

Minster in Sheppey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118344
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312898
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	465
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gloria Williams
Headteacher	Cath Foad
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Brecon Chase Minster Sheerness ME12 2HX
Telephone number	01795 872138
Fax number	01795 877705

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average First School serves the village of Minster and the surrounding area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small number are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools. The school anticipates moving towards full primary status as part of the imminent reorganisation of schools in Sheppey. The acting headteacher took up her post in April 2007. The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing, and difficulties in recruiting staff, in recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Minster in Sheppey Primary is a satisfactory but improving school. Although there has been insufficient time for recent initiatives to have full impact, the robust leadership of the acting headteacher and her unswerving commitment to improvement have given the school stability and direction during a challenging period of uncertainty. Staff have readily embraced change. Parents recognise that the school is making progress. As one said, 'This is a great place to enjoy learning.' Although the acting headteacher and her deputy provide effective leadership, at other levels, leadership and management remain satisfactory. This is because middle managers and subject leaders are mostly either temporary or relatively new to their role and are not yet fully effective and not all governors feel knowledgeable enough to challenge school leaders about the school's performance. Enhancement of the system for checking pupils' progress has been a key development, alerting staff to underperformance and providing evidence of the effectiveness of teaching. More rigorous monitoring of teaching is contributing to increasing the proportion of good teaching from its current satisfactory level. This is a necessary development if pupils' progress is to improve. However, teachers do not always mark pupils' work with sufficient rigour, nor make sufficient use of individual targets to help pupils understand how well they are doing. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception, although assessment information is not used sufficiently well to plan work that would support better achievement. In Years 1 to 4, standards have improved steadily in recent years to become broadly average, initially at Year 2 and now also at Year 4. However, while achievement is satisfactory overall, some inconsistencies remain, largely because of staffing issues. Currently, achievement is stronger in Years 3 and 4 than for younger pupils. This is particularly so for able Year 4 pupils who are making rapid progress in mathematics and science.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Almost all behave well and enjoy school. Nonetheless, attendance remains below average, with too many apparently casual absences. The school has only recently taken robust action to tackle this issue. The school works satisfactorily with others to promote pupils' progress and well-being. The curriculum meets pupils' needs satisfactorily, pending the reorganisation of the school. Pupils support the good extra-curricular provision well. Pastoral care is good. The school is rigorous in ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. The few pupils with English as an additional language make good progress, particularly in acquiring oral skills in English. Provision for pupils who need additional support is satisfactory, although the leadership team plans to restructure the courses through which these pupils' needs are tackled. The school has satisfactory capacity to build further upon recent changes.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Reception with lower than expected skills. They quickly settle in to well established routines and are cared for well. Relationships between children and staff are good. There are regular opportunities for children to choose and initiate activities and this develops their independence well. However, children's choices are not monitored closely enough to ensure a good balance of experiences. Although satisfactory teaching promotes early literacy and mathematical skills satisfactorily, ensuring that children make steady progress, not all reach the expected goals for learning by the time they join Year 1, particularly in writing. Few children are working at a higher level. Progress is constrained because insufficient account is taken of

children's current level of development in planning future learning. Staff do not make enough use of assessment information to move children's learning on.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure, in partnership with parents, that levels of attendance are raised.
- Increase significantly the proportion of good or better teaching so that pupils' achievement is more rapid, sustained and consistent across the school.
- Make more effective use of assessment information in Foundation Stage planning.
- Ensure that leadership is fully effective at all levels.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved steadily year on year to be broadly average in 2007. In spite of staff changes, the school has done well to sustain this position in the current year. Improved basic skills, supported by more rigorous checking on pupils' progress, are feeding through to Years 3 and 4 so that standards by the end of Year 4 have risen this year and are also broadly average. Achievement is satisfactory overall but is strongest in Years 3 and 4, where able pupils in particular, achieve well and are making up ground quickly. Higher expectations, separate teaching for able mathematicians and a rigorous approach to science are promoting better standards. While girls continue to outperform boys across the school, effective action is beginning to reduce the gap. Pupils who need additional support achieve satisfactorily. The school is evaluating the effectiveness of its intervention strategies, with a view to raising the achievement of these pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are friendly and confident. They enjoy lessons and behave well. An effective personal, social and health programme and close relationships with adults ensure that pupils feel very safe. They say that bullying is rare. Attendance remains below average and until recently the school has done little to tackle this issue. Pupils' moral and social development is good. However, although spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall, their awareness of cultural diversity in contemporary Britain is limited. Pupils understand well the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and participate eagerly in physical activities. They contribute satisfactorily to the school community through the school council, eco council and other posts of responsibility. There are fewer opportunities to engage with the wider community. Although fundraising supports skills that contribute to pupils' future economic well-being and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are improving, this element remains satisfactory, because basic literacy and numeracy skills have been less effectively developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While staff changes have affected the pace of improvement, more consistent approaches to planning, assessment and evaluation, and effective monitoring of teaching, are ensuring that teaching is typically at least satisfactory. Relationships are good, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and the environment for learning is calm and well managed. When deployed effectively, teaching assistants give good support to individuals who need additional help. Lessons sometimes lack pace and tasks are not always sharply matched to pupils' needs, so providing insufficient challenge to move learning on briskly. The marking of pupils' written work, though regular, is often focused more on acknowledging pupils' efforts than on giving them a clear direction as to how they can improve their work further. As a result, while teaching has some good features, it does not yet ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

