

Shalbourne CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126354
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315512
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Deborah Zachary

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenni Blake
Headteacher	Ruth Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Shalbourne Marlborough SN8 3QH
Telephone number	01672 870475
Fax number	01672 870475

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Shalbourne Primary School is very small, with the number of pupils in each year group ranging from 2 to 6. This means that the attainment on entry of the different year groups varies enormously from year to year, depending on the attainment of each individual pupil. The report does not make a judgement of standards in the Foundation Stage for this reason. The school serves a small rural village and surrounding hamlets, though more than a quarter of the pupils travel to attend the school from outside the catchment area. There has been a large influx of pupils in the last year, with the school roll increasing by a third. Most pupils are of White British heritage, and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Shalbourne is a good school in which pupils achieve well and are exceptionally well looked after. Most parents are very happy with what the school is offering – one who wrote 'I cannot thank Shalbourne School enough for their support' represents the views of many. Teaching is good, with work carefully matched to pupils' abilities even in the Key Stage 2 class, which has the most pupils and the widest age range. The headteacher is a very well organised and effective leader, and the school is well set to improve even more.

Standards are generally above average by the time the pupils leave the school, and pupils in all year groups, including the Foundation Stage, make good progress from their starting points. Teachers assess pupils frequently and keep careful records so their progress in the different subjects can be tracked. These detailed records also allow teachers to set highly appropriate individual targets in mathematics and English to help pupils improve, and pupils say they find these very useful.

The school used the tracking and analysis of test results well to identify that progress in mathematics was not quite as quick as in reading and writing. The actions it took had a strong impact on raising standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 in 2007. In Key Stage 2, progress in mathematics is satisfactory but has not yet accelerated. Although teachers tell pupils what they are going to learn in mathematics lessons, the way this is put is sometimes too general (for example 'solve number problems'). When this is the case, the work does not appear to the pupils to be closely linked to their detailed targets, so the opportunity to get the pupils more involved in their learning is missed.

The school offers pupils a wide range of extra-curricular activities and the curriculum supports personal development well. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and they hold strong views, for example on the importance of care for the environment. They also care for each other, and are well aware of how to keep healthy and safe. The academic curriculum is also effective. The development of an innovative approach to the teaching of key skills across a range of topics is well under way. It is helping to prepare pupils well for their future lives, teaching them to apply basic skills in new contexts.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage are taught in the same class as pupils in Key Stage 1. The environment is stimulating and they get plenty of opportunity to be active. The number of children is small, so they get plenty of individual attention and achieve well. They are well taught and have appropriate opportunities to learn through play. Both teacher and teaching assistant guided a dressing-up session well during the inspection, reacting to children's ideas and questioning well to enable them to explore ideas of what to wear in hot and cold weather. The children also benefit a great deal from some of the innovative teaching that takes place, such as practising movement skills before handwriting. More able children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress, gaining a great deal from listening and working with older pupils. Less able children make satisfactory progress, but there is limited specific planning for the Foundation Stage curriculum. Lesson plans do not always identify clearly how children can work towards the next steps in their learning, which may involve experiences that are very

