

Minster in Sheppey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118344
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339198
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	552
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Ingleton
Headteacher	Debbie Wheeler
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, involving 21 teachers, and attended two assemblies. Meetings were held with representative governors, the acting headteacher, representative staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, 120 questionnaires from parents and carers were received and analysed along with questionnaires from 108 pupils and 47 staff.

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

- how well pupils make progress, particularly boys and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of action taken to improve pupils' attendance how well leaders identify weaknesses and bring about improvement, and have prepared for the school's change in status.

Information about the school

The pupils in this large primary school are mainly from White British backgrounds, but a range of other heritages are represented in small numbers. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. A third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is a higher proportion than in most schools. These mostly relate to speech, language and communication, behavioural, emotional and social needs or autistic spectrum disorders.

As part of the reorganisation of schools in Sheppey, the school changed to a full two-form entry primary school in 2008 from a three-form entry first school taking pupils up to Year 4. This is the first year the school has pupils through to Year 6. Due to recruitment difficulties, the school has not had a substantive headteacher for over three years, being led by two acting headteachers. The current acting headteacher took over in November 2009 and has recently been appointed as the substantive headteacher. The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing and is currently undergoing significant staff reduction in line with its new status which requires fewer classes. The school shares its site with a children's centre which is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

During this academic year, the school has been involved in an Ensuring Success programme with local authority consultants designed to raise pupils' attainment. It holds Healthy School status, Activemark and Eco School awards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Minster in Sheppey Primary School is a friendly place where pupils enjoy their education. The headteacher has built well on the strengths evident when she took over the school so that, although the overall quality of education is satisfactory rather than good, improvements have been made since the school was last inspected. A good start has been made in extending provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Successful recent initiatives have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Together with the governing body, the headteacher has secured a clear view for the school's future and is driving improvement in a way which staff describe as 'simple and effective'. Consequently, staff know exactly what they have to do to improve practice further and morale is high. Staff are facing the challenges of the final stages of restructuring as a cohesive team because they feel involved and supported in their professional development. School self-evaluation is accurate and well informed. This, together with the improvements made this year in pupils' progress, demonstrate the school's good capacity for further development.

Children make a good start in Reception. Attainment through the school is broadly average and pupils' achievement over time is satisfactory, giving them a sound basis for secondary education and their future economic well-being. Because of the improvements made to the teaching of writing, pupils have more opportunities to write at greater length, and an increasing proportion of pupils are now making good progress. However, staff realise that more remains to be done to raise attainment in writing further as it is still below the national average. The school's monitoring data track significant improvement in teaching this year, but the good practice evident in the large majority of lessons is not yet consistent in all lessons. For example, in a few lessons the pace is too slow, and sometimes teachers are too quick to accept one word answers from pupils rather than having them explain their thinking in more detail. Teachers generally use the information available from their assessments of individual progress to plan work which is well matched to pupils' targets. Occasionally, though, the activities for each group are not sufficiently focused on the intended learning outcome. Marking is frequent and detailed but does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work, and often pupils are not given time to respond. Pupils' enjoyment of school was shown in their enthusiasm for the activities relating to Green Britain Day during the inspection, when they dressed in green and much learning was based around the protection of the environment. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to support their learning in other subjects because of a shortage of computers around the school. Good plans are in place to secure a phased improvement of equipment.

