

Sheriffhales Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123396
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	292646
Inspection date	28 November 2006
Reporting inspector	Martin Cole

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Norton
Headteacher	Christobel Ann Cousins
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001
School address	Sheriffhales Shifnal TF11 8RA
Telephone number	01952 460204
Fax number	01952 460204

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small school serves a rural area where the number of children has fallen to a low level. Consequently the school has in recent years recruited relatively few pupils from its immediate surroundings. A substantial number of pupils join the school part-way through their primary education having transferred from schools further a field. In some recent years, a high proportion of these pupils have had learning difficulties and the overall level of pupils' attainment when starting at the school has been below average. In the last year the pattern of recruitment has changed and pupils have started at the school with above-average attainment and with few having learning difficulties. Most of the teaching staff, including the headteacher, are new to the school within 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

This is a good school. Good teaching, which has some very strong features, is helping pupils to achieve well. They make good progress from the Reception Year right through to Year 6. Pupils who join the school part-way through their primary education, and the substantial number with learning difficulties, also make good progress. The standards of pupils who left the school in 2006 were broadly average. Taking account of this group's attainment on starting at the school, and the learning difficulties several pupils experienced, their progress was good. The present Year 6 pupils have also made good progress and are on track to achieve significantly higher standards than their predecessors. This reflects the rising standards and improving quality of education being promoted by the good leadership and management of the school. Pupils make particularly good progress in English and science. Progress in mathematics is steady and is improving, but the school knows it can improve it still further.

A key factor in pupils' good progress is their good personal development that leads to responsible attitudes, good behaviour and much growth in self-confidence. Together with good progress in the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), these qualities are preparing pupils well for the demands of their future adult and working life. Pupils enjoy school and find much of interest in both lessons and the good number of visits, events, community links and after-school activities which the school provides. Good provision for pupils' personal development and welfare is successfully helping them to understand how to stay healthy and safe.

Amongst many good features of the teaching which promote good progress is teachers' very skilful management of pupils, which results in pupils' high levels of concentration and keen determination to complete their work. A very strong aspect of both the good teaching and the good curriculum is the excellent planning, based on thorough assessment of pupils. Pupils' work is very well matched to their individual abilities and needs, ensuring that they build successfully on previous learning. The overall quality of care, support and guidance for pupils is good, especially in relation to personal matters. The school has recently begun to develop the guidance it gives to pupils on learning. The current practice is effective for many pupils but leaves some others unclear about exactly what they must do to improve.

The strong leadership and management have recently led to many significant improvements that are raising standards and which have pleased parents. This reflects the clear-sighted and determined leadership of the headteacher and the hard work of a committed team of staff. The school keeps a thorough check on the effectiveness of its work and on pupils' progress. It has a very clear understanding of its strengths and of where it can move further forward. The school's track record of successful improvement shows that the capacity for further improvement is also very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics to match the good level in English and science.
- Ensure every pupil has a clear understanding of how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well both in the Reception Year and in Years 1 to 6. They leave the school having made good progress during their time there, whether they have been present since age five, or only for the last few years of their primary education. The standards of the Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2006 were broadly average. The highest results were gained by pupils who had been at the school since age five. Pupils who joined the school at a later stage did less well but still made good progress when their attainment on joining the school, and the learning difficulties of many of them, are taken into account. Progress for all pupils was best in English and science, partly reflecting the school's recent efforts to improve the provision for English. Progress in mathematics was satisfactory. Overall progress is improving, thanks to some significant improvements in teaching. Present Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve much better results than their predecessors. Mathematics is now a school development priority and improvements have begun to increase pupils' progress in the subject, but the school recognises there is still more work to be done here.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The youngest children soon join happily and confidently in school life. Pupils of all ages say they enjoy their time at school and this is reflected in the above-average level of their attendance. Good spiritual, moral, and social development leads to caring and responsible attitudes, a strong sense of right and wrong and relationships with others that are respectful and supportive. Behaviour is good, with almost all pupils showing self-discipline by doing the responsible thing as a matter of course. Occasionally, one or two older pupils behave inappropriately but staff manage this well. Pupils contribute extremely well to the community through the lively proceedings of the school council and the 'Eco Committee' and by willingly taking on many responsibilities for helping out and looking after each other, for example, as 'play buddies'. Pupils respond well to good guidance on staying safe and healthy. They join enthusiastically in the good range of opportunities for physical exercise the school provides and they understand the need to eat healthily, though some still give in to the temptations of less healthy options.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching and learning have many strengths and some outstanding practice was seen in two classes. A great strength of the teaching is the planning of lessons. Teachers use very careful assessments of pupils' progress to ensure that all are given tasks that challenge them to do their best. Pupils who experience difficulties receive effective help and make good progress. Teachers' and teaching assistants' time, together with resources and equipment to support learning, are judiciously deployed to give the best help possible to pupils. Teaching is lively and engaging so that pupils are attentive and willing learners who eagerly get on with their work with little need for adult direction. Good opportunities to learn through using the computer are much enjoyed. Very skilful management of pupils leads to exemplary behaviour in lessons on the part of almost all pupils. Lessons are very brisk, making full use of available

