

Sherborne Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113673
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311333
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Jon Palethorpe

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	326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alistair Powell
Headteacher	Mike Sandy
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Harbour Way Sherborne DT9 4AJ
Telephone number	01935 812619
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving the north and east of Sherborne. Some parts of this area are recognised as being socially disadvantaged. The school is popular, with parents choosing to come from outside the immediate area. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of abilities, many requiring additional support, particularly in development of language and social skills. A well above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion do not have English as their first language. The school has had a very stable teaching staff for many years. This has been changing recently, and the headteacher is about to retire after 27 years at the school. The school has 'Activemark' and 'Extended Schools' awards and is currently pursuing 'Healthy Schools' and 'Eco-school' status.

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. It has some outstanding features. It takes very good care of pupils and staff, and provides a good standard of education. Success is securely founded on outstanding provision in the Reception Year, where the majority of children are making good, and some outstanding, progress. The vast majority of parents have nothing but praise for the school, with comments such as 'Sherborne Primary School is a super school with fantastic staff' and 'The school has a strong academic and inclusive ethos, high standards of behaviour, as well as offering a range of out-of-school hours activities.' Good teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress. Teachers are enthusiastic and, together with very good support from well trained teaching assistants, they provide a high quality education. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or with English as an additional language, receive equally good teaching and support, enabling them to make similar progress to other pupils. This means that even though many pupils start from a very low base, especially in language skills, they reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Higher ability pupils are successfully challenged in a variety of ways and they, too, make good progress. The causes of underachievement of some pupils in mathematics last year are being addressed and currently all pupils are making good progress. The school's outstanding curriculum is deliberately wide-ranging to cater for pupils' varying needs. It is exciting and stimulating, and is successful in motivating all pupils, including those who find learning difficult. This motivation comes from teachers, and from visitors, such as the theatre group re-enacting scenes from Tudor times, helping to bring the curriculum alive. The school's philosophy is that 'everybody will be included in everything', and this is evident in its work. There are particularly good opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities, developing their musical, sporting and social skills, amongst many others. The participation rate in these is very high. The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils have clear guidance on acceptable behaviour through the Golden Rules and there is an effective reward system for good behaviour which is used consistently. This helps to promote the good behaviour and positive attitudes seen around the school and in the playground. Confidence and independence are encouraged, and self-esteem is effectively promoted. The school makes very good use of a number of external agencies. This includes support for pupils with specific academic or social problems, and support for teachers in their teaching of such areas as sex and relationships education and drugs education. Academic guidance is developing well, but the new 'Assessment for Learning' strategy is not fully functional throughout the school. The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is an outstanding feature. The senior management team is at a transitory stage with recent and imminent changes, and it is yet to reach its optimum state. However, the clear direction that has been set by the current leadership team, together with the support of the governors, indicates good capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Lively and imaginative teaching in the Foundation Stage has resulted in children making rapid progress and achieving very well. Many children start from a very low base, particularly in speaking and listening. Leadership and management are outstanding, and the very clear focus on raising standards and achievement provide an excellent start to school for children. She successfully conveys her vision to the rest of the team. The curriculum is outstanding because

