



Shepton Mallet Infants' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123660
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292738
Inspection dates 30–31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Susan Orpin

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Type of school | Infant | School address | Waterloo Road |
| School category | Community | | Shepton Mallet |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 | | BA4 5HE |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01749 342322 |
| Number on roll (school) | 140 | Fax number | 01749 346060 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Anita Johnson |
| | | Headteacher | Celia Higgs |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 November 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is average in size. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The school has successfully improved standards over recent years so they are now average. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2 because they are taught well. As one pupil said, 'I like the teachers because they are kind and they help us learn.' Teaching is good and activities planned well for different abilities so pupils are keen to learn, enjoy their work and generally behave well. However, progress in some classes is a little slower than in others. The curriculum is satisfactory, rightly focusing on developing literacy and numeracy, but there are missed opportunities for pupils to develop these skills further through other subjects. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils mostly make healthy choices at lunchtime and are physically very active. They keep themselves and others safe around the school. The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils, who know their opinions are valued.

The leadership and management of the school are good. In recent years, the standards children have when they join the school have declined steadily. At the same time, the standards being achieved in Year 2 have risen especially in mathematics. This is mainly due to improvements in teaching. Lessons are observed regularly and teachers are given good advice. The school's judgement of its own success is good. It has much informative data about pupils' progress, but this is not yet fully analysed to identify the more subtle trends which make some teaching slightly less effective than the best.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further analyse the data collected on children's and pupils' progress in order to highlight those few areas where teaching and learning might continue to be improved.
- Provide more opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to improve their literacy skills through other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children join the Nursery with standards that are below those you would expect, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. They make a satisfactory start in the Nursery and their progress accelerates in Reception so that by the time they reach Year 1, they have improved well but the standards are still below those expected. All pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that by the time they leave the school, they are achieving standards that are in line with national averages. Pupils' progress in writing is patchier and slows in Year 1 because sometimes teaching is slightly less effective. Higher attaining pupils achieve well because the teaching provides them with a good level of challenge, although there are fewer of them than is usual, which

is reflected in the results. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with those expected in Year 2. Improving standards in English, mathematics and ICT mean that pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. In the Foundation Stage, children's personal and social and skills improve well. Behaviour is good throughout the school, although there are a few pupils who are slow to settle in lessons. Pupils say they are happy in school and feel safe from bullying. They are polite, helpful and have good relationships with each other and with adults. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. Assemblies support their spiritual development well and pupils have a growing understanding of life in a multicultural society. Pupils play well together and this contributes to the harmonious atmosphere that pervades the school.

Pupils are eager to learn and they enjoy their lessons. They use equipment and move around the school in a safe manner. Pupils have good links with the local community and there is an active school council that influences school decisions. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved a little since the last inspection. The attendance figures are reduced due to the persistent absence of a very small number of pupils and some high levels of illness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although children make a steady start in the Nursery, when they join the Reception class, their rate of progress improves because lessons meet their needs more effectively. In other classes, pupils generally progress well because teachers plan suitably challenging activities. Teaching assistants are used well. For example, the recently introduced approach to teaching literacy uses them to work with small groups, thus ensuring that pupils get more personal attention.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan suitably interesting activities that are practical and engaging. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons, together with teachers' good use of praise and encouragement, means that behaviour in lessons is usually good. Teachers have varied ways to successfully demonstrate and explain new ideas. This variation in approach ensures that all pupils grasp what is being taught. Good routines and organisation ensure that pupils know what is expected of them.

Although generally the pace of lessons is brisk, occasionally the pace falters, for example when resuming after fruit snacks. Despite the many strengths in teaching, there are a few minor variations, as reflected in pupils' slightly slower progress in writing in Year 1.

Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are helpful written comments in some books, but not all. Pupils have individual targets in literacy and numeracy that are successfully being used to help pupils' improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy is resulting in improving standards. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects. However, not enough time is given to these subjects so pupils are able to develop their literacy numeracy skills. The recently introduced small group programme to improve language skills is effective and is helping improve standards in reading and writing. Provision in ICT has improved and pupils are given good access to the computer suite. There is a good programme to support pupils' personal, social and health education. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors. Pupils say that 'Learning on visits is fun and really interesting.' Pupils have benefited from specialist visitors who teach physical education. During the inspection some pupils enjoyed a visit to the local café for chocolate drinks as part of a project. There are a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as ICT and French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and they are making a significant contribution to pupils' progress. Staff successfully care for pupils' pastoral needs and pupils are confident there is an adult they can go to should the need arise. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are effective. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well. Pupils are taught the value of a good diet and exercise and how to keep themselves safe. The transition of pupils to and from the school is handled well. This means that pupils settle into the school well and are confident when leaving. Good records are maintained and are particularly helpful in supporting the progress of pupils with learning difficulties.

The school now systematically assesses pupils' academic progress, so teachers have a good understanding of individual pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has created an effective team of staff who all contribute well to improving standards. The leadership team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their self-evaluation accurately portrays this. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively and ensure teachers improve, although there still a few minor areas for development. Subject leaders make a good contribution to continued improvement.

Assessment systems are developing and help teachers track the progress of individual pupils well. However, the school recognises that there is still some further analysis of data that will help continue the developments in teaching. The school improvement plan reflects the views of many stakeholders and indicates direction for the school.

Governance is good. There are good links between the school and governors so they are well informed. All governors have been trained to understand their roles. They now produce an effective annual action plan and have a clear plan for the future of the school at a time when the roll has fallen. Their race relations policies are effective in practice although the documents are still in draft form. Although the hall accommodation is inadequate, new work to improve buildings is imminent. The school has set itself suitably challenging targets for the present Year 2 which it is likely to achieve. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the school has demonstrated good capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 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? | 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 making us so welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed with how friendly and polite you are.

What we liked most about your school:

- You learn well and so your work is getting better.
- As you told us, your teachers help you learn.
- You mostly behave well and enjoy school.
- You work and play well together and take care of each other well.
- The adults at the school know what to do and are making school a better place.

We found that a few improvements are needed and have asked your headteacher and others to do further work on:

- using information about how well you are doing to improve lessons
- using topic work as a chance for you to learn more about English and mathematics.