While the Foundation Stage curriculum covers the areas of learning satisfactorily, activities are not always sufficiently well matched to children's needs. With reorganisation pending, the curriculum in Years 1 to 4 has yet to be extensively reviewed. There is an appropriate focus on raising standards in English, mathematics and science and the use of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across other subjects is planned for satisfactorily. Provision for physical development is a strength and pupils sing enthusiastically and confidently. The school plans to restructure provision for pupils who need additional support to ensure that the curriculum focuses on what they most need to learn. The provision for extra-curricular and enrichment activities is good, with a wide range of activities on offer. Academically gifted pupils are increasingly well provided for through dedicated clubs in mathematics and art and the introduction of 'fast stream' mathematics teaching. A residential visit in Year 4 enhances pupils' personal development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Adults promote pupils' health, safety and welfare well. The school promotes a well supported breakfast club and welfare staff actively support the needs of families. The school has satisfactory links with external agencies. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils' welfare needs are met effectively and that they make steady progress in their learning. The monitoring of attendance has, until recently, been given insufficient priority. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Enhanced tracking systems enable staff to monitor pupils' progress closely, but staff are not yet confident in using the data consistently to identify underachievement. Improvement targets are inconsistently implemented and not all pupils are aware of their targets. Teachers' marking does not explicitly reflect these targets, or pupils' progress towards them. As a result, pupils are not always aware of how they can improve their work. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate the quality of their own work are only spasmodically evident.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher is resolutely focused on raising standards. She has an incisive awareness of the issues facing the school. Self-evaluation is good. While her efforts have been hindered at times because of unexpected staff changes, her strong leadership and enthusiasm have been a catalyst for other staff to contribute to improvement. More effective use of the tracking system now highlights more quickly pupils who may be falling behind, while initiatives in, for example, writing, and for able pupils in mathematics and science, are helping to raise standards. The impact of middle managers is more variable, with key subject leaders being relatively new or in an acting role. The monitoring of teaching and support of less experienced staff is thorough but remains dependent largely on the headteacher or her deputy. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities conscientiously. Governors are well organised and enthusiastic. They recognise the need to challenge effectively, as well as support, the school's leadership through this extended period of change.

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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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 the 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

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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Minster in Sheppey Primary School, Sheerness ME12 2HX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You are very interested in meeting visitors and we very much enjoyed talking to you. We could see that you are proud of your school. You look after each other very well. Given all the recent changes, we felt that Minster in Sheppey Primary is a satisfactory, and improving, school.

- The main things that we found are these:
- you behave well in lessons and work hard
- the teaching is satisfactory and you make steady progress; however, some teachers are giving harder work, in mathematics, for example, and this is helping some of you to raise your standards at a faster rate
- the school makes sure that you are cared for well, and you understand how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise
- the curriculum is satisfactory, but the extra-curricular activities are good
- those in charge of the school make sure it runs smoothly at present and know what to do to improve it still further.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you do even better:

- work with your parents to make sure that you miss school only when it is really necessary
- ensure that the teaching is really challenging so that you make faster progress in your learning
- make sure Reception teachers use all the information they have to plan activities which help the youngest children to learn more quickly
- ensure that less experienced school leaders really understand what is needed to make things work well and help you to do better.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

- George Logan
- Lead Inspector

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