle weaknesses. The deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators are extremely influential in raising standards in their areas of responsibility and they are well supported by all staff. They have been particularly successful in raising standards in science following a dip in test results and are working determinedly to achieve similar success with pupils' writing. Governors provide excellent support and challenge; they have a clear understanding of their strategic role and a detailed knowledge of how the school is doing. The school leaders are equally focused on promoting pupils' personal development and providing a high level of care.

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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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 the friendly way you welcomed me to your school for the recent inspection. A special thank you goes to those of you who met with me to let me know your views. I enjoyed talking to you and visiting your classrooms. You have given me lots of helpful information.

Many of you told me that you feel you are doing well and I agree. Yours is a good school and your work is better than I find in many schools. You are doing well because your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and fun and because you are so keen to do your best. Many of you told me how much you enjoy science (and the explosions!) and the work I found in your books, and in the Year 6 lesson, helped me to see that you are doing very well. Your work in other subjects is good, too. Your teachers have been working hard to help you to improve your writing so that you do just as well as you do in reading. I agree with them that they could do this by giving you more writing to do in other subjects and by making sure that those of you who find writing easy are able to try harder things. I am sure you will want to help them because I have seen just how hard you try in lessons.

Your behaviour is excellent and you are very friendly towards each other in class and on the playground. This is another big reason why you are doing well. Well done to those of you who help with jobs around the school and a special mention to the school council. Your 'friend ship' is wonderful. All of the adults in school make sure that you are safe and very well cared for. Many of you told me how much you appreciate this and the help you get from your teachers, especially when you are stuck.

Your excellent headteacher and governors are keen to make sure that your school carries on improving. I am sure that you will want to help them and I wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams Lead Inspector