

Shirley Heath Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104050
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323948
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Tim Bristow HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Deakin
Headteacher	Mrs Gail Knight
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 July 2006
School address	Coombe Road Shirley B90 3DS
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, pupils and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, monitoring and evaluation documents, assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and 93 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the rate of progress made by all groups of pupils
- the quality of teaching and assessment
- the school's capacity for sustained improvement
- pupils' personal development and well-being, particularly their health, safety and behaviour.

Information about the school

The school is above average in size. In most years the majority of pupils join the school with standards that are above average. However, Year 6 pupils in 2008 entered school with standards that were average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. A very small minority of pupils claim free school meals. The pupils benefit from a before- and after-school 'Kids club' that is managed by the school. A local authority children's centre opened last year on the school site.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. As one parent commented, summing up the views of many, 'We believe that Shirley Heath is an excellent place in which to learn and to grow.' The achievement of pupils is outstanding. Every year since the previous inspection, standards by the end of Year 6 have been high. This is because nearly all groups of pupils make good progress over time. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. Teaching and the use of assessment information are good, explaining why the quality of learning for the very large majority of pupils is good. In some lessons a few more able pupils make progress that is slower than that of their peers.

Many of the outcomes for pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The behaviour of nearly all pupils is exemplary, and this is underpinned by outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' responsibility for their own safety and their adoption of a healthy lifestyle is outstanding for their age. One of the main reasons for this is the school's great expertise in caring for their safety and health. An example of exemplary practise is the 'Place to Talk' room which has successfully encouraged the majority of pupils to take responsibility for their emotional well-being. As one pupil reported after taking the responsibility to use this resource, 'A big weight has been lifted off my shoulders.'

An outstanding curriculum has enabled nearly all pupils to thoroughly enjoy their education. Key aspects of this are the excellent range of school clubs that a large majority take part in and the extensive variety of enriching activities that greatly enhance the work in lessons. Outstanding care, guidance and support have created an extremely caring environment in which almost all pupils thrive.

The school has made many successful improvements since the last inspection because of the outstanding ambition and drive of school leaders. They are relentless in their desire to improve the education of pupils. The school has excellent procedures to identify relative weaknesses in its work and to make improvements. For example, the impressive rise in standards in writing in 2008 was the result of a concerted whole-school drive to improve provision for this subject. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. Recent changes in middle leadership resulting from promotion this year mean that senior leaders have successfully channelled their efforts into ensuring that the impressive outcomes for pupils are

maintained whilst some inexperienced leaders develop the skills needed to be fully effective.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of some more able pupils so that they make faster progress by:
 - providing more opportunities for challenge and creativity
 - encouraging independence by providing open-ended investigations
 - sharing the excellent practice that is available in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

School assessment information and pupils' work show that this year high standards have been maintained in English, mathematics and science. In 2008 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6 is much greater than average in English and science, and slightly higher in mathematics. However, a few more able pupils do not make as rapid progress as they could because they are insufficiently challenged in some lessons. Pupils' very good speaking and listening, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are exploited to enable them to make good progress in lessons. Pupils demonstrate that they have developed extremely productive relationships with each other. Teamwork and cooperation are a strength. Pupils show great tenacity when solving problems. For example in one lesson, where two pupils were working together to solve a difficult mathematical problem, they persevered over a long period of time, systematically testing a range of solutions until they arrived at a correct answer. They demonstrated great enthusiasm and enjoyment for the activity.

Here are other key features of pupil outcomes.

- Pupils' safety awareness is outstanding. They maintain that bullying hardly ever occurs and are able to explain very confidently the actions they would take if they needed help.
- The pupils' outstanding development in adopting a healthy lifestyle has resulted in the school receiving the National Healthy School Award.
- Attendance is consistently above average for almost all pupils.
- Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They demonstrate a high degree of responsibility when carrying out class or school jobs, for example, by organising school clubs, working as bank cashiers or acting as peer mentors. They show great initiative when fund-raising for charity by deciding on activities and then organising them. They are developing their understanding of global citizenship through links with schools abroad, for example in China. The school has accurately identified that more opportunities for pupils to contribute to the local community could be exploited.
- Pupils demonstrate that their preparation for their future economic well-being is outstanding as they apply their basic, social and ICT skills extremely successfully to the activities they are presented with in lessons and around the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has a number of strengths. Teachers demonstrate that they continually strive to improve their lessons. Excellent relationships have been established with pupils so that they really try hard to do their best in lessons. The quality of planning is consistent and assessment information is used successfully to pitch work at the correct level for the very large majority of pupils. Marking is consistently good. Pupils benefit from praise and helpful advice on the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Whilst teachers ensure that more able pupils have harder work to complete than others, in a few lessons it lacks the challenge that would enable these pupils to demonstrate their skills of creativity, investigation and independence.

