

Sherdley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104769
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	336361
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dave Aspinall
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Carter
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, curriculum plans, the school's tracking data showing pupils' progress, pupils' exercise books and the displays around the school. Inspectors also scrutinised responses on 142 questionnaires returned from parents and carers, 23 questionnaires from staff and 134 questionnaires from pupils.

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

- the progress all pupils make from their starting points to the end of Year 6
- the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, more-able pupils and pupils eligible for free school meals
- the quality of the curriculum and how well it meets the needs of all pupils
- staff's expectations of pupils' progress and achievement
- how well the school knows itself and the rigour of its self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is a large primary school situated in the town of Sutton, in the borough of St Helens. The majority of pupils live locally. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small percentage of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are at the very early stages of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average; none has a statement of special educational needs.

The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award. It provides a breakfast club, after-school care and holiday club. These are not managed by the governing body and a separate inspection report for them is available on the Ofsted website. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in a part-time Nursery and two separate Reception classes. The headteacher works for the local authority on a consultancy basis. During the 2009 autumn term 20 days were allocated to this. The deputy headteacher steps up to become the acting headteacher in the headteacher's absence.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The leadership and management team at Sherdley has not secured the improvements the school was asked to make at the time of the last inspection, which were to raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science. In 2009 the standards attained at the end of Year 6, although in line with the national average, had not risen since the last inspection. A large proportion of pupils make inadequate progress from their starting points. There are huge inconsistencies between the achievement of pupils in different classes in the same year group. The school recognises that if these pupils are to attain national expectations by the end of Year 6, they will have to make exceptional progress. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' overall attainment has fallen to below the national average and shows pupils have made inadequate progress from their average to above-average starting points.

Inspectors observed lessons in different subjects of the curriculum. These ranged in quality from outstanding to inadequate. The majority were satisfactory. Parents and carers appreciate the approachability of staff and some wrote very positive comments about individuals. However, the assessment of pupils' progress is not always accurate and some teachers are too frequently absent from the classroom to ensure outcomes for the pupils' are good or better. Pupils told inspectors that they would like to see more of their 'real teacher' and this was evident during the inspection. Over time, disruption in staffing has led to inconsistency in expectations and poor learning habits for some pupils. The quality of teaching, overall, is inadequate because it is failing to secure good enough achievement for all pupils.

Pupils know how to keep fit and healthy and they experience a good range of physical activities. The school provides a good level of pastoral care. The procedures to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of pupils meet statutory requirements. Most pupils report that they feel safe in school.

Governors are supportive of the school. However, they are overly reliant on the quality of information provided to them by the school's leadership team and the local authority's School Improvement Partner. This information is not always accurate and therefore does not enable them to challenge the school effectively to secure better outcomes for pupils. Because the senior leadership team does not evaluate the impact of the school's work

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carefully enough, it is failing to promote equality of opportunity for all. Despite some recent action taken by the leadership team to remedy areas of weakness, such as the improvement to the tracking of individual pupils' progress and the introduction of 'The big write', (an initiative to boost pupils' writing skills) self-evaluation lacks rigour and is wide of the mark in its conclusions. The leaders and managers are ineffective in securing improvement. Agreed policies are not adhered to consistently or monitored effectively and some staff are unaware of the school's priorities. Currently, the leaders are not demonstrating the capacity to drive sustained improvement to secure better outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the school is not providing value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - inadequate teaching is eradicated
 - the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate
 - the curriculum fully matches the needs and abilities of all pupils
 - teachers spend sufficient time teaching to make an impact on pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders make good use of the data available to set the school's priorities for improvement and to check the effectiveness of their actions against the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - communicating the school's priorities effectively to all staff
 - ensuring that agreed policies and actions are adhered to consistently
 - evaluating the impact of teachers' management time against the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - ensuring that the governing body receives information which accurately reflects the school's progress against the key priorities for improvement.
- Improve equality of opportunity for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their time in school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Pupils start in Nursery and Reception with levels of knowledge, skills and abilities that are typical of, or above, those of children of their age. During their seven years at school, a large proportion of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Although most reach average standards by the end of Year 6, they do not achieve their potential in English, mathematics and science. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is poor.

