

Shenstone School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101486
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	335726
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Lynne Kauffman

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Passey
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Aldcroft
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed 7 teachers and 2 higher level teaching assistants. Meetings were held with pupils, governors, staff, therapists, parents and managers. Inspectors observed the work of the school, and looked at its procedures including safeguarding, general school policies and scrutinised the assessment system. They reviewed records of pupils' progress and their records of achievement files and analysed the 29 responses to parental questionnaires.

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

- how well the curriculum has been modified to meet the needs of all pupils and its impact on learning and personal development
- how effectively data are used in all planning to provide clear and relevant targets in pupils' individual education plans
- to what extent the school has addressed identified weaknesses in the strategic role of the governing body
- the effectiveness of community cohesion and its impact on learning and pupils' personal development.

Information about the school

Shenstone School is located in an attractive setting and provides mainly for pupils from the London Borough of Bexley. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for their severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, including those pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and those with severe medical needs. Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds, the largest being White British followed by Black British African pupils. Nearly a quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are more boys than girls in the school and an above average number are at early stages of learning English. The school works closely with its special and mainstream partners and provides outreach training on behalf of the local authority.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Shenstone is a good school. Senior leaders' accurate self-assessment reflects their good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Outstanding procedures for safeguarding and promoting equality of opportunity ensure that all pupils are nurtured and given the best support to make good progress. These areas, together with improved coordination of topics and subjects by middle managers, good attendance and the successful completion of its previous key issues, illustrate the school's capacity for continuous improvement.

The senior leaders' high expectations of what pupils can achieve are communicated effectively. Leaders ensure provision is good, and outstanding in the case of care, guidance and support. Passionate leadership demonstrates ambition and drive, which are shared through effective performance management. Management, however, misses some opportunities to engage all stakeholders in community cohesion by collecting views from the parents and governors on this area. The school's planning ensures that barriers to learning are minimized. For example, staff use a full range of speaking and listening strategies such as symbols, picture exchange communication (PECs) and signing to ensure all pupils are fully included and can respond in the way they prefer.

The effectiveness of governors' support has been identified by the school as an area for improvement, mainly due to lack of training and appropriate systems to support the school's development. Training during the last two terms has given governors greater focus on their role to challenge and support the school, but their strategic influence in driving the school forward is limited.

The school provides many lively opportunities to develop pupils' confidence and to support and challenge the more able. Assessment is used effectively to shape the targets of pupils' individual education plans and there are improving records of the progress of different groups.

Pupils' facial expressions, thumbs up gestures and discussions show that they enjoy school and they understand that good learning is rewarded. Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school and make excellent choices about healthy food and keeping fit. Behaviour is outstanding because the large majority of staff use the school's policy well and many are very skilful in defusing potentially difficult situations for autistic pupils. Pupils have fun being independent and socialising during break and lunchtime, for example by taking part in the parachute game. Although the systems for evaluating the impact of the school's strategies to promote community cohesion are only just starting to develop, community awareness and links with other partners provide pupils with knowledge of the wider world that prepares them well for the next stage of their lives.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good range of experiences that provide a firm basis for future learning. Teachers and teaching assistants capitalise on working with parents to build on children's previous experiences.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review and develop the governors' role as strategic planners so that by July 2011 they are able to challenge and support the leadership and management in taking the school forward.
- Develop more effective strategies to evaluate and improve the school's contribution to community cohesion in local, national and global contexts.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

'We have been delighted in our son's progress; Shenstone makes miracles happen.' This quote from the school's 'thank you' file illustrates the strength of parents' views. Happy pupils and smiling faces show pupils like to be at school. Corridors that burst with outstanding displays of pupils' work provide considerable evidence of good learning.

Pupils' attainment on entry and exit is low, owing to their complex special educational needs. Achievement is good because well-structured planning builds effectively on individual pupils' previous experiences. Tracking by all staff against pupils' individual education plans boosts pupils' confidence through the strong focus on their personal development and well-being. Pupils respond very well to multi-sensory support, for example when they engaged in a very wide range of activities related to the story of 'The Rainbow Fish'. These activities excited pupils and feeling water, watching fish mobiles on the ceiling and listening to the sound of the sea all helped to boost their learning. The positive reorganisation of classes into specialist groups for pupils with more complex needs ensures there are no discernible differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Many pupils can explain how they keep fit and healthy. Mealtimes have a good family atmosphere and ensure pupils develop very good routines and manners. Many pupils contribute well to conversations, either independently or with communication aids. Relationships are excellent. Attendance is good due to well-monitored systems that track absence for medical and other reasons associated with pupils' needs. Pupils and their parents and carers agree the school is a very safe environment and pupils feel secure when they go into the community for activities such as shopping. Most pupils' self-control and management of their own behaviour are excellent. There have been no exclusions during the past five years.