One of the excellent features of the curriculum and the care, guidance and support that explains the outstanding achievement of the pupils is the great attention paid by the school to the needs of each individual pupil. For example, through the extra activities provided for gifted and talented pupils. A number of parents have expressed their great pleasure with this. For example, one parent who has two children in school remarked that, 'Our children are very different but we are delighted that both are allowed to thrive in a challenging yet supportive environment.'

Here are other key features of provision.

- Additional activities for pupils who find English and mathematics difficult are excellent, enabling them to make progress that is often better than that of their peers. They are taught by highly skilled teaching assistants.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

- The very small minority of pupils for whom English is an additional language make rapid progress because of the high quality of the provision they receive.
- Good measures for assessing pupil progress that were implemented two years ago have been successful in enabling teachers to identify and give additional help to those whose progress at times may slow down.
- The before- and after-school care has been very successful in enabling parents who take advantage of this club to go to work in the knowledge that their children are safe and well cared for.
- The school is very enthusiastic about the additional opportunities the children's centre will provide for families in the community. At the time of the inspection the impact of the relationship with the children's centre is not yet evident.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

At the heart of the school's success is an excellent team spirit and sense of common purpose. School leaders are successfully empowering teachers to lead and training them to be fully effective. Staff respond to this trust by continually striving to improve their work. School leaders are rigorous in the evaluation of the work of the school to identify where improvements could be made. The school development plan has been extremely well developed as a tool to enable leaders to successfully prioritise resources to make these improvements. For example, the school takes safeguarding very seriously and has created provision such as the 'Place to Talk' room that the local authority recognises is an example of excellent practice. Governance is good. School leaders are regularly held to account for the work of the school by governors, who have a range of very useful skills. Governors regularly review and revise all policies, such as safeguarding and equal opportunities, which involves questioning and challenging school leaders about the changes made. However, they have not taken sufficient steps to check with staff and pupils that the policies are being consistently adopted and applied.

Here are other key features of leadership and management.

- Presently the school has good procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils. The checks it makes on adults who work in school are exemplary.
- The school is extremely successful in promoting equality and tackling discrimination because of the great attention paid to the well-being of each pupil. In recognition of this they are regularly asked to accept pupils who have

had difficulties in other schools. In nearly all cases the school can demonstrate that this has been extremely beneficial to the well-being of these pupils.

- The school has established excellent links with local infant and secondary schools as well as a range of outside agencies which contribute to the outstanding care, guidance and support that pupils receive.
- The school has an effective plan to promote community cohesion that has ensured that pupils have a good appreciation of and respect for groups that make up the school community. It has successfully campaigned for a children's centre to further develop this work. Good links have been established with almost all parents, who regularly attend school events such as parents' evenings. The school recognises that further links need to be established in the local community so that pupils learn to recognise and respect its diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of the parents questionnaires received were positive. Trends in the comments made by parents showed that they recognised that the school enabled their children to be happy and thrive because of the quality of leadership, the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and the close attention that is paid to the needs of individuals. They appreciate the wide variety of school clubs and additional activities and the way that staff are approachable and listen and respond to their questions. A few parents rightly voiced concerns about aspects of the schools' work. There was no apparent trend to these concerns to indicate weaknesses in the schools procedures, nor were any witnessed by inspectors. Nevertheless, inspectors pointed out some of the issues of concern to school leaders who agreed to investigate them further.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shirley Heath Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 93 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 585 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	21	4	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



11 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Shirley Heath Junior School, Shirley, B90 3DS

If you remember, I came with my colleagues to inspect the work of the school and to check how well you were doing. I am very pleased to report that we think that you are doing extremely well. Nearly all of you work very hard in lessons and because of this you can be very proud of the high standards you achieve in English, mathematics, ICT and science. However, there are some other very important aspects of your education in which you are also very successful. Your behaviour is excellent. We were particularly impressed by your politeness to us and kindness to each other. You told us that you thoroughly enjoy your education and feel very safe and understand how to stay healthy, and we agree with you. You work very well together in lessons and many of you appear to relish the opportunity to tackle difficult problems. You carry out your jobs in school very conscientiously and show great initiative when taking the responsibility for activities such as raising money for charity.

We think that the headteacher, other adults and school governors work extremely hard to provide you with an outstanding education. They are particularly good at looking at ways to make lessons better and then improving them. They try their best to make sure that every one of you is happy. You have some excellent school clubs and trips that you told us that you really enjoyed and that your parents fully appreciate. In order to make your lessons even better we have asked the school to try and make the work in some lessons more challenging for those of you who may find it easy.

The school is very proud of you all and I am sure that you will continue to work hard and do your best.

Yours faithfully

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's inspector

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