

Sherston CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126356
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315514
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock

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	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Cutcher
Headteacher	Nicholas Bowditch
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Knockdown Road Sherston Malmesbury SN16 0NJ
Telephone number	01666 840237
Fax number	07092841067

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sherston C of E Primary School is smaller than the average size school, serving the village and the local community. The school has grown over the last few years and moved into a new purpose built building two years ago. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small percentage from minority ethnic families. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There have been significant staff changes this term. The school has strong international links with schools in Kenya, Calcutta and Brisbane. The school has an Activemark Award, Singing School Award, Intermediate International School Award and Special Achievement Award for recycling.

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 with many good features. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory but the school has not fully addressed the issue regarding raising writing standards in Year 2. Strengths in pastoral care, cultural development and the outstanding partnership with others, both locally and internationally, contribute much to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Written comments from parents such as: 'I find the staff at Sherston Primary School a dedicated, focused and happy team. This positive energy is passed on to the children who thrive in this environment.' show that most parents appreciate the commitment and friendliness of the staff. The outcomes can be seen in happy pupils who mostly enjoy their lessons, behave well, feel safe and get on well together. They enjoy exercise and have a good understanding of adopting healthy lifestyles. Academic achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter school with skills above those expected for their age. They settle quickly and achieve well in the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning, in particular their personal, social and emotional development. This is because provision and teaching are good and children's progress is carefully tracked to help teachers plan activities that motivate and challenge all children of different abilities. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but variable in Years 1 to 6 with the result that pupils' progress is inconsistent as they go through the school. Assessment information is not used consistently when planning lessons and therefore work is not well matched to individual needs. Achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2 but is inadequate for boys and higher attaining pupils in writing because work does not sufficiently motivate or challenge these pupils. Consequently, they do not do as well as they could. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make better progress because of more consistent teaching. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the help given by teaching assistants and make similar progress to their classmates. The headteacher has a clear vision of the strengths of the school and what is needed to improve it further. He has been instrumental in helping new teachers feel welcome and valued as important members of the team. His hard work and commitment are strong features in the school's satisfactory leadership and management. A new senior management team has recently been established to play a full part in monitoring the school's performance to bring about further improvement. New initiatives have been introduced including improving the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress more carefully so that work is closely matched to their individual needs. However, this is in the early stages of development and the school acknowledges that further time is needed for senior staff to make a real impact on raising standards and achievement. With a more settled staff and newly formed leadership team and the gradual success of recent actions, including the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity for further development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's achievement in the Reception class is good. All children achieve all their learning goals before moving to Year 1, and many exceed these goals. Great emphasis is placed on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development and children make particularly good progress in these aspects of their learning. Children are keen to be involved in their activities, their relationships with each other are good, and their behaviour is calm and purposeful. The staff know the children well and regularly assess their progress to ensure that

teaching and the curriculum fully meet their needs and keep them actively engaged. Early reading activities, including phonic work, where parents are fully involved to support children at home, help children get off to a flying start in reading. Provision in the Foundation Stage has significantly improved since the last inspection, with the creation of a well designed outside area as part of the new school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2, especially for boys and higher attaining pupils, by ensuring that writing activities capture their interest and imagination and challenge them to do their best.
- Use assessment information more consistently when planning work so that all pupils are supported or challenged to reach their full potential.
- Extend the role and responsibilities of senior leaders so that they play a full part in monitoring school performance. 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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall but as they move through the school, variations in the quality of teaching result in different rates of progress. Some work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly in writing in Years 1 and 2, so pupils do not all do as well as they should. As a consequence, although standards in reading and mathematics are above average at the end of Year 2, they are broadly average in writing. This is because higher attaining pupils and boys do not reach their full potential in writing. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to that of their classmates. Their needs are clearly identified and targets are appropriate to their particular difficulties.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All pupils launch straight into the day's activities with a 'wake and shake' session in the playground. Pupils' positive attitudes and their friendly relationships with each other and with adults make it obvious that they enjoy school. They respond well to the staff's warm welcome and, consequently, attendance is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with cultural development a particular strength. There are outstanding links with numerous countries throughout the world enabling pupils to explore closely the differences in childhood in various cultures. Behaviour across the school is good. Pupils feel safe and know they can go to an adult with any worries. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the importance of healthy food. Members of the school council are proud of their contribution in changing the lunchtime menu to make it more healthy and attractive. Pupils know the importance of exercise and participate enthusiastically in physical activities. Many commented, 'I enjoy PE, it's fun.' Very strong links have been established with the community including a local software company that visits the school weekly and effectively supports pupils' learning. Pupils are developing good personal qualities and are considerate and respectful to others. They are polite and quick to give support to each other in both the classroom and the playground. They are keen to take part in the school's charity work. Pupils' positive approach

