

Shears Green Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118436
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339219
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	474
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Debnam
Headteacher	Chris Guy
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of inspection time looking at learning. They visited 21 lessons or small group sessions and saw 16 teachers teaching. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They looked at teachers' planning, the school's assessment information and safeguarding policies, and samples of pupils' work. They analysed questionnaires from staff and pupils, as well as 145 from parents and carers.

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

- the effectiveness of teaching at meeting differing needs, especially in mathematics for less able pupils or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the role of leaders in ensuring improvement
- how well pupils take responsibility and learn about life beyond Northfleet
- the use of target setting to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

Information about the school

Most pupils come to this large junior school from the local community. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British heritage.

The school has an Activemark award for its work in physical education, as well as Healthy School accreditation.

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

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that has strengths in the way that pupils are cared for and develop positive attitudes towards learning. Adults and pupils get on well together and most pupils thoroughly enjoy school.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6 and their achievement is satisfactory. The average attainment reached in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2009 reflected satisfactory progress for these pupils from their broadly average starting points at the beginning of Year 3. Pupils make the best progress in English because it is taught well. In literacy lessons, pupils' learning is brought alive through exciting teaching that meets differing needs well. In mathematics, progress is slower because teachers do not always make enough use of assessment information to plan accurately the next stage of learning and the activities do not always give pupils enough opportunities to be actively involved rather than listening to the teacher. The use of marking and the setting of targets are successful in English at helping pupils understand how to improve, but is less effective in mathematics. Less able pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, also make slower progress in mathematics than in English. Until recently, special educational needs support has focused largely on developing basic skills in literacy. Leaders have now changed this but there is still some catching up to do in mathematics.

Good relationships between teachers and children mean that pupils are happy at school. Pupils' behaviour is good and they are polite and friendly. They work hard in lessons, especially in Year 6, where teachers are trialling an approach to learning that links subjects and uses as its starting point the pupils' own interests and curiosity. This approach is proving very effective and the school knows that it now needs to strengthen the curriculum elsewhere by building on the good practice that exists in Year 6.

Pupils keenly take on responsibility and have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, as is demonstrated by the school's success in gaining Activemark and Healthy School awards. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the importance of eating a balanced diet and of the need to be careful when using the internet. They are able to take part in a wide range of clubs and achieve good success in sporting competitions. These activities are greatly valued by pupils, who say that 'there are lots of exciting things to do outside lessons'.

Leaders have ensured that the school has moved forward steadily since the last inspection. Weaknesses in English have been tackled well and this has had a good effect on pupils' progress, demonstrating that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Leaders have begun to tackle the gap between mathematics and English,

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but initiatives are relatively recent. There are sound systems for checking school effectiveness and this means that most leaders know what needs improving. However, this is not reflected strongly in school development planning, which is not focused sharply enough on raising attainment and does not set clear criteria for measuring success. This makes it difficult to check whether developments are having the desired effect. There are many new subject leaders this year. They are very enthusiastic and are keen to develop their roles. They have not yet had enough opportunity to monitor teaching and learning. The school has a wealth of data on pupils' progress but it is not analysed with enough frequency to identify and support those who are in danger of falling behind.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise pupils' standards and improve their progress in the subject, move the quality of mathematics teaching from satisfactory to good by December 2010 by:
 - ensuring that teachers make sharper use of their knowledge of pupils' prior learning so that work is always pitched at the right level for all
 - ensuring that the use of marking and targets to help pupils understand how to improve is consistently good across the school
 - planning activities that enable pupils to be more actively involved in their learning.
- Improve the curriculum by ensuring that the good practice in Year 6 of linking subjects and building learning on pupils' own interests is extended to other year groups.
- Strengthen leadership and management by July 2010 by:
 - ensuring that development planning is focused on raising attainment and sets measurable targets for improvement
 - giving subject leaders more opportunities to monitor teaching and learning
 - making better use of data to identify children who are falling behind so that they can be supported more quickly.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They thoroughly enjoy school and are very enthusiastic about their work, especially when the learning is brought alive by teachers. This is most evident in English lessons, where progress is frequently good. In Year 6, where subjects are linked together, progress was especially fast. In an outstanding lesson, pupils learnt very quickly about how to write newspaper reports because the theme of 'Mountain Rescues' was exciting and relevant, and the teacher used questioning very effectively to engage pupils and to move understanding on. In a good lesson in Year 5, pupils acquired new skills quickly because there was good challenge, and work on how to make notes was linked to a history topic. In mathematics lessons,

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where progress is satisfactory, pupils are not as actively involved in their learning. For example, in a Year 3 numeracy lesson, a group of less able pupils made only satisfactory progress because they did not have suitable apparatus to help them practise and develop counting skills.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. They are given the best support in literacy lessons and when working in small groups outside lessons. In numeracy lessons, not enough account is taken of the need to adapt work to the specific needs of these pupils, slowing learning. There are no other significant differences in the progress being made in lessons by other groups of pupils.