time. Occasionally the pace of whole-class discussion with the oldest pupils is a little too brisk so that some pupils have too little time to think and therefore struggle to work out answers for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Very good curriculum planning promotes good progress and caters well for the abilities and needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Often, activities link different subjects to make good use of available time, add to the relevance of learning and give pupils good opportunities to apply and improve their skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Year 2 pupils were seen using the internet to find information about Indian dress that they could incorporate in a report they were writing related to their history topic. In a single activity they were practising skills in writing, reading, ICT and Historical research as well as developing their understanding of the cultural diversity of their world. A thorough programme of personal, social and health education helps to promote good personal development. The school lacks indoor accommodation for physical education but makes good use of facilities at the local Sports College to provide well for physical education. The basic curriculum of required subjects is enhanced by the teaching of Spanish, and is enriched by a good number of visits, visitors and projects linking the school with the local community and by a satisfactory range of after-school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Close, caring relationships between staff and pupils in this small school mean pupils are well understood and well supported as individuals. Pupils say they are looked after well and given all the help they need by school staff; this is evident in their obvious contentment at being in school. Formal procedures to safeguard pupils and ensure their welfare are well established and effective. Guidance on personal matters and behaviour is very good. Guidance on learning has some good features, such as the helpful comments teachers make when marking pupils' work. However, a minority of pupils do not fully understand the class or group targets set for them and are not therefore clear about exactly what progress they are making and how as individuals they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led with clarity of purpose and thorough determination by the headteacher, who sets high expectations for herself, her staff and her pupils. The challenge to do better is backed up by a full range of support mechanisms to help everyone to do their very best. School staff benefit greatly from good opportunities for continuing training and from guidance and support from other schools and organisations. Thorough and accurate appraisal of school performance is the basis of well-considered and ambitious planning for school improvement. Many significant and successful improvements to the school have been made in the last eighteen months which have raised standards. Within the teaching, the assessment of pupils and planning of lessons have improved and the management of behaviour is also better, as parents' and pupils' comments confirmed. The teamwork of a largely new staff has quickly become strong, leading to a consistency of good practice in many areas, though new approaches to academic guidance for

pupils are not yet working well enough for all pupils. Governors give good support to school self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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	2
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	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?	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.

Annex A

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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

The inspectors who visited your school recently would like to thank all of you for your very friendly welcome. We really enjoyed meeting and talking to you. It was also good to see how much you enjoy school and that you get on well with each other and with the adults. We think your behaviour is good and that you have a sensible attitude to school and to your work. This is helping you to make good progress. We were very impressed by the many ways that you help to look after the school and the community through jobs that you do. The school council and the Eco Committee are doing well to help improve the school and community.

Some of you told us how much help the teachers and the other adults give you. We saw this for ourselves. All the adults look after you really well. The teachers give you good lessons and provide good work that helps you learn. They also organise plenty of interesting visits and activities.

We have said that yours is a good school and that the adults in charge of it are doing a good job. However, we have suggested two ways that the school could help you learn still more successfully:

1.You make better progress in literacy and science than you do in numeracy. We have asked the teachers to help you improve your progress in numeracy. 2.Some of you find it difficult to understand the targets you are given. We have asked the teachers to make sure all of you understand your targets and how you can improve your work to achieve them.

We wish you all the best for the future.