to all aspects of learning and their above average basic skills mean they are well prepared for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is much good teaching and learning, the quality is uneven, meaning that there are variations in how well pupils learn from year to year. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles and contribute well to the good personal development of pupils. This ensures that in most cases pupils are enthusiastic and well motivated. Activities build successfully on prior learning and are mostly well matched to pupils' learning abilities. However, work does not always stimulate the interest of boys and is not sufficiently challenging for more able pupils in Years 1 and 2. This has a negative impact on pupils' attitudes and achievement, particularly in writing, and these pupils learn too slowly. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to explain new concepts and bring activities alive. Well-trained teaching assistants give good support when they are working with groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring that these pupils make at least satisfactory progress over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is satisfactory overall but has many good and commendable features. Learning is extended well through a wide range of special events, visits and visitors. These have a positive effect on pupils' interest in school and strengthen links with the local community. French was successfully introduced last year and is now in place in Years 3 to 6. Provision for information and communication technology has significantly improved since the last inspection. There is a wide range of clubs, which are well attended and effectively support pupils' learning. However, the curriculum does not always provide enough challenge for more able pupils or capture the interest of boys in Years 1 and 2. As a consequence, their progress slows and their achievement in writing is not good enough. There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills, which helps ensure pupils work hard in most lessons, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils spoke very positively about further strengths in the curriculum, including singing, peripatetic music and physical education which they thoroughly enjoy and 'make learning fun'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers and staff place a high priority on pupils' safety and well-being. They have a good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs and provide them with good pastoral support and guidance within a warm supportive family environment. Parents are positive about the care shown to their children, as reflected in comments such as 'My child receives great support, inclusion has really worked here and there is a welcoming atmosphere for all children.' Child protection procedures are fully in place and risk assessments are carried out conscientiously. Substantial links with outside agencies support all pupils and their families well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for academic support is not as robust as the provision for pastoral care. A new assessment coordinator has recently been appointed to ensure that the tracking of pupils' individual progress is given higher focus by all teachers.

Currently, assessment information is not used consistently. As a result, work is not always matched well enough to individual needs to enable pupils to do their best, particularly those capable of higher attainment in Years 1 and 2. Although some very good use of marking was seen during inspection, particularly for older pupils, this practice is not consistent throughout the school and many pupils receive insufficient guidance about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, governors and staff are strongly committed to school improvement. There have been significant changes in staffing during the last few months but the newly appointed teachers have settled in well. This is largely as a result of the strength in the headteacher's leadership in the way he values all members of the school community. A new senior management team has recently been formed to support the headteacher and enable the school to get a firmer grip on improvement. They have begun to reconsider the school's self-evaluation procedures to identify key areas for improvement. New systems for tracking pupils' progress have recently been introduced. These initiatives have not yet had time to bring about improvement in achievement and standards. All members of the senior management team are involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning to pinpoint precisely where and how improvements are to be made. This is beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They are supportive of the school and have a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Many are attending training sessions, including newly appointed governors, to have a greater understanding of how they can monitor the school's effectiveness more accurately.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
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 disabilities make progress	3

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?	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	3
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

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

- 12 December 2007 Dear Children Sherston C of E Primary School, Sherston, SN16 0NJ Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to your school. We enjoyed talking to you very much and watching your Christmas production. We thought you were very friendly and polite. The school provides you with a satisfactory education and these are the main things we thought were good.
- You enjoy school and behave well.
- You have a good understanding of how important it is to eat healthy food and keep fit by regular exercise.
- You like the clubs that you attend, visits outside school and learning about children in other countries.
- Teachers and adults look after you well.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make your school better. These are the things the school should do to make it better.
- Teachers in Years 1 and 2 should make writing lessons more interesting, particularly for boys, and expect more from those of you who can manage your work easily.
- Help plan your work more carefully, so that it is not too hard or too easy, to help you learn more quickly.
- Make sure that senior teachers and governors are more involved in checking how well you are doing to help your school get even better. Best wishes for the future. Ian Hancock Lead inspector



12 December 2007

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Best wishes for the future.

Ian Hancock
Lead inspector