Pupils start Year 1 with skills and abilities that are above those expected for their age. However, by the end of Year 2 standards in reading and mathematics are below the

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national average. Standards in writing are in line with those expected nationally, but are below the capabilities of more-able pupils. Overall, pupils do not make the progress they should. The attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals is particularly low. It is not only below that of their peers at Sherdley, but well below national standards for this group of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are confident to express their views and make friends easily. During the inspection, pupils demonstrated a good spiritual awareness through the respectful way they honoured Remembrance Day. Pupils' moral, social and cultural understanding is satisfactory. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong but on occasion they show a lack of consideration towards each other. For example, pupils in a small group did not listen to the person who was speaking and some called out in lessons. Some pupils report that behaviour in and around the school is poor. During the inspection pupils' behaviour was satisfactory, other than where lessons were judged to be inadequate. Where lessons were interesting, pupils were responsive and made good progress. However, some pupils report that they often find work 'boring' and would like 'more stuff to keep us interested'. Some pupils say they are not provided with enough challenge. This was evident during the inspection.

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and the majority say they enjoy school. They make a satisfactory contribution to the school and local community and actively raise money for charities. However, opportunities are missed for pupils to take responsibility. For example, during lunchtime older pupils watched as younger children struggled with their knives, forks and plates, yet they did not offer to help. The school council and eco council are active and the pupils involved enjoy this aspect and are good ambassadors for the school.

The pupils interviewed say they feel safe at school; however, a small number of questionnaires returned by pupils indicated that they have concerns about their safety, particularly with regard to bullying. Most pupils say they know who they can talk to if they have concerns, but not all are convinced that their concerns are dealt with fairly and consistently by all staff.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4

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

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The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Inspectors observed a range of lessons across the subjects of the curriculum. Most were satisfactory, a very small proportion was outstanding, a minority was good and a similar proportion inadequate. Where teaching was good or better, teachers gave pupils a clear picture of what they should achieve during the lesson and their expectations were high. Teachers planned activities carefully to ensure that the tasks included good opportunities for assessment. For example, in a good Year 4 literacy lesson on adverbs, the teacher set a couple of potentially confusing examples to check how well pupils understood the concept. Relationships between pupils and staff are generally good, but where teaching was weak, they sometimes broke down and pupils became inattentive. In inadequate lessons work was at the wrong level for pupils' abilities, time was wasted, pupils did not know what they were supposed to do and the teacher's expectations for pupils' achievement were too low. Some teachers spend a large proportion of their day not teaching, particularly when the headteacher is absent. This weakens the impact of their teaching on the outcomes achieved by pupils.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and French and Spanish are provided in Key Stage 2. An appropriate time is allocated to teaching the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the curriculum is not always well matched to pupils' abilities. There is an over-reliance on text books and work sheets. Work is not always set to challenge those of higher ability and few examples of open-ended questions and problem-solving activities were found in pupils' books. The curriculum includes interesting work in history, which focuses on pupils' local heritage and art is used well to further pupils' understanding. The school provides a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities. It has started recently to monitor pupils' attendance at arts-based activities, but does not know whether its most vulnerable pupils have the same opportunities as their peers. Year 6 pupils are provided with a holiday activity, 'Challenge through choice', which is well attended.

The school provides a good level of pastoral care. Parents and carers report that their children are happy in school and individual support for families is good. The provision for

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pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well led and managed. This is leading to higher expectations from all staff and a better partnership with other agencies that support children's well-being. But it is too early to see the impact on pupils' outcomes because of the legacy of underachievement. The guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Pupils appreciate 'golden time' as a reward for their achievement, but they say it is not always fairly allocated. They perceive a difference between pupils who are good all the time and those who are quite often naughty, then suddenly good, being well rewarded. Some staff, and parents and carers, also commented that rewards are not always given, weakening the behaviour policy.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leadership team have failed to secure improvement since the last inspection. This is mainly because the systems to monitor how well the school is doing are not rigorous enough and self-evaluation is inadequate. The senior leadership team, until very recently, held too rosy a picture of how well the school is performing, despite national performance data for the past two years indicating otherwise. Because the system to track pupils' progress did not indicate pupils' potential until very recently, there is a considerable legacy of underachievement, particularly among pupils of the highest and lowest ability.

