

Sheepscombe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115534
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311966
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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)	66
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	Richard Williams
Headteacher	Helen Symes
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Far End Sheepscombe Stroud GL6 7RL
Telephone number	01452 813852
Fax number	01452 813852

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

the achievement of all pupils in the light of their attainment on entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and of those joining further up the school

opportunities for using information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning and the pupils' achievement in ICT

the provision for pupils in mixed-year classes

the clarity of direction within the context of recent changes in leadership and how effectively the school checks its own performance.

Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and analyses of the school's working documents and the questionnaires completed by parents. Other aspects of the school were not inspected in detail.

Description of the school

The number of pupils on roll is stable in this school that is much smaller than average. Pupils are taught in three classes. Children in the EYFS are taught in a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The other two classes each contain pupils from two year groups. Almost all pupils are White British. A significant proportion join the school other than at the usual time, having been educated at home or in an alternative system. The proportion with learning difficulties is below the national average. The school had an acting headteacher from January to August 2008 following the retirement of the previous headteacher. A new permanent headteacher took up post at the beginning of this term. Two of the three classes swapped classrooms from the beginning of this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is emerging from a period of uncertainty with a number of significant strengths. Nevertheless, there are some important aspects that are underdeveloped. Standards are above the national average, particularly in English. The school is very committed to the care and support of all its pupils and this contributes to their good personal development and well-being. This is recognised by parents. One reflected several similar comments received by writing of the 'high level of care and attention given to all pupils by all staff', while others referred to the 'nurturing' of individuals that 'allows them to grow in confidence'. The school is improving the way it carries out checks on its work and is gaining a more accurate view of its performance. There remains a legacy of overgenerous judgements about many aspects of its work, but the new headteacher has quickly introduced more thorough ways of checking the school's performance and she has an accurate and perceptive view of the strengths and areas in need of improvement. The school made limited progress in addressing previously identified areas for development until recently, but this is now accelerating and it is securely placed to improve further.

The attainment of children on entry to the EYFS is above that expected for their age apart from writing which is barely in line with expectations. Children make good progress in their first year in school and by the end of the EYFS, standards are significantly above the national average. This good progress is maintained in English throughout the school by pupils of all abilities, and standards by the end of Year 6 are high, being well above the national average. However, achievement is satisfactory rather than good because progress in other subjects, including mathematics and ICT, is less consistent. Although some pupils achieve well, many make only satisfactory progress. Those pupils who arrive in the school in the older year groups are frequently below the national average in terms of writing and mathematical recording skills. Most catch up quickly and many go on to exceed national averages before leaving the school. Challenging targets were set for pupils in Year 6 almost a year ago, but at present several are not on course to achieve them. Nevertheless, pupils have a good range of skills needed for the next stage of education and adult life.

There are gaps in the school's procedures for assessing, recording and tracking the progress of pupils and the school has not previously considered end-of-year targets for other year groups to help raise standards. The new headteacher has moved swiftly and effectively to adopt clearer procedures. These are very new and it is too soon to see any significant effect, but as a result, the school is now in a satisfactory position to analyse patterns in pupils' progress, set appropriately high targets for all pupils and direct support where it is most needed. The headteacher has also drafted a programme to monitor the work of the school. This is already helping to overcome the previous 'overgenerous' judgements. Staff welcome their involvement in this process but have had too little additional training for their new roles. These new developments are a significant factor in the improving leadership and management of the school. Leadership remains satisfactory overall but the headteacher has worked effectively with governors and staff to agree a clear vision for the school and set the most important priorities for improvement whilst building on previous strengths. Governors welcome the changes and are scheduled to receive more training to enable them to fulfil their roles as critical friends more effectively. Pupils enjoy their time in school and the very wide range of activities beyond the classroom that successfully enrich the good curriculum. The school has received Artsmark gold, and Healthy School and Eco-School awards in recognition of its stimulating curriculum.