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□ Pupils know how to keep safe, fit and healthy, and this is recognised in a range of national awards. They feel safe in school, appreciating it is a secure site; parents confirm this in the Ofsted questionnaire. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, commenting that behaviour has improved well this year. The school guides and supports pupils well. Attendance rates fell rapidly after the last inspection. The school now takes a hard line in refusing holidays during term time and school staff have worked effectively to reduce absence this year. Attendance, while still low, is now much closer to the national average than a year ago. However, it is reduced by the persistent absence of pupils from a few families who are not yet engaging with the school's expectations to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching so that pupils' rates of progress continue to accelerate by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to write at length
 - increasing the pace of those lessons where learning is too slow
 - making sure that pupils are required to explain their answers in greater detail
 - implementing the plan to give pupils more opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills in different subjects.
- Extend the good practice in assessment to all classes by:
 - using teachers' understanding of pupils' targets to plan work which is closely matched to the needs of all groups in the class
 - making sure that pupils have more opportunities to follow up the points made for improvement.
- Improve the attendance of those pupils who do not attend regularly by:
 - involving external agencies more to ensure that appropriate steps are taken.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Because this is the first year the school has had a Year 6 cohort, there is no national comparative data for pupils' attainment as they leave the school. Attainment seen in lessons and in pupils' books is broadly average, and their work shows that they have improved the quality of their work well through this year, particularly in writing. A range of work to consolidate and apply their numeracy skills means that they make satisfactory progress in mathematics. Pupils find their work interesting and apply themselves well in lessons. Because of staffing difficulties, there has been variation over time and from class to class so that pupils' learning and progress remain satisfactory overall. The downward trend in performance in the Year 2 assessments following the last inspection has been reversed and attainment in Key Stage 1 is now average, representing good achievement from pupils' below average start in Year 1. Last year there were differences in the performance of boys and girls in Year 2, but the action

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taken has addressed this situation and there is no significant difference in their progress overall. Changes made to the programmes to support pupils who have fallen behind have proved successful, and the progress of those pupils involved has accelerated. Because of recent work to ensure that assessments of pupils' levels are more accurate, teachers generally plan work which matches the needs of all pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make steady progress.

□ Pupils' response to the inspection questionnaire shows a significant improvement in their attitudes to school since a survey carried out by the school in November 2009. For example, they indicate that behaviour is better. Relationships are strong. Pupils say that there are hardly any incidents of bullying, but that sometimes there are arguments. They appreciate that adults help them well to sort out any problems they may have. Pupils respond well to the school's positive approach to achievement as shown in their enthusiasm for the success of others in the weekly awards for the star pupil in each class. Pupils also commented that they are pleased that the school recognises their achievements out of school. They participate in a number of activities which make a good contribution to the school community, for example the school council influenced the design of new play equipment and Year 6 pupils run a Fizzy Wizzy club for younger pupils. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community are more limited, and usually related to fund raising or preparing special events for parents and carers. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of their roles as citizens and their place within a global society, such as when learning about cultural differences in a lesson where they used their persuasive writing skills to formulate arguments about the benefits and problems associated with tourism in Kenya. Links to develop pupils' understanding of communities and cultures in different areas in Britain are more limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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 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
	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The work undertaken over the last year to improve teaching has had a positive impact. Teaching is now good, helping pupils to enjoy learning because teachers make lessons interesting. Teachers plan tasks which are linked effectively to the whole-class learning objective and presented to pupils in a way which they understand. Teachers manage pupils well so that they remain engaged, though occasionally the pace is too slow. Where possible, teachers make links between subjects and pupils particularly enjoy the themes related to history, which provide opportunities for school visits and role play. Themed weeks give pupils effective opportunities to learn about other cultures. There is a good range of enrichment activities catering for a range of interests, with pupils taking particular pride in music events and success in cross-country running and swimming competitions.

Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, helping groups of all abilities but most often supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they make satisfactory progress against their targets. While much has been done to improve teachers' use of assessment data this year, more remains to be done to ensure that new systems and the school's policy are implemented consistently by all teachers. Teachers have developed their expertise in assessing the quality of pupils' work accurately so that the tracking system is becoming more useful as assessment becomes more reliable. Good systems have been introduced during the year to help teachers to identify pupils' targets and next steps in learning, and this is having a positive impact on their progress. However, the improved practices are not yet fully embedded. For example, pupils are not routinely required to respond to the improvement points made in teachers' marking in all classes, and some activities are not related closely enough to the targets for individuals or groups within the class. The impact of specific support programmes to help pupils who are not making the expected progress is now being evaluated. Early evaluations indicate that most programmes are having a positive impact in accelerating pupils' progress.

