

Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109976
Local Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Inspection number	310161
Inspection date	29 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jill Grindal
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Green (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Chestnut Crescent Shinfield Reading RG2 9EJ
Telephone number	01189 883 663
Fax number	01189 886 138

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Shinfield St Mary's CofE is a small junior school. Pupil numbers have fallen significantly since the last inspection. About 80% of pupils come from a White British background. The remainder come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average and includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. An average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The local authority and Oxford Diocese carried out a review of the school's performance in January 2008. An acting headteacher, seconded from another school within the authority, took up post in September 2008. Five new teachers started in September 2008. The school provides a breakfast club and after-school care for pupils run by a voluntary committee.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness of Shinfield St Mary's CofE School is inadequate because of the legacy of pupils' underachievement. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and standards, particularly in English.

The school has been through a difficult time. The recent review carried out by the local authority and Diocese identified weaknesses in leadership and management and teaching which led to pupils underachieving. With good support from the local authority and the Diocese and the good leadership of the current headteacher, teaching, learning and the pupils' behaviour have improved and are now satisfactory. However, due to the lack of progress in the past, pupils' overall achievement is inadequate.

Parents hold mixed views about the school. Many have commented favourably on the recent improvements. A significant number expressed concerns about leadership, management, and pupils' behaviour. These concerns are justified but the school has improved significantly and is continuing to do so in these important areas. One parent summed up the recent changes to the school really well, 'Many parents have mentioned the positive vibe which is now felt and we are excited about the school moving forward.'

The acting headteacher brings good experience to the school and provides clear direction. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher. New teachers are enthusiastic and positive and have settled in well. Teamwork among the staff is developing. There is a clear commitment to change and satisfactory capacity for improvement. Senior staff have effectively reviewed the school's performance. As a result, all staff are now working towards raising achievement and standards, and further improving teaching. There are now clear systems to monitor pupils' attainment and progress so all know how well individual pupils are doing. Governors have a clearer understanding of the school's performance and are better placed to challenge and hold it to account. A few key subject leaders are new so are not yet fully effective in their role.

Standards by the end of Year 6 are below average overall. During the past two years, pupils have not made enough progress from their starting points. Standards in mathematics were below average in 2007 but the school has taken positive action to bring them back up to average levels in 2008. There have also been recent improvements in science with more pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in 2008. However, standards in English are below average and this is because not enough pupils attain the expected and higher levels in writing. The school is taking positive steps to improve pupils' writing. The quality of teaching is now satisfactory and improving. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and informative. There are examples of good teaching and in these lessons, there is a clear purpose, pupils are challenged well and learning maintains a brisk pace. However, this good practice is not consistent and work is not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs and the pace of learning is not always brisk enough. The use of individual learning targets to help pupils to improve in writing and mathematics are in their infancy. Although the marking of pupils' work is improving it is not always used well enough to guide improvement.

A satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional activities. Pupils generally enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen participation in activities. Since the last inspection,

attendance has improved to average levels. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and know how to keep themselves safe. They make sound contributions to the school and to the wider community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in writing, by improving teaching and the use of assessment.
- Ensure all lessons have a sharp purpose, are suitably challenging for all pupils and maintain a brisk pace.
- Use assessment, individual target setting and marking more effectively to accelerate pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. In most year groups, pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. During the past two years, standards by the end of Year 6 have been below average overall and pupils have not made enough progress. All groups of pupils, including the more able and those who need support, have not done well enough. Weaknesses in assessment and teaching contributed to this underachievement. The school has taken positive action to improve attainment in mathematics and science. Provisional national test results for 2008 indicate that Year 6 standards are broadly average in these subjects. However, 2008 test results in English are down and below average. Pupils are not making enough progress particularly in writing. Raising achievement and standards in writing is a whole-school priority and opportunities for pupils to acquire and apply writing skills are being extended.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' development are satisfactory. Most pupils really enjoy school and show positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is satisfactory and improving. While most pupils are well behaved, a few are not always sufficiently settled for work. These pupils are receiving appropriate support. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Pupils make a sound contribution to the wider community by raising funds for well-known charities. Those on the school council have contributed to improvements to playground facilities. Pupils' inadequate progress in essential areas of literacy and numeracy limits the extent to which they are prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school is working hard to improve teaching and pupils are now making satisfactory progress in lessons. In a Year 5 session, the teachers shared the purpose of the lesson with the class so pupils knew what they were expected to learn. Clear success criteria were also provided which enabled pupils to assess their own learning. In some lessons, the purpose was less clear and pupils did not understand what they had to do to succeed. Most pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Effective questioning by teachers challenges the pupils and checks their understanding. When teachers use assessment information

effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and, as a result, pupils make good gains in their learning. Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support pupils who need help with literacy or their behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There have been improvements to the curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and to write in different subjects are being extended. Pupils are using word processing well to develop drafting and editing skills in their writing. A range of programmes has been used to improve pupils' performance in mathematics. Increased investigative work in science has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. The school is developing stronger links between subjects, which add meaning and relevance to learning. A good range of additional activities is offered. Clubs include art, athletics, choir, drama and football. A successful residential week in North Wales provides a good range of interesting outdoor activities and contributes well to pupils' social and teambuilding skills. Health education is promoted well throughout the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are satisfactory. The school works well to monitor and promote good attendance. Holidays in term time have been reduced. The headteacher and staff are developing a consistent approach to managing behaviour. Clear expectations and the good relationships are leading to a calm and purposeful atmosphere with improved behaviour. As a parent commented, 'I really like the way the children are rewarded for good work and behaviour'.

The school now has a clear system to assess and record pupils' attainment and progress. The setting of individual learning targets in English and mathematics is at an early stage of development. At the moment, pupils are not always clear what they need to do to improve in writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher brings good experience and a determination to drive improvement. She has formed a good partnership with the deputy headteacher. The senior leaders and a new teaching force are positive and keen to move the school forward. The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about further improvements. All staff are well focused on raising achievement and improving teaching. The school has made good use of the professional development and support provided by the local authority and the Oxford Diocese. This support has had a positive impact on improving achievement in mathematics and science.

Governors are now much better informed about the school's performance. They are aware of the need to challenge the school more particularly about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.

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Annex A

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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 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?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

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

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School, Reading, RG2 9EJ

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we have found. While your school is improving, many of you have not made enough progress. Your school has not been doing as well as it should but your headteacher and staff are working hard to make it better. We have asked the school to make improvements and it will be inspected again to check that this happens.

These are the main strengths of the school.

- You enjoy school.
- Most of you are well behaved.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- Your headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your learning.
- They are creating a positive atmosphere for you to learn.
- There is a good range of additional activities, which you enjoy.

There are things that your teachers could work on to make it even better.

- Some of you could make more progress particularly in writing.
- At times, your teachers could make the purpose of the lesson clearer, challenge you more and ensure that the lesson moves on at a quicker pace.
- Teachers could make better use of marking and individual targets to improve your progress in English and mathematics.

You can help the school by behaving well and working hard, particularly in English. Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector