

Sharmans Cross Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104049
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323947
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Green
Headteacher	Mark Pratt
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2006
School address	Sharmans Cross Road Solihull B91 1PH
Telephone number	0121 705 2379
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors. The report is based on two inspections carried out separately, with findings summarised in a single report.

Description of the school

This is a large junior school where most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also lower than average. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008. There is a before- and after-school club with 98 children who attend the school on roll. The club provides for a maximum of 48 children at any one session.

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 which is improving at a very rapid pace. The new headteacher has energised the school, bringing with him a clear direction and high expectations, resulting in significant improvement over a very short period of time. Teachers are thriving under his strong lead, and leadership and management are burgeoning as a result of clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Consequently, pupils are beginning to make the good progress of which they are capable. However it is very early days and although the school's well planned actions are becoming embedded, practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Parents speak positively about the changes that have been made. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'It is excellent to see a young head with so much passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning.' Pupils enter the school with above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Unvalidated data for 2008 show that at the end of Year 6, pupils have made satisfactory progress to reach standards that are above the national average in English, mathematics and science, although mathematics is the weakest subject. Inspection evidence shows that where teachers are confident and work is challenging, pupils are now making good progress.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is above average. Behaviour is outstanding because relationships across the whole school community are strong. Pupils demonstrate maturity and a great respect for others because adults provide excellent role models. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and pastoral care is good. Recent developments in marking and the process of setting targets are also helping pupils to rapidly accelerate progress. However, this is not yet consistent across the school.

While teaching is satisfactory overall there are examples of good and outstanding practice. Where assessment is used well to plan for learning, pupils are excited and say they 'really enjoy the challenge'. However there are still some lessons where this is not so and consequently progress is not as good as it might be.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enhanced by many clubs, visits, visitors and special events. Although links between subjects are beginning to be improved, the curriculum is not yet fully creative because the school has quite rightly prioritised raising achievement and standards and the improvement of teaching and learning.

The before- and after-school club meets the welfare and learning development needs of all children exceptionally well. The manager, deputy manager and staff form excellent relationships with the children, which results in the children being fully included and enjoying the activities. The staff assess the progress children make in all areas of learning, and are developing personal folders for them that will be shared with the school and parents. Effective leadership and management and the very close partnership with parents and the school ensure that children are being provided for very well. Senior staff review their work methodically, and to good effect.

Senior leaders, staff and governors share the new headteacher's passion for improvement and are united in a focus on raising achievement and standards. The school has a secure view of its own strengths and weaknesses because of sound self-evaluation. Senior leaders are now clear about their roles and responsibilities and beginning to take an effective part in school improvement. Monitoring by middle managers is not yet robust and their use of data is not yet as effective as it could be. The headteacher and his assistant headteachers, supported by a

knowledgeable, committed body of governors, provide a focused lead for the school. The school is now suitably placed to improve further and has the capacity to do so.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the achievement of all groups of pupils in mathematics.
- Improve the consistency of teaching in every year group and share the good practice that exists within the school.
- Develop a more robust system of monitoring and evaluation, including use of data, by middle managers in order to raise standards and achievement further.

A small proportion of the 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

Achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average although mathematics, which is the weakest subject, is nearer to the national average. Inspectors agree with the findings of the school's own mathematics review, which highlighted problem-solving and using and applying mathematics as two areas for development. Achievement was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and for the three years following. However, school data and inspection evidence confirm that, as a result of the stringent targets and measures recently introduced, progress is now showing signs of improvement. Where teaching and learning are good, pupils make good progress. This is particularly evident in Year 6, where enthusiastic teachers deliver lively lessons which challenge and excite pupils, but this is not yet true of every class. Effective programmes of learning and support from teaching assistants enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve as well as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good with many outstanding features. Pupils really enjoy school. Their excellent moral and social development is another example as to why there is exemplary behaviour. Spiritual development is good. Pupils are used to reflecting on attitudes, beliefs and the world around them. Cultural development is satisfactory. The school recognises that pupils' understanding of a multi-ethnic society is not well developed. Pupils have excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, including the importance of exercise, fresh air and 'being happy'. Pupils' understanding of keeping safe is equally outstanding. They speak convincingly about feeling safe and are able to say with confidence that there is no bullying. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities, including the school council and feel confident that they contribute well to school life. However, the school recognises that pupils' contribution within the wider community is an area to develop. Satisfactory achievement, together with the skills they learn that can be used in adult jobs, means they are suitably prepared for their future. The children who attend the before- and after-school club enjoy their activities in a friendly and cooperative environment

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some good and outstanding teaching was seen but this is not yet consistent throughout the school. New assessment strategies are already beginning to focus teachers and pupils on how they can improve. Teachers generally plan for the different needs of pupils; however, not all groups of pupils are always sufficiently challenged and time can be wasted in lengthy whole-class introductions. Resources are not always used to support the learning of lower ability pupils in mathematics. Also, some higher ability pupils rightly feel they are not sufficiently challenged in this subject. Although work has begun on the Gender Project and girls are gaining more self-confidence, some pupils still feel that 'teachers concentrate more on boys than girls'. Relationships are good and pupils display excellent attitudes to learning. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, all pupils were fully engaged in learning skills which fostered teamwork and independent investigation. Good examples of self- and peer-assessment were seen. Working environments serve as good prompts and are frequently referred to during lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is currently working hard to improve problem-solving and using and applying mathematics, which are the weakest areas in mathematics. Although 'WOW' factors, such as Chinese dancers, motivate pupils at the beginning of their topic work, learning links have yet to be fully developed between subjects. However, the enrichment of literacy with tales of Beowulf, mathematics with practical day-to-day problems, and a greater focus on challenging pupils through problem-solving enable most pupils to enjoy lessons and to improve the progress they make. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects is satisfactory. Exciting art and music provision allows pupils to express themselves creatively. Enrichment in the form of theme days, visits and visitors is good. Many pupils enthusiastically participate in the many clubs that exist, from ocarina to learning Chinese.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the strong care and commitment that the school has to all the pupils and this has built a very strong educational partnership. The school works hard to keep pupils safe, both inside and outside the school. The before- and after-school club meets the welfare and learning development needs of children exceptionally well, all of whom are pupils at the school. The staff effectively assess individual progress in all areas of learning, and are compiling personal folders that will be shared with the school and parents. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust. Attendance and behaviour procedures deliver outstanding outcomes. Outside agencies and the LA offer consistent and well directed support. Procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' work have received a high priority recently and now allow a stronger focus and personalised support to be tailored to individual pupils and groups. The school's work with the few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasingly well informed and consequently they make similar progress to their classmates. The use of targets and informative marking of pupils' work are developing well and in some instances lead to good teaching and high levels of pupil motivation.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has been a driving force in bringing about significant improvement in the work of the school. He is well supported by the local authority in his work. Pupils' attitudes are good, behaviour is outstanding and there is secure evidence that standards and achievement are improving throughout the school. He has raised the morale of staff and built a strong team. However, much of this work is still at an early stage and the school recognises that there is still much more to do. Senior leaders have been active participants in all of the initiatives and instrumental in securing rapid improvement. Middle managers work hard but it is early days and their roles in monitoring and evaluation are not yet fully developed. Governors are conscientious and loyal but recognise the importance of being more involved. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school promotes respect and understanding well within the school but recognises that currently, links with the community both nationally and internationally are less well developed. The effective leadership of the senior staff and very close partnership with parents and the school ensures that children who attend the before- and after-school club are provided for very well.

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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

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/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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	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**

26 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sharmans Cross Junior School, Solihull B91 1PH

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us to your school for the recent inspection. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting your classrooms. You have given us lots of helpful information. We think your school is a satisfactory school which is improving very quickly. These are the things you do well.

- Your behaviour is outstanding and you all enjoy coming to school.
- You have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, especially the importance of exercise, having plenty of fresh air and being happy.
- You have an excellent understanding of keeping safe.
- You are very friendly and have a lot respect for each other. There is no bullying.
- You enjoy your responsibilities, and know that you contribute well to school life.
- The teachers look after you very well.
- Those of you who attend the before- and after-school club really enjoy the exciting activities provided.

The school is working hard to make things even better for you. We have asked the school to do three things.

- Help you to do even better and improve the pace of your learning, especially in mathematics.
- Make sure that all lessons are good.
- Make sure that school leaders have a good system for checking how good lessons are and how well and how quickly they are helping you to improve.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and to try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Thank you again. We wish you continuing success.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Atcheson

Lead inspector