Staff take good care of pupils, including at the breakfast club which gives pupils a good start to the day. Child protection arrangements are thorough and effective, and staff have up-to-date training. Health and safety arrangements are well considered. The school is watchful of pupils who might be vulnerable, whatever the reason. Staff involve external agencies well to provide additional expertise not available in the school to complement the well-considered range of in-school activities, such as a lunchtime club to support pupils who do not feel able to join in playground games.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has used her experience and skills very effectively so that a great deal has been achieved in a short time and during a difficult period when the school roll is being reduced in line with its new designation. The school's strengths and weaknesses have been evaluated accurately and used to create a well-structured improvement plan with the correct priorities so that no time has been lost in bringing about improvement in pupils' attainment and progress. A stronger focus has been brought to strategic leadership and staff have confidence in the headteacher's approach because they see that improvements, particularly in pupils' progress, are being made. Staff have used the support provided by local authority consultants well to develop their own views about how they should develop teaching and the curriculum. The school has made a smooth transition into its current status, for example in developing an appropriate range of leadership responsibilities for older pupils.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Now that the longer-term leadership of the school has been secured, governors are working towards strengthening their approach to governance. They meet more regularly to ensure that all governors have a better understanding of the issues facing the school. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily, and with more reliable performance data, staff are picking up any potential underachievement sooner so that appropriate arrangements are put in place to address individual difficulties. The school seeks parents' and carers' views through surveys, and acts promptly on the issues raised. The re-formed parent teacher association provides another forum for parents and carers to share their views. Arrangements to safeguard pupils exceed minimum requirements and adults are vigilant in monitoring provision for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school has a good understanding of its own context, particularly the wide socio-economic mix, and makes appropriate provision to ensure that all groups have access to a full range of opportunities. The school works as a warm and cohesive community. Leaders are aware that pupils need to have more first-hand experiences of different cultures in the United Kingdom to broaden their understanding of society nationally and globally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are positive about the school. A few wrote comments to expand on their views, for example remarking on the caring staff and how the school creates a safe and fun environment for children. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about the introduction of two mixed-age classes in the next academic year, and also that the school does not take account of their concerns. The inspection team found that the school has shared as much information as possible during a time of formal consultation with staff about the restructuring of the school and that a number of improvements have been made recently to help parents and carers share their views about the school. A few concerns were raised about the way in which the school manages unacceptable behaviour. This has been addressed earlier in the report and inspectors judge that behaviour is managed effectively. A few parents or carers raised individual concerns and these views were taken into account when reaching overall inspection judgements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 552 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Minster in Sheppey 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	62	44	37	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	55	50	42	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	33	68	57	6	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	31	69	58	10	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	43	36	68	57	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	29	69	58	8	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	37	66	55	4	3	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)	35	29	61	51	11	9	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	32	66	55	11	9	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	26	59	49	17	14	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	30	54	45	11	9	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	42	35	58	48	5	4	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	51	51	43	3	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



21 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Minster in Sheppey Primary School, Sheerness, ME12 2HX

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We found the information you gave us when you spoke with us very valuable, and thank those who gave up some of their lunchtime for this.

Minster in Sheppey Primary School is a happy and friendly school, where you all get on well together. Many of you make a good contribution to this by giving your views to the school council, running clubs or helping others in the playground. You know a lot about how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy.

Children get off to a sound start in Reception. It was good to see that most of you enjoy school and find your work interesting. Many of you are making more progress in writing this year because of the changes made to give you more tasks which require you to write at greater length. Your teachers are helping you to understand the level of your work and exactly what you have to do next. All the staff look after you well so that you feel safe. You know a lot about keeping fit and healthy. The school is improving all the time because the acting headteacher, governors and staff know exactly what actions they need to take next to help you make more progress. They are to:

- find more ways for you to explain your thinking and to write at length
- make sure that there is no time wasted in any lessons
- find ways for you to develop your ICT skills in more subjects
- give you time to respond to teachers' comments when they mark your work
- make sure that your independent and group tasks are at the right level of difficulty.

A few of you do not attend as well as you could and can help by coming to school more regularly.

We wish you every success in the future and know that you will help by continuing to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector

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