Pupils talk very positively about their frequent visits, for example, to Ebworth, and the imaginative creative experiences these offer, such as role-playing Greek myths. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and are fully aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They contribute well to their school and local communities, conscientiously taking on responsibilities around the school and participating enthusiastically in village and county events, helping promote community cohesion. Pupils behave well and are sensitive to the needs of their peers, although a few individuals show a casual approach when being spoken to by an adult. The school has introduced clearer procedures related to attendance, but despite pupils' obvious enjoyment of school, attendance remains only average, with a higher than usual proportion of pupils missing school for special events and holidays.

Although there are elements of good teaching in each class, teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not consistently learn as much as they could in lessons. Teachers carefully plan activities designed to match the different abilities of pupils in mixed-year classes. However, the pace of a few lessons is too slow, and at times pupils appear to lack a sense of clear purpose and urgency. Access to computers has improved recently and the school has identified the need to increase the use of ICT in lessons and teachers' expertise in this aspect. When marking pupils' work, particularly in mathematics, teachers do not always make it clear how to improve and some of the pupils' short-term targets are too general and so not as helpful as they should be. In all other respects, the care, guidance and support for pupils is very good. Pupils feel valued and safe in school and are very positive about the personal support they receive from teachers and their assistants. The most vulnerable are supported well, enabling them to play a full part in the life of the school. The school implements legal procedures designed to safeguard pupils and there is an ongoing programme of staff training.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the EYFS because they are taught well, and by the end of the year, standards are above the national average in all six areas of learning. The children, after just two weeks' part-time school, have settled quickly and are already becoming confident about routines, benefiting from the role models of older pupils in their class. Many are showing attainment above national expectations for this age, for example, by the earnest and confident way they join in class discussions. The teachers and assistants carefully observe each child, enabling them to plan further experiences in response to the children's interests, and they systematically record their progress. There are effective ways to ensure the children's welfare, with substantial planned involvement of parents in the induction process. The formal responsibilities for leadership of the EYFS have yet to be clarified and the move at the beginning of term to the largest classroom, although having a number of benefits, has not been completely thought through, for example, in terms of free access to an outdoor area for child-initiated activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure there is a good pace in all lessons, with pupils purposefully engaged, fully extended and clear about how to improve.
- Help teachers and their assistants to make more use of ICT in their teaching and for pupils to have more regular access to ICT in their work across the curriculum.

- Establish comprehensive systems for checking the performance of the school, including the tracking of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, and ensure staff and governors are fully trained for their roles in the process.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	3
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

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	3
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?	No

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

20 September 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Sheepscombe Primary School, Sheepscombe GL6 7RL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently when we inspected it. We enjoyed talking to groups of you, seeing some of your work and walking round your school. You were very helpful in answering our questions. We are pleased you like your school. Overall, Sheepscombe is a satisfactory school that has many things that are good but a few things that need to improve. Here are some of the highlights we noticed.

? You behave well and are thoughtful towards one another. This helps the new children settle quickly and make friends. ? You seem very confident and completely at ease when talking to adults. This is good but a few of you appear a little casual at times. ? You make very good progress in reading and writing and reach high standards in English by the time you leave the school. ? Many of you take on jobs around the school and represent the school in special events in the village and beyond. ? Your teachers plan interesting lessons and arrange lots of good trips and special events, such as the visits to Ebworth. ? Everyone who works at the school takes good care of you. Your parents are especially pleased about this. ? Your new headteacher has many good ideas for building on the things that are already good and improving the school.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on three things to make the school even better. ? Make sure time is not wasted in lessons and that you are all fully extended and clear about how to improve. You can help here by always trying to do your very best. ? Help teachers and their assistants to make more use of computers and other technology in lessons and arrange more times for you to use computers to help you in your learning. ? Develop better ways of checking how well the school is doing and make sure all the adults can get any training that they need to help them with this.

I am sure, perhaps through your school council, you will want to talk about ways you can help make the school even better.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector