

Shobdon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116734
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338881
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Rob Isaac

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve MacDonald
Headteacher	Mrs Victoria Hancock
Date of previous school inspection	3 January 2007
School address	Shobdon Leominster HR6 9LX
Telephone number	01568 708386
Fax number	01568 709139
Email address	admin@shobdon.hereford.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 10 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at: pupils' books, teachers' planning, the school development plan, monitoring and evaluation records, a range of policies and administrative records, reports from the local authority, analyses of attainment in end-of-key-stage assessments, assessment records, and questionnaire returns from 19 pupils, 30 parents and 9 staff.

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

- pupils' achievement in English and mathematics
- the level of challenge in mixed-age classes
- the quality of assessment
- the quality of monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievements.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average - compared with others of its type - and serves a rural community in and around the village of Shobdon, close to the Welsh border in the north-west of Herefordshire. Virtually all pupils are from White British backgrounds, although a few have minority ethnic backgrounds which include those of a traveller heritage. There are 22% of pupils currently eligible for free school meals, although the proportion has been higher in previous years. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but there are no statements of special educational needs.

The school is accredited to the Herefordshire Healthy Schools Standard and has been awarded the Activemark, the Artsmark, the Football Association's Charter Standard and the Green Flag as an eco-school. It also belongs to the local authority's Values Initiative and the Minster School Sports Partnership. The numbers on roll have fallen a little in the last few years. The school's mission statement is 'We value education; we value each other'.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Shobdon Primary is an outstandingly effective school. Its pupils are at the heart of everything it does. They are cared for, guided and supported excellently in a nurturing environment which helps them to thrive. Safeguarding procedures are excellent. Most pupils, parents and carers are rightly proud of their school. Pupils whose circumstances render them vulnerable state unequivocally that adults are always there for them. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Pupils say instances of rough behaviour or bullying are virtually unknown and are dealt with quickly and fairly. Although most pupils attend school regularly, overall averages are no more than satisfactory because of the erratic attendance patterns of a small minority. Pupils' understanding of keeping safe is very good, as is their knowledge of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in the extensive range of sporting activities available, recognising the importance of regular exercise.

Pupils love their school and enjoy the excellent provision made by the headteacher and her colleagues. They receive a warm welcome to the Reception class and quickly become happy and eager to learn. Throughout the school, both staff and pupils are enthusiastic about learning and when this combines with at least good and occasionally outstanding teaching it engenders excellent learning and progress. Relationships are excellent and pupils spontaneously help each other with their work.

Many pupils join the school with attainment below what is typical nationally yet by the end of Year 6, their performance is at least above average and often higher in English, mathematics, science and information and communications technology (ICT).

Attainment in reading is above average and in writing, it is sometimes exceptional.

Teachers consistently use assessment information to help plan the next steps in learning. Marking provides pupils with good advice on how to improve their work. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstandingly good progress because of carefully tailored support.

Good self-evaluation procedures and inspired leadership ensure that the school is clearly aware of its strengths and priorities for development. Governors also provide good support. The staff use the school improvement plan well to identify the right priorities and this leads to a rigorous and effective programme of actions aimed at further improvement. The school has done much to promote its excellent community cohesion and different faiths and cultures are considered fully, although the school recognises even more is possible given the context in which it operates.

The school has made significant progress since its last inspection. New staff have been appointed who make strong contributions to teaching and support. Continuing

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

professional development is very good and does much to inform teaching and learning. Assessment strategies have improved and progress is excellent. The curriculum has been enhanced with highly effective use of ICT resources. The further development of education for emotional well-being has helped pupils' moral understanding. The school's capacity for improvement is, therefore, outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise average attendance to at least 95% by:
 - promoting the value of good attendance within the wider community
 - encouraging more parents to take their children on family holidays outside term time
 - broadening the range of rewards offered to pupils for good attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has fluctuated over the last three years, although the small numbers in each year group render assessment data statistically unreliable. As a result of strategies such as grouping pupils by ability and age and a focus on the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy, pupils' attainment in these aspect of literacy is rising rapidly. Boys' attainment is in line with that of girls. Pupils' current work shows that most are working at levels at least above and often much higher than the national average. Learning and progress throughout the school are outstanding. In reading and writing, progress is very good and more-able pupils are challenged well. Their poetry about the tortured feelings of Macbeth over Banquo's murder is lively, melodramatic and perceptive. Some of this writing shows an excellent empathy with the character's feelings. In mathematics and science also, pupils are challenged suitably and when they study mini-beasts on the visualiser, their scientific curiosity is aroused and their learning is greatly enhanced. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well, resulting in their exceptional learning and progress.

The vast majority achieve exceptionally, and enjoy their learning. Pupils are highly motivated and keen learners. They say that 'we learn lots' and all who completed questionnaires, both pupils and parents, agreed that learners enjoy coming to school very much. Pupils report that the school 'teaches us to enjoy the world'. In conversation, they are happy, confident and sensible. The attendance of a few pupils was erratic last year and this contributed to levels which were no more than broadly average in the context of this small school. Pupils value their school greatly and relish the chance to take on responsibilities - such as school council members or eco-councillors. All pupils spoken to and the analyses of the questionnaire returns show that they take a very active part in decision-making. They are very keen to improve their environment and told inspectors how they work hard to keep it free from litter.

Pupils are respectful and kind and their spiritual, moral and social development is

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

excellent. Cultural development is marginally less strong, but pupils have a good and developing awareness of different faiths and cultures. Their understanding has improved since the last inspection but there is scope for further development. Throughout the school, there is a sense of enjoyment and interest in learning about the world. Pupils show greatly enhanced skills in literacy, numeracy, scientific enquiry and ICT, and these coupled with their strong problem-solving skills ensure that they are prepared well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

During the inspection, the teaching was at least good and often better. Several of the lessons observed had outstanding features, for example, the highly effective use of the interactive whiteboard and a visualiser and very positive participation of pupils in all aspects of learning. Probing questioning in all lessons drew out key points in learning as staff checked pupils' knowledge carefully as well as their understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and what to do to succeed through a precise sharing of learning objectives. Lessons are supported

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

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

very effectively by skilled, caring and proactive teaching assistants. These partnerships in learning between teachers, assistants and pupils ensure that tasks are matched closely to learners' abilities and interests.

In all lessons, teachers and assistants use praise effectively to encourage pupils to feel confident when answering questions, building up their self-esteem and encouraging their excellent behaviour.

Information about what pupils know already is used carefully by teachers to plan the next steps of learning. Observations of lessons and the analysis of pupils' work show that assessment information is used effectively so that teachers are specific in their planning about the learning expected for the range of ability within the class. New strategies for assessment have been introduced and are being used more and more by teachers and pupils, but have not yet been fully evaluated. In some writing lessons, the activities planned are very relevant for the more-able pupils as well as for those who experience learning difficulties. There are also examples of very informative marking and feedback to pupils about the quality of their writing, with comments clearly outlining how to improve. Pupils also involve themselves regularly in assessing their own achievements as well as the progress of their peers.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and fully meets the needs of all pupils. It is especially well adapted to meet the needs of the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils comment that the things they learn about are very interesting and 'each day is different'. Extra-curricular activities are very varied, and the excellent links with other local schools and organizations means an extensive range of sporting, artistic, scientific, religious and computer-based activities are available. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these opportunities and the take-up rate is very good. They comment that 'you can take part in everything' and 'girls get to play football'. The curriculum helps them to gain a very good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and lifestyle; they recognise that school lunches are nutritious and 'exotic'.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils needing additional help or who are in vulnerable circumstances are supported exceptionally well and benefit from a wide range of effective strategies to meet their specific needs. Withdrawal groups are particularly effective in supporting pupils of different ages or who have emotional or social difficulties. Strong links with outside agencies ensure the school offers appropriate support at the right time. School councillors state that 'We do what it says on the sign; we value the school and we value each other'. Pupils' representatives attended a regional 'values conference' during the inspection. They reported that it was 'brilliant' in helping them to learn group-skills and to cooperate with many pupils from 50 other schools. This occasion also helped them to understand better the theme of 'difference and diversity'. They returned to school saying that 'difference makes no difference'. The school's circle-time discussions and other lessons and assemblies are often crucial in supporting pupils' emotional well-being and their relationships education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	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?

The relentless determination of senior managers to drive the school forward demonstrate that it has an outstanding capacity to improve further. The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school should develop and this is shared by staff at all levels of responsibility and experience, pupils, governors and parents. Morale is high as confirmed by the overwhelmingly positive responses from the questionnaires. Pupils and staff praise the school and commented on the 'approachable teachers', 'inspired team spirit', a great 'love of learning' and of 'feeling highly valued'. Many pupils and parents commented positively on the care, commitment, dynamism and drive of the school's leadership. Staff wrote that: 'The school goes from strength to strength.'

Monitoring and evaluation, including tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of targets, are rigorous. Consequently, the leadership has embedded a culture of striving for improvement. Parents and carers are closely involved in their children's learning through homework and the school's up-to-date and very attractive website. Governors and teachers ensure a strong partnership with parents. Equality of opportunity is promoted outstandingly well, and the staff work hard to foster the progress, both personal and academic, of each individual pupil in their care.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is exceptional at local and regional level. The excellent partnership with other schools, both locally and in other countries, results in pupils' increased understanding of how schools and communities differ from each other. Governors are involved in monitoring the school and provide it with good support. They, alongside the teachers, fulfil their statutory duty to promote safeguarding outstandingly well.

Leaders monitor spending carefully to benefit all pupils and the outstanding outcomes indicate that the school provides excellent value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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	
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's development when they start in Reception is generally below that expected for four-year-olds nationally. In the last few years, these children have not benefited from a Nursery education, prior to Reception, and are still catching up on their personal and social development. A new privately managed Preschool has recently been started and is establishing itself well. Induction and assessment strategies are excellent and although at the time of the inspection children had only been in school for a few weeks, they were all happy, settled and eager to learn. Children thrive and make good progress, not only because of high-quality care, but also because of excellent teaching. All staff regularly make notes about what children achieve during each session, and the information is used productively to determine what should happen next. This ensures that learning is continuous and planning meets the children's needs and interests. As a result, by the time they start Year 1 children are working at levels often a little above those expected of five-year-olds.

There is an appropriate balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children. Children know that good behaviour is important. They follow routines and respond well to instructions. This was observed when they tidied away their numeracy games, paint aprons and swept up the sand. Teachers and support staff show excellent team-work as a result of first-class leadership and management. The class teachers have a close understanding of strengths and development areas and have provided essential guidance in the development of the beautiful outdoor classroom. Teaching assistants often provide children in small groups with at least good teaching and this underpins a suitably specialised curriculum.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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

Views of parents and carers

All parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the school's work and the efforts of the staff. They were especially pleased with the safeguarding arrangements, the quality of leadership and teaching and the progress their children make.

Comments included satisfaction with children's progress such as: 'From his first day, my son has embraced the school as a friendly and supportive community. Every day is a delight to him.' 'The leadership and management are exemplary.' 'Teaching is excellent.' 'The school is an amazing educator ... providing a good, all-round education.' 'Staff are very professional and helpful.

Of the 30 responses were received, a very small minority were negative about being informed of the progress their children make. Inspection evidence did not endorse this criticism, but fully supported the positive views expressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shobdon 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 49 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	84	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	84	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	61	9	29	3	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	61	9	29	3	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	61	11	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	61	10	32	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	71	9	29	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	55	11	35	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	71	7	23	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	55	12	39	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	55	12	39	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	74	7	23	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	50	23	50	0	0	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 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.



7 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shobdon Primary School HR6 9LX

Thank you for the way you made us feel welcome when we visited you at your school. Shobdon Primary is an outstanding school where you greatly enjoy learning and your parents are very pleased you are able to go there. Here are some of the highlights we found:

You work hard and make excellent progress in lessons. Well done! You behave well, know how to take care of yourselves, eat healthily and do lots of exercise.

Your teachers teach you very well and plan lots of interesting things for you to do and provide you with many different experiences.

Your school is excellently led. You look after your environment very well and your headteacher has introduced many good ideas to make the school better. She is helped by the other teachers and the governors, who are all work very well as a team.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined to make your school even better. We have asked that they:

- help the small minority of pupils who do not attend school regularly to do so.

It was a real pleasure to meet and talk with you and I thank you very much for your kindness and your contribution to the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Rob Isaac

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.