The management of teaching and learning is inadequate. Although teachers have frequent management time and frequently attend training courses, this has not had a positive impact on the outcomes achieved by pupils. Agreed policies are not carried out consistently, nor are senior leaders clear where the best practice exists. This is because they do not monitor the quality of pupils' work or the quality of teaching regularly enough or with sufficient rigour. Teachers are not provided with accurate guidance about how to improve their teaching and they have not been held to account for the progress of pupils in their care. Some recent initiatives, such as 'The big write', have led to small improvements in English and there is some good practice from which staff can learn. However, practice is inconsistent between classes.

Parents and carers are generally supportive of the school and relationships are satisfactory. Family learning sessions are exceptionally well attended and governors report that the majority of parents and carers want their children to do well at school. However, some parents and carers, and staff, point to inconsistencies in management

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systems, which lead to pupils not achieving as well as they should. The promotion of community cohesion is inadequate. The school does not yet analyse the needs of its own community effectively enough, neither does it plan for opportunities in the curriculum to promote community cohesion or evaluate this aspect of its work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The school's records show that children start in Nursery with levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that are broadly typical or above that of children of their age. They settle quickly and most appear happy and confident to use all the space for learning available to them, including a large outdoor area. Most of the pupils in Reception transfer from the school's Nursery, which means that they are already familiar with day-to-day routines and are ready to become confident learners. The school's records show that most children leave Reception having achieved the early learning goals for their age. However, the senior leadership team is aware that some of the assessments may be inaccurate, so it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty exactly how much progress children have made during their time in Nursery and Reception.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children have experiences in all the areas of learning and the classrooms are well resourced. During the inspection, children played happily alongside one another and knew what they were expected to achieve. Planning is of a satisfactory quality, but does not consistently ensure that children build on what they have already learned. Staff have good relationships with children and the level of care, welfare and support provided is satisfactory. Parents and carers are appreciative of the approachability of staff and say their children are happy at school.

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The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Recent changes to staffing mean that some management systems are in the early stages of development. For example, not all staff know how to use the Foundation Stage profile to best effect.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are generally supportive of the school. From the 142 questionnaires received, over a quarter had additional written comments. Included in the written comments which were positive, strengths included the approachability of teachers, the care and support from the school in times of stress, the happiness of their children and the wide range of after-school clubs. Among the written responses which were negative, typical concerns included the consistency in dealing with poor behaviour, the lack of communication about children's progress and the lack of challenge for more-able pupils. Where inspectors agree with the views of parents and carers, this can be found in the main body of the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sherdley Primary 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 142 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 457 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	82	58	48	34	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	54	61	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	65	46	65	46	8	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	50	59	42	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	67	47	64	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	39	70	49	7	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	36	82	58	2	1	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)	49	35	65	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	40	72	51	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	29	73	51	15	11	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	30	71	50	12	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	37	69	49	11	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	48	64	45	3	2	1	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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 pupils' 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.



14 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sherdley Primary School, St Helens, WA9 4HA

You may recall that I visited your school recently with three other inspectors to carry out an inspection. Thank you for sharing your views with us. We listened carefully to what you said. This letter is to tell you what we found.

Before we arrived at your school we were concerned that some of you appeared not to be achieving as well as you should. We looked at your work, spoke to some of you, watched your lessons and discussed your results with your headteacher. We judged that you are not getting a good enough quality of education. Because of this we have placed your school in special measures. This means that an inspector will visit each term to check on your school's progress. So that your school improves as quickly as possible, we have asked the staff to do the following things.

- Improve your progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Make sure that the managers know how well you are doing and what you are feeling so that they make good plans to improve the school.
- Make sure that all of you are given an equal opportunity to achieve your very best.

We were impressed by some of your work. We noticed your lovely art displayed in the halls, we saw that you are keen to keep fit and healthy and we found you very friendly and polite. We also appreciated the respect you showed on Remembrance Day. I hope that you will all try your hardest in all your lessons and I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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