

Shenley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117150
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312516
Inspection date	17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Leopold
Headteacher	Mr John Dibdin
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	London Road Shenley Hertfordshire WD7 9DX
Telephone number	01923 855864
Fax number	01923 855942

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement in reading at Key Stage 1 and in science throughout the school
- the challenge for more able pupils, particularly girls
- how effectively the school monitors and evaluates its work and takes action to raise standards.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's documentation and discussions with pupils, parents, staff and governors.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. It draws its pupils from a mix of owner-occupied and rented homes in the large village of Shenley and the nearby built-up areas. The majority of pupils are from White British homes, with a small proportion of pupils from other backgrounds speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils identified as needing extra support with their learning is slightly below average, with most of these pupils having moderate learning difficulties.

The school experienced a high turnover of staff and governors shortly after the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils joining the school other than at the usual times is below that found in other primary schools.

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 an improving school which correctly judges its overall effectiveness to be good. The vast majority of parents are pleased with what the school offers and say that staff are approachable and helpful. Pupils are enthusiastic about the good range of learning and other activities provided for them. They help and support each other well and take a keen interest in what is going on around them. The school has good links with other providers which effectively support pupils' transition to the next stage of their education.

By the end of Year 6, overall standards are above average and pupils are on track to reach the suitably challenging targets set for them. Improvements in the quality of pupils' writing, a focus in recent years, are evident in English and other subjects. Similarly, standards in science, having hovered around the average since the last inspection, are now climbing throughout the school and are now above average at the end of Year 6. This is because of a greater emphasis on teaching pupils to more accurately interpret and record the findings of their investigations. As a result, the majority of pupils, including those who find difficulty in acquiring new skills and knowledge, are making good progress. The legacy of underachievement of more able girls, although not completely resolved, is being successfully addressed. At the end of Year 2, overall standards are above average, notably in mathematics. Closely focused support for pupils needing additional help is helping to improve the standard of reading, particularly for boys, and close the gap in performance between them and the girls.

Pupils achieve well because the school has put in place robust systems for systematically checking pupils' progress and is using this information to take action to support those who are not doing as well as expected. At the start of lessons, teachers share with pupils what they are going to learn and identify the 'steps to success' that they will take to achieve this. In addition, teachers' comments when marking pupils' work often provide guidance for improvement but this practice is not yet consistent. The headteacher's regular and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is accurate. Effective practice is shared and areas for improvement are being effectively addressed through performance management and staff training. This is seen in the systematic teaching of sounds and letters together with well-structured reading sessions for younger pupils, and in the increased focus on independent research and investigative work for older pupils. Both of these provide a secure basis for the next stage of pupils' education. While the quality of teaching is good, the school rightly recognises some inconsistencies in teachers' use of information about what pupils know and can do in their planning and delivery of lessons. On occasions, neither questioning nor the tasks expected of pupils are sufficiently challenging, and the pace of some lessons is not brisk enough.

The school successfully promotes pupils' academic and personal development. Those who need extra support with their learning are promptly identified and receive good support in taking a full part in all activities. There is also good support for pupils for whom English is an additional language and, as a result, they make good progress. The recent introduction of a new programme for teaching personal, social and health education and citizenship is effectively supporting pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and pupils enjoy learning Spanish. Overall, behaviour is good. The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and staff are working with outside agencies, parents and carers to support the very small minority of pupils whose behaviour is inconsistent. In discussion, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's expectations of them and are familiar with the agreed system of rewards and sanctions. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and say

they are confident in turning to staff for help or advice. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise, and participate in a wide range of out-of-school activities. Attendance, which is similar to the national average, is improving as a direct result of the systems to reduce absences and discourage holidays during term. Through the school council, pupils play a positive part in the school's development and their support for charities and local events contributes effectively to the wider community.

As the result of good leadership and management, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has a good capacity for further improvement, reflected in the impact of changes made during the past two to three years. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and, with the support and involvement of staff and governors, sets challenging targets for improvement based on effective self-evaluation. Improvement planning provides a good structure for achieving priorities. Increasingly, subject leaders are taking responsibility for checking teachers' planning and pupils' work to track progress. The school's leaders have rightly identified the continued development of this work to involve all staff in further raising pupils' achievement. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and the school undertakes regular risk assessments. The governing body is well led and governors effectively use their wide range of professional skills in holding the school to account. Staff and resources are deployed well and the school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. When they start in the Nursery, children's skills and experiences are broadly similar to those expected for their age although the communication and language skills of many are below those expected for their age. Children make good progress because they are well taught and keen to learn in a calm yet supportive setting. Children settle quickly into daily routines, learn to share and make choices. Occasionally, staff miss opportunities to develop and extend children's vocabulary during activities children undertake independently. Children's early reading and writing skills are benefiting from focused teaching on letters and sounds. Children sustain their concentration well, take turns to ask and answer questions and follow instructions carefully. Aware that those who learn at a faster rate need a greater challenge, staff are successfully improving their use of information about what children know and can do to accelerate their learning. The Foundation Stage Unit is well equipped and managed, and good is made of expert advice to develop good practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed improvements in meeting pupils' learning needs to further raise their achievement, particularly in reading by the end of Year 2 and in science throughout the school.
- Strengthen the involvement of subject leaders and other staff in planning for improvement through increasing their role in monitoring and evaluating pupils' learning and progress.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shenley Primary School, Shenley, WD7 9DX

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited your school last Thursday. I was pleased to hear how much you enjoy coming to school and that you value the support and help the staff give you. Thank you for explaining so clearly how the 'steps to success' your teachers share with you at the start of lessons help you to make good progress and improve your work. You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and know how to keep yourselves safe. The vast majority of you behave very well in lessons and around the school. However, a few of you find it difficult to do so all the time and Mr Dibdin and the staff are helping you to improve - do keep trying because it makes a real difference to everyone in the school.

You make good progress at the school. The recent improvement in your work in science is a good example of this. I am grateful to Year 6 pupils for explaining to me how to plan and conduct fair tests and then present the findings using charts and graphs. For those of you in the younger classes, your work on sounds and letters is certainly helping you improve your reading - well done! Staff make regular checks on how well you are getting and are now making better use of this information to help them plan their lessons to make sure that you get on well. Those of you who find learning difficult get good support. Occasionally, the questions teachers ask those of you who learn at a faster rate could make you think a bit harder and you sometimes finish the work they give you more quickly than they expected. I have asked the staff to improve this and I hope you will help by showing them how well you understand what you are doing.

Mr Dibdin runs the school well and has many exciting ideas about how to improve it. Increasingly, your teachers are helping him to decide what are the most important things to do next. I have asked them to do more of this by involving all the staff in keeping an eye on how well you are learning and making progress so that they can improve teaching further and make sure you have everything you need to do well. Please help them by working hard and sharing with them what you most enjoy about your lessons. Keep working hard and enjoying school.

Yours truly

Mike Best

Lead inspector