Pupils' moral and social development is good; pupils have a good understanding of what is meant by right and wrong and manage their behaviour well. They contribute well to the school and wider community by taking responsibility for parts of the school's work, by raising funds for charities and by supporting a local hospice. Pupils' cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of different faiths but have limited contact with children from other parts of the United Kingdom or beyond.

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
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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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How effective is the provision?

Adults care well for pupils. They regularly 'go the extra mile' for them, devoting much time to making school a happy and safe place to be. There are good systems to support pupils who are having problems at home or at school, including good links with outside agencies. These provide additional help such as counselling sessions or home visits. A well-attended breakfast club gives pupils a good start to the day.

Teachers are hard working and they ensure that learning is fun in many lessons, especially in English. Teachers manage behaviour effectively and make good use of resources, including modern technology. For example, pupils in Year 6 watched a video about a mountain rescue to help them with their newspaper report writing. Pupils are grouped by ability for mathematics lessons, but within these groups there is still a wide range of starting points. Teachers are aware of the need to plan work for the differing ability groups in their sets and in the best lessons they do this well. However, there are occasions across the school when work is not pitched at the right level for all.

The school is working hard to develop the curriculum so that it promotes good progress in basic skills. In Year 6 close links are made between different subjects and this helps to make learning purposeful. The school already has a timetable for extending this good practice into other year groups.

An exciting range of clubs in sport and the arts are greatly enjoyed by pupils and promote personal development well. Pupils especially enjoy music activities and sing very tunefully in assemblies. Good partnerships with other schools and groups enrich the curriculum in subjects such as science and physical education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

Leaders are moving the school forward satisfactorily and their ambition and drive for improvement are shared by staff and governors. Initiatives since the last inspection have had a good impact in English but the pace of improvement in mathematics has been much slower. This is because data are not always used well enough to identify underachievement. Written development plans do not focus sharply enough on how improvement is to be achieved and measured. Governors provide sound support to the school. They have rightly identified that they need to do more to find things out for

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themselves so that they can be more involved in strategic planning.

The school promotes equality satisfactorily. Leaders are beginning to do the right things to ensure that progress is more even in different subjects. Discrimination is tackled vigorously and pupils quickly learn to respect different viewpoints. There are generally good partnerships with parents and carers. They support the school well and they are given good opportunities to contribute to school life. The school's satisfactory contribution to community cohesion is supported well by links with local schools and the pupils' good involvement in the local community. Leaders are now rightly seeking to strengthen the school's work in this area by establishing links with communities in other parts of the United Kingdom and beyond.

There are good safeguarding procedures. Adults carefully assess the risks of different activities and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that pupils may encounter.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
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 and carers are pleased with the school. They feel that their children are well looked after, are happy and enjoy their learning, with typical comments being, 'We are happy with the wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities' and 'Teachers are friendly and approachable.' A minority of parents and carers raised some concerns about the way that the school tackles unacceptable behaviour. None was seen during the inspection. The school has rigorous procedures to deal with very occasional bullying but leaders know that they need to be more thorough in recording their responses to

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incidents of poor behaviour whether it involves bullying or not. Parents and carers were also concerned about site security. Inspectors found during the inspection that the school was doing all that could be reasonably expected to keep the site safe. Governors are rightly in the process of reviewing how they can more carefully control access between the junior school and the adjoining schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shears Green Junior 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 145 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 474 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	49	71	49	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	41	75	52	5	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	25	90	62	13	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	32	8	57	11	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	45	71	49	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	29	83	57	17	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	25	103	71	4	3	1	1
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)	39	27	83	57	8	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	30	85	59	9	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	26	76	52	19	13	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	20	86	59	12	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	39	75	52	6	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	46	68	47	6	4	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 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.



15 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shears Green Junior School, Northfleet DA11 7JB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and completing the questionnaire ' your comments were very helpful. At the moment, your school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- Satisfactory teaching means that you make steady progress as you move through the school. Progress is better in English because this is the subject that is taught best.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well together. You make a good contribution to the life of the school; the school council does a good job, as do the 'peer mediators' and other helpers.
- All adults in school are kind and caring and they give suitable extra help to those of you who need it.
- There are many interesting things to do outside lessons and some of these help you develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. It is great that you grow your own food in the school garden.
- The headteacher, teachers and governors know what needs improving and are taking the right steps to move things forward more quickly.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- improve teaching in mathematics by making sure that your work is not too hard or too easy for you, making sure that you have more opportunities to try things out for yourselves and using marking and targets more effectively to tell you how well you are doing and how you can improve more clearly
- extend to other year groups the good ideas that we saw in Year 6 that are helping to make learning more interesting
- check how well the school is doing more carefully so that it can improve more quickly.

We wish you all well for the future. You can help your teachers by always doing your best work and continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector

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