

Sharpness Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115526
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311962
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Mo Roberts HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	105
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Boxall
Headteacher	J.Raeanne Dunn
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	New Town Berkeley GL13 9NU
Telephone number	01453 811220
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is above the national average. The number entitled to receive free school meals is near the average nationally. Children's attainment on entry varies from year to year and is often below that expected for their age, with a particular weakness in communication skills. The school has the Investor in People Award, the Basic Skills Award, Healthy Schools Status, an Active Mark for its sports strategy, the intermediate level International Award and a silver status Eco Award. There is an on-site pre-school run by separate management. A new deputy headteacher started this term and the headteacher returned from maternity leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sharpness is a good school and it has significantly improved since the last inspection. Pupils receive high levels of individual attention and consequently their personal development and well-being, as well their care, guidance and support, are outstanding. Behaviour is good, pupils have settled well into the new term and into tackling their new targets for learning. They are clear what they are trying to achieve and mostly say they enjoy coming to school 'very much'. This is a view shared by parents, who are pleased with the progress their children make and the warm friendships the school fosters.

Standards have risen in the past three years at all levels and were above the expected national level in 2007. Any minor fluctuations in the performance within subjects are traceable to the specific needs of the pupils in the small year groups. Pupils consistently do well from their individual starting points, including those with learning difficulties. The school is welcoming and goes the extra mile to support vulnerable pupils who have often transferred from other schools. Links with other agencies are outstanding and family learning is promoted very effectively; so all pupils make good gains in their learning and social skills.

Teaching is now solidly good across the school; plans take into account the needs of the mixed age classes well. Each teacher has aspects of their lessons that are outstanding. These outstanding qualities range from the astute support of the newly arrived 4 year olds to effectively instructing a predominately-male Years 5/6 class in mime techniques. Marking is systematic but lacks consistency so sometimes fails to link to pupils' targets or the key learning expected in the lesson. Pupils know their targets but would benefit from some more advice on how to reach them. The school has outstanding links to the community and the inspection concurs with the view expressed by a parent that it is 'the heart of the village'. Pupils help in many ways, including regularly singing at the home for older residents. They raise money for charity, supporting last year victims of local flooding as well as children in Romania.

The improved curriculum engages the pupils in their learning and they especially recall the many visits and experiences the school arranges for them. Younger pupils know a lot about healthy food and farming and older ones now have a good knowledge of multicultural Britain. The gardening projects and the regular access to swimming are notable features. There is a good range of clubs for this size of school. The pupils' knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe is very good. The regular 'wake and shake' classes help pupils to revive their concentration during the day. Their economic understanding develops well due to the environmental projects, including the current attempt to fund a wind turbine.

The leadership and management of the school are good. There have been substantial improvements to the buildings and the classrooms as well as to the resources for the library and information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. The headteacher and governors have worked tirelessly to achieve a brighter and more welcoming school environment, including the room for the youngest pupils. The headteacher has very successfully driven improvements, especially in raising the standard of teaching and learning across the school. Her monitoring and own class teaching ensure she firmly has her finger on the pulse of all that happens. Pupils gave a very long list of things that they think have improved, including the quality of the school dinners. The new deputy headteacher already has a good grasp of the school's data on pupils' rates of progress. The school's self-evaluation is accurate but sometimes lacks sufficient factual

evidence to support the judgements. The school's improved standards and its excellent support of all pupils, including the most vulnerable, mean it provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are outstanding. Children have good opportunities to visit the Reception class when they are still in the on-site pre-school and this greatly assists their smooth transition into the class and their good social and personal development. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning right from the start and meet with the teacher before the children enter school to exchange information. Assessment details transfer effectively from the pre-school to the school. Assessment procedures in the EYFS are excellent; they already capture how well the individual children are settling into the new routines. The planning, teaching and classroom organisation are effective, although, at this early stage in the year, plans have yet to show how they will be flexibly adapted to meet children's interests as required by the new EYFS framework which started 1 September 2008. Children make good progress from their starting points due to the good teaching and they mostly reach average or above average standards by the end of the year in all areas of learning. Physical and mathematical development is good. The school has just changed the programme for learning letters and sounds as some children find it hard to recall letter names, although they generally know the sounds letters make. The outdoor provision is stimulating; the learning gained on the day of inspection from tending the raised garden beds, using real tools, was excellent. The staff team is adept at extending vocabulary, when, for example, children encountered 'caterpillars'. It is clear children rapidly develop their knowledge and understanding of the world in this class. There is an appropriate balance between the self-selected activities and those directed by adults so children have opportunities to be self-reliant and creative. Teamwork is good, with the teacher and her assistant providing high quality support and care for every child.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the way the school records the outcomes of its self-evaluation procedures to ensure judgements are robustly supported by evidence, and to further clarify the development priorities for those monitoring the school's progress.
- Ensure there is consistency in marking across the school and that comments are linked sufficiently to the lesson objectives or the pupil's individual targets so learning is accelerated where possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In 2007 the school met or exceeded the challenging targets set for all subjects and standards were well above the national average in all but higher level science. This cohort of Year 6 pupils was more able than is typically the case for the school. Mathematics results have been consistently higher than English and science over recent years. Younger pupils' writing skills are also notably good. Since 2007, the focus on improving pupils' skills in reading, the relatively weaker area, has resulted in raised pupil confidence and standards. Staff and volunteers take every opportunity to extend their skills. The paired reading work seen in one class was very effective in developing pupils' levels of comprehension. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress from their starting points supported by highly skilled teaching assistants. In the