Pupils' involvement in the school community is good although they do not have a school council. Experiences outside school are more limited. Pupils often take the register to the office or help each other during lunchtime games. Pupils' enthusiastic singing raised the roof in assembly as they chose songs they love to sing for celebration and worship. Most pupils develop a keen sense of right and wrong which can be seen in their facial expressions when a misdemeanour occurs. Staff provide excellent role models and help

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pupils to experience strong values and beliefs. Pupils care for each other; at lunch and break times they learn to take turns and play fairly. Good artwork, stimulating displays and pupils' records of achievement files reflect their curiosity about the wider world and its cultural diversity, for example through their work on Buddhism and the Chinese New Year.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching capitalises on the work of the highly skilled teaching assistants. For example, in the outstanding lessons, their total involvement ensured the needs of every pupil were closely monitored and challenged. Small, but nevertheless significant, leaps in progress brought a flurry of recording in the class assessment book and photographs to highlight the actual point when progress was consolidated for that pupil. The excellent use of objects of reference, such as a fireman's hat in a mathematics song and constant

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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signing and PECs, helps to promote good progress for all pupils. Some staff however do not use communication aids to best advantage and miss opportunities, for example to use visual clues to encourage positive behaviour from autistic pupils. Pupils are managed without fuss and routines are very well established.

The curriculum is well planned to match pupils' needs and interests. Recent changes have resulted in a good topic-based approach which makes meaningful links between subjects and aspects such as problem-solving and information and communication technology. These approaches strengthen pupils' independence and confidence. Teachers work hard to embed the new approach and share them with parents through the home-link books. Curriculum enrichment is varied and includes activities such as theatre trips and visits to a football academy. Take-up for these activities is good and pupils explore new skills with enthusiasm.

'My child is so loved and cared for in this school it is like one big family.' This and similar comments from several parents underline the outstanding care, guidance and support offered by the school. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of school policies and practice. The excellent and well-targeted involvement of therapists and the new health support worker provide a seamless network of support for pupils and their families. The parent support group is highly effective and parents feel there is always somebody willing to discuss their concerns.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership is very responsive to the analysis of pupils' needs and has an outstanding practical commitment to ensuring that all groups of pupils do equally well. The senior leadership team leads by example, so all staff are ambitious for pupils to achieve their potential. Middle leaders work effectively to make links across all subjects and topics in the curriculum. The school has been diligent in seeking and establishing close links with one local secondary school to support pupils when they move on. School leaders' effective outreach work across the local authority provides training for special and mainstream schools in the use of assessment levels to track pupils' progress. This was an area raised by the previous inspection which is now well established. Improved data and tracking of all pupils has led the school to seek ways to make better use of data to answer searching questions about pupils' progress. A nationally accepted programme is being trialled, but this is at an early stage implementation.

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Safeguarding is rigorous; procedures are exceptionally well established with all staff, governors and visitors to the school. The school development plan is crisp and clear, setting realistic and challenging targets. Governors meet the statutory requirements of their role but until recently have lacked a corporate approach to strategic leadership of the school. This has led to a hiatus in governors' support for the school. The situation has been rectified through training provided by the local authority and the reorganisation of governors' roles. Governors are now clearer about their role and are realising plans for greater involvement in school self-evaluation and development planning.

An excellent partnership with health and social services involves all external agencies in contributing to pupils' individual education plans. The school is taking appropriate steps to promote community cohesion but the plan to monitor, evaluate and fill any gaps is incomplete.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Early Years Foundation Stage children benefit from good teaching which enables them to make good progress. Leadership and management are good but there is no policy document to celebrate and share the successes of the Early Years Foundation Stage and formally identify next steps of the department's development.

Teaching creates and maintains a good pace to keep learning bubbling and children thriving. However, on some occasions, teaching assistants do not play a sufficiently active part in children's learning. Lunchtime activities extend learning well and give good

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opportunities for children's physical development, for example by having a rest from their wheelchairs by rolling and stretching on a blanket on the grass. Lively leadership and management ensure all staff are involved in assessment, planning and completion of the home-school link books that are used well by many parents.

In one session, the daily welcome song provided good opportunities for developing language and children's enjoyment. It enabled children to say the names of their friends, the days of the week and to recall the visual timetable. Adults' excitement as pupils recalled and progressed was infectious and led to further improvement. Physical development is particularly strong. Effective collaboration between teachers, teaching assistants and physiotherapists brings good results. Inspiring aspects of the curriculum, such as swimming and horse riding, consolidate positive learning. As many parents mentioned, 'Home visits create a good relationship with parents from the word go!'

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The school received 29 responses to the Ofsted parent/carers questionnaire. Replies were overwhelmingly positive about the school's work and the pupils' progress. Concerns of a very small minority of parents/carers about communication were investigated. Inspectors' evidence showed these are individual issues for parents to clarify with the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shenstone School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	90	3	10	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	83	4	14	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	73	5	17	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	66	9	31	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	69	8	28	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	59	8	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	79	5	17	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	52	10	34	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	72	4	14	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	83	4	14	1	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shenstone School, 94 Old Road, Crayford, Kent DA1 4DZ

We would like to thank you for the welcome you gave us to your school last week when we saw you all hard at work. We agree with you and your parents that Shenstone is a good school that helps you make good, and for some of you outstanding, progress. We especially enjoyed the singing at assembly time, when those of you in class 5 and 6 nearly raised the roof of the school with your lovely voices.

Your head teacher and all the staff help to make Shenstone a lovely place to be; the spotlessly clean school really sparkles! The many photographs and displays around the school show how many exciting activities you take part in. You all behave well and enjoy learning.

We know that you will continue to work hard but before we left the school we asked your teachers and governors to improve the following points:

- To make sure the governors work more closely with the school and that they take a more active part in planning the school's future.
- To plan more ways to involve you, your parents and the governors in the local community and to make links with other communities and cultures in Britain and around the world.

Our best wishes for the future ☐ especially those of you who are going to a new school in September.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Kauffman

Lead inspector

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