it is specifically planned to meet the children's needs. It has a strong emphasis on speaking and listening to develop children's language and literacy skills, and on cooperating to develop their social skills. Assessment is detailed and informative. The use of assessment data underpins both short and long-term planning, ensuring that the appropriate level of work is given to everyone. Children make outstanding progress in their personal development. Within a very short time, they learn to cooperate well, achieving high levels of independence and self-confidence. This results in very good relationships and behaviour, and enjoyment of time spent in school. There are very effective links with parents and good arrangements which ensure children's safety and well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the use of assessment for learning, ensuring that all pupils know and understand their targets.
- Ensure that pupils achieve as well at the end of Year 6 in mathematics as they do in English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage make good and sometimes outstanding progress, often reaching the levels expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2 to reach standards above national averages. In the 2007 Year 6 tests, standards were above average in English, slightly above in science, but below in mathematics. The reasons for this dip in mathematics results, is very much related to staff difficulties. Appropriate strategies and modifications have been implemented to remedy the situation, and improvements have already been noted. For example, pupils are working on 'Quick maths' cards to improve their speed of recall of basic number facts. Analysis of tracking data indicates that standards are currently above average in English, mathematics and science, in spite of a high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress. Improvement is particularly marked for those pupils expected to reach the higher levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, with some outstanding features. Pupils obviously enjoy their time at the school, and comments such as, "I love this school and I wish I never had to leave", sum up how many pupils feel. Attitudes and behaviour are good and sometimes outstanding, with pupils being very responsive in class, and very responsible in the playground. Pupils are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles through their eating, and in particular, their participation in physical exercise. Pupils pay good attention to safety issues, for example, being safe from bullying, and road safety. Pupils are beginning to play a part in decision making within the school through the school council, although this has not yet been fully developed. Pupils are gaining skills in English, mathematics and the use of computers, and social skills such as cooperating together, which will help them in the world of work. Pupils show an understanding of their responsibilities in the wider community through their contribution to fundraising. All aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, with their knowledge about different races and beliefs in Britain being particularly strong. Attendance remains broadly in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. All teaching is at least satisfactory, with some being outstanding. Work is planned to meet all pupils' needs, with a good range of activities. The pace of lessons is usually brisk, with good open-ended questioning techniques. Effective strategies are used actively to involve all pupils, especially at the start of the lesson. Interactive whiteboards are used well to motivate pupils and both teachers and pupils use them effectively. Pupils are well managed and show respect to their teacher and their peers. Teaching assistants give very good support, either by working with individuals or groups in class, by withdrawing pupils, or by taking the class themselves. There have been good improvements recently in how mathematics is taught. On a few occasions, the pace of lessons is too slow, the introduction is too long, or the delivery is not stimulating enough. This sometimes leads to inappropriate responses and minor disruption. On other occasions, there is too much teacher information given and not enough questioning to elicit answers from the pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has an outstanding curriculum for both academic and personal development. It covers all the required elements plus much more, through visits, visitors, the use of specialist services, special events and after school clubs. This is all having a positive impact on the academic progress and personal development of pupils. Planning is securely based on assessment, with pupils of all abilities and aptitudes being given appropriately challenging work. For example, the curriculum for some Year 1 pupils has been modified to ensure that they can gain maximum benefit from it. Pupils have good opportunities to become involved in their local community through sporting, musical and cultural events such as the pageant and sports fixtures, and on a wider scale through the school's link with Swaziland. The development of the outdoor classroom area is an exceptionally good provision for pupils' 'eco' awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care, guidance and support, for pupils' academic and personal development, are good. There are outstanding features in the very successful health and safety, and child protection, arrangements. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are robust and regularly reviewed, a good example being the walkie-talkie handsets used by teachers whilst on the playground. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all pupils can make good progress. Particularly effective is the work of the special needs coordinator, teachers and teaching assistants to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers use assessment information well to give pupils good academic guidance and support. There is some outstanding practice developing in the marking of pupils' work, particularly in Year 6, but this is at an early stage of development and is not consistently good throughout the school. Pupils' individual targets are not revisited enough to ensure that they know them sufficiently well. This has had a more obvious negative impact on more able pupils' performance in mathematics than English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good, with some outstanding features. The headteacher sets clear direction to promote high quality care and education, focused on raising standards and achievement. He is broadening the staffing structure, effectively involving everyone in the school's development. The senior management team, staff and governors work well together as a team and manage the school well. Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic, and shows that the managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Effective work on the areas for development is leading to improved performance. Comprehensive data are used to set challenging year group targets. Individual targets are being used effectively to raise standards, although some pupils have insufficient knowledge of them. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and those of higher ability are well challenged. Resources, including teachers, teaching assistants and a variety of outside agencies, are used well to ensure value for money. Governors are well informed and they support and challenge the school well. They hold 'drop-in sessions' for parents, and are working on a five-year development plan to create a vision for the school over a longer time span. There are good links with parents and outside agencies to support the school's work and support community cohesion. This helps to promote the school's good reputation locally.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

- 3 March 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Sherborne Primary School, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 4AJ Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school. You are very friendly, polite and helpful, and we found it a great pleasure to be with you. We think that yours is a good school, with some things that are outstanding (that means really good). Here are some of the reasons we think that:
 - You get a very good start to school in the Foundation Stage.
 - You make good progress, and sometimes better than that, to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave the school.
 - You do this because your teachers and teaching assistants are doing a very good job, encouraging you to do your best.
 - You have an excellent curriculum, with something to interest everyone. You are trying out all sorts of activities, which are not always available to pupils of your age, such as Spanish and circus skills, and the school finds experts to come and help you.
 - You know how to keep fit and healthy, and you take part in all sorts of clubs after school.
 - You often show how grown up you are becoming, with very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons, on the sports field, and on the playground.
 - The school is especially good at helping those of you who find learning difficult, and making sure that those of you who are more able make the most of your ability.
 - Everyone at school takes good care of you, making sure that you stay safe. These things happen because you have a headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and governors who all work hard as a team to make school a happy place where you can learn a lot. We have asked the staff and governors to make sure that you all know the targets that you are working towards, and that you reach higher standards in mathematics this year. You can help by continuing to work hard and behaving sensibly. Best wishes Jon Palethorpe Lead Inspector

3 March 2008

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Best wishes

Jon Palethorpe
Lead Inspector.