different from the work needed by pupils in Key Stage 1. As a result, less able children occasionally find whole-class activities too hard.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that pupils are told more precisely what they are going to learn in mathematics lessons, and link this wherever possible to their mathematics targets
- plan explicitly for activities and experiences that will take Foundation Stage children to the next step in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Results of national assessments for Year 6 pupils have varied between average and exceptionally high over the last three years. National measures of the progress pupils have made between their Key Stage 1 results and their Key Stage 2 results four years later show achievement is good. However, the school's own data show that progress between Years 3 and 6 is not as good in mathematics as it is in English. In 2007, pupils in Key Stage 1 made very good progress in mathematics as a result of strategies adopted to raise standards. Their progress in writing was not as good, but the work of current Key Stage 1 pupils shows significant improvement in writing this year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make a good contribution to the community, both inside school and in the village. They raise money for charities and compost waste, and work to improve the school through the school council. The pupils have been involved in devising their own rules for how to behave. They say there is no bullying. Behaviour is generally good, but occasionally younger pupils have difficulties concentrating and settling to work. All are very courteous and welcoming to visitors. In the playground, younger pupils are well cared for and supported by older ones, who treat them kindly even when they interrupt a ball game. Attendance is good and one parent even said that a child had enjoyed 'every day of every year in the school'. Some Year 6 pupils said spontaneously: 'We've got this really fun teacher...'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers group pupils well to ensure they can be given work that matches their abilities. They change the groupings very sensitively according to what is planned, particularly in Key Stage 2. Teaching assistants often work with small groups, and they make a very good contribution to the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers use resources such as information and communication technology effectively. Handwriting is taught very effectively in Key Stage 1. Here pupils do exercises before they start: first of all larger movements of their arms, progressing to fine movements with their hands. They are taught to focus closely on the mechanics of drawing shapes, tracing the sweep of the letters in the air, in sand and on the carpet. This gives them a really good understanding of what they are trying to achieve, and it is fun. Occasionally the pace drops in lessons for older pupils, when they work slowly even though work is of appropriate challenge. When they have been given too broad a view of what

exactly they are aiming to learn in the lesson, an opportunity is missed to involve them in pushing themselves on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The pupils have particularly good opportunities to excel at physical education and music, with around two thirds learning an instrument. Close links with the church and with other schools support the pupils' good spiritual development and good cultural understanding, which is also enhanced by a range of visits and visitors. Planning is effective for most year groups, but there is little explicit planning for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Occasionally this means they sit through less appropriate activities for older children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care is outstanding. A parent wrote of a 'wonderful family feel' in the school, and this was echoed by pupils who said, 'If you are feeling ill, they really look after you well'. All safeguarding requirements are met, and staff have had a wide range of training in health and safety. The small size of the school means that every individual child is very well known by all adults. Guidance is very good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported through individual education plans that give very helpful targets. The pupils say they find marking very helpful; books are corrected but also have useful comments about how to improve. Targets in the front of exercise books particularly help older pupils to know what they are aiming for in the longer term. The large proportion of pupils who arrived during the last year from other schools have been helped to settle particularly well. Strong links with pre-schools and secondary schools help the pupils to move securely into and out of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a strong vision for the school and the staff work as a cohesive team. They have demonstrated their commitment to raising standards through improvements to writing and mathematics in the last year, and their capacity for imaginative development through the design of the new 'skills curriculum'. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous, and development planning clear and realistic. Governance is good, and governors offer both support and challenge. They make frequent visits to the school and have effective systems to monitor what is taking place. Professional monitoring is generally carried out by the headteacher. Teachers in this small school have to take responsibility for a large number of subjects. As subject leaders they support each other well, but their opportunities for monitoring are limited.

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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	2
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?	1

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

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shalbourne C of E Primary School, Marlborough SN8 3QH

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited the school on Wednesday. I enjoyed seeing you at work and hearing about your many successes. I think you go to a good school and are making good progress. You all look after each other and you behave well. Even though the school is very small, you get lots of opportunities to learn different things and lots of clubs to take part in. The grown-ups support and help you extremely well, and the teaching is good.

I have asked the school to work on two things to make it even better. I think that when teachers tell you the lesson objective - what you are going to learn in a mathematics lesson, for example - they could link what they tell you more closely to your targets. That would mean you could try really hard and maybe actually reach a target during the lesson. You can help by asking politely if the lesson objective is not clear. The other thing I have suggested is for the youngest children. Teachers need to plan the things they are going to learn more clearly.

A special thank-you to all the Year 6 pupils who came to talk to me about the school. You were great fun to listen to. You had a really good understanding of healthy eating - but don't tell Mrs Matthews about the biscuits we shared!

Best wishes

Deborah Zachary Lead Inspector