absence of validated test results for 2008, the school's own data show that standards are predicted to be average or above in English, mathematics and science except where a pupil had recently transferred to the school or had an identified learning difficulty.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are rightly very proud of their school and thoroughly enjoy lessons. They especially enjoy caring for the school and wider environment. Their behaviour is good in their new classes although in some situations they get excited and all want to talk, rather than listening enough to each other. Their attendance is excellent with no unauthorised absences last year. The well-organised school council provides an effective voice for pupils. Members of the school council serve one term and then give others a turn, so there is wide participation. Older pupils shoulder a range of responsibilities, as helpers in assembly and as 'buddies' to the Reception class to support younger pupils. They make a difference to others' lives through fund raising for charities. Pupils feel safe in school and know about the dangers associated with the pond, river and road. Relationships with teachers and friends are very positive and they report that there is little if any bullying. The playground friendship stop helps those without a play partner to find one. Pupils have participated in many international and local events and especially enjoyed the Ghanaian drumming. They experience a good range of physical activities both during and after school. Good standards and pupils' involvement in various enterprising activities lay an excellent foundation upon which to build future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations for behaviour and good class management skills. Lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils get an opportunity to say if they need a little more time for any task. Streamlined planning supports the full curriculum. It is suitably adapted for the different groups of pupils and meets their individual needs. The levels of support and challenge ensure pupils are confident to 'have a go', as when younger ones confidently prepared to write a story containing descriptive words and exaggeration. Teachers use interactive technology effectively to engage pupils and model good use of ICT. Pupils' own skills in this area develop well and they are using them effectively across the curriculum. Younger pupils were observed successfully learning mathematical terms via a program on the new computers. Older ones responded well to having digital images recorded of their mimes to analyse on the class screen later in order to support their writing on gesture and expression. Imaginative teaching stimulates pupils' writing. Pupils' work is marked regularly but there is insufficient reference to individual targets to help pupils focus on the key points to accelerate their rate of learning and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A comprehensive review of the curriculum has ensured that pupils are taught all subjects, including history and geography, on a regular basis. The visits related to these topics stick in pupils' minds and they talked knowledgably about life in a Victorian classroom. A good range of clubs enhances the curriculum although there is more for older than younger pupils. Provision

for personal development is excellent. The personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' development. Activities such as 'relaxing minds' at the end of physical exercise help them to avoid stress. Trips, including a residential visit to either France or Shropshire, support pupils' social and cultural development. School assemblies and performances in the local church enhance their moral and spiritual development well, for example at Harvest Festival. The religious education curriculum successfully promotes respect and understanding for the faith groups found in multicultural Britain.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is outstanding, and safeguarding requirements are fully secure. Lunchtime supervision is supportive and pupils play well together with staff immediately available when needed. Pupils feel confident that they are well looked after and that any minor problems or potential bullying will be dealt with promptly and well. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties are carefully constructed and give pupils the support they need. Links with health and welfare agencies are outstanding and there is an exceptional level of cooperation amongst local schools, including the secondary school, to ensure vulnerable pupils' transfers run smoothly. Guidance is a strong feature of the school and the new reports make information clear for all. Pupils are encouraged to make their own comments and to understand their targets for the next year. The high quality support and guidance are key factors that, together with the good teaching, are leading to generally improving standards and pupils achieving well. There are regular consultations involving pupils, teachers and parents, which effectively involve pupils in their own learning. They are consequently ready to appreciate more detail in the marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's strong leadership and dedication to meeting the needs of all pupils have ensured both teaching and standards have improved to meet her high expectations. Good teamwork amongst all adults who work in school is also a key factor in the school's success. The partnership between the school, the parents and outside agencies is excellent, and offers exceptionally strong support to those families who find themselves in some difficulty. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is run in an exemplary manner; it uses resources very well with a skilled teaching assistant ably supporting the headteacher with this work. The school's self-evaluation, while successfully promoting improvements in the quality of provision, does not always give quite enough detail to assist others, such as governors, in challenging the school to develop even more. Subject leaders increasingly monitor provision and outcomes in their subjects and identify what needs improvement. Governors support the school well; they regularly visit to monitor the developments but have not, as yet, fully recorded the outcomes of these visits. They have plans to do so once a format is agreed with staff.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

18 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sharpness Primary School, New Town, GL13 9NU

Thank you for your time and help when I inspected your school. It was good to talk to so many of you and I enjoyed hearing how well you read and sing. I am writing to tell you what I found out during my visit. I agree with you that your school is good and it was interesting to hear about all the exciting things that happen. You say that you like school and enjoy your lessons.

Your headteacher is a good leader and all the adults who work in school care about you very much. They work very hard to make sure that all of you achieve well in your work. You have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe. You told me the playground friendship stop helps pupils to find someone to play with and that if you have any worries there is always an adult to help you.

I was pleased by how polite you are, how well you all get on together and how well you behave. It is clear that you try to do your best in lessons and are keen to take part in all that happens in school. Your school council works well and makes sure everyone gets a say. Your teachers listen to your ideas and use them – I liked the bright colours you selected for the toilets. Good luck with your wind turbine project.

You do well in school but I have asked your teachers to link their marking more clearly to what you are learning so you always know exactly how to improve your work and reach your targets. The other thing I have asked your teachers to do is to look at how they write down all the good things you do and to use this to make sure they do not miss any little areas that might need a bit more improvement.

Your school has improved a lot since the last inspection, which is great news for your community. I want to end by saying 'well done' and 'thank you' for all the things you do in the village and to help others further away who had no presents at Christmas.

Best wishes

Mrs Roberts Her Majesty's Inspector