

Sholden Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118749
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339289
Inspection dates	24–25 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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Sullivan
Headteacher	Justine Brown
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, involving five teachers, and attended an assembly. Meetings were held with representative governors, the headteacher, representative staff and the school council. They observed the school's work and looked at planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors analysed questionnaires from 83 parents and carers, 15 staff and 20 pupils.

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

- how well pupils achieve, particularly in mathematics and in Key Stage 2
- the start children get in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how effective leadership and management have been in involving all staff in identifying weaknesses and setting priorities for further improvement.

Information about the school

The pupils in this small primary school are mainly from White British backgrounds, but other heritages are represented in small numbers. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is high. Pupils' identified needs relate mostly to medical, physical, moderate or severe learning needs. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing. A new headteacher took up post two years ago. The school holds Healthy Schools and Activemark 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Sholden Primary School is a good school, with a warm and stimulating environment. The new headteacher, staff and governors have built well on the school's strengths when it was last inspected and it now has many outstanding features. The school's ethos is based on strong Christian values where pupils are exceptionally well looked after. This was recognised in a parental comment referring to the 'spirit of Sholden' and 'the caring Christian ethos reflected in the way children are taught to respect and listen to each other, and to take responsibility for the environment'. A great deal of pupils' personal development is outstanding because of the school's excellent care, giving each pupil well-focused support and guidance. Pupils and their parents or carers respond very well to all the school offers them, shown in high attendance and contribution to school events. For example, the annual 'Green Day' involves a high proportion of pupils and their parents or carers in tidying the grounds, preparing them for use through the summer and often providing additional playground facilities. There is a real resolve to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination, and prompt action is taken to remove any barriers to an individual pupil's learning or well-being. Consequently, each pupil has access to programmes carefully tailored to meet their individual academic needs or to promote their emotional well-being. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Pupils take great pride in their school and their own achievements. Children get off to an excellent start in Reception. Pupils' attainment varies from year to year depending on pupils' individual needs and the capabilities of each cohort. Typically, attainment is above average, representing good achievement for pupils from their starting points. Attainment in the Year 6 tests fell after the last inspection but this trend has been reversed and attainment throughout the school is now generally above national expectations for the pupils' ages. Teaching is good and lessons are presented in a way which interest and motivate pupils. Marking is regular and identifies how pupils could improve their work, but teachers do not routinely provide opportunities for pupils to respond to this advice. Pupils of all abilities receive good support from teaching assistants, ensuring high levels of personal attention. However, pupils do not have enough activities that require them to work independently other than for short periods of time. This restricts opportunities for them to consolidate their learning and develop critical thinking skills by using and applying their new skills and knowledge.

The school's self-evaluation is robust, and senior staff and governors have an accurate and realistic view of the school's performance. Teamwork is strong and, after a period of significant change, stability has been achieved. The improvement in attainment brought about this year, together with other improvements such as the quality of provision in

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Reception, gives the school a good capacity for continuous improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' progress and attainment further by ensuring that teachers more often:
 - give pupils extended activities to consolidate their learning and develop critical thinking by using and applying their new knowledge and skills for themselves
 - require pupils to respond to the comments made in the marking of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are confident and interested learners as a result of the exciting and practically-based curriculum. Themes such as 'Crash! Bang! Jingle!' or 'A Drop in the Ocean' appeal to pupils and help them to achieve well and enjoy their learning. One of the reasons pupils make good progress is that they have a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they need to do to reach their targets. They focus well on their work in lessons, shown when Year 1 and 2 pupils developed their understanding of money by working out which items they could afford within a simulated shop setting. Performance varies from year to year, but school data show a clear pattern of above-average attainment and increasingly good progress throughout the school. Because of the relatively low numbers in each group, comparisons with national averages are not wholly reliable. Pupils in Year 6 have had their education disrupted through frequent changes of teacher over a number of years. This has reduced their progress overall so that, although good this year, their progress from Year 2 is only satisfactory. Although there is some fluctuation, attainment in mathematics and science has generally not been as high as in reading and writing. The current focus on a practical 'hands-on' approach to mathematics is narrowing the gap and improving rates of progress.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and to take responsibility for their own health, recognised in the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Most recently, pupils have considered the impact of sleep on their ability to concentrate. Their considerate and exemplary behaviour helps them to play safely together and to concentrate well in lessons. Pupils are very confident that any disagreements are quickly resolved and that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils make a very strong contribution to the school community, for example, in the Team Spirit club run by Year 6 pupils to help younger pupils make new friends by joining in different playground activities. Opportunities to contribute to the wider community are more limited, but there are examples of pupils taking initiative to support others. For example, pupils have joined in a 'litter pick' with their parents and carers to tidy up the environment close to the school. They regularly organise events to support charities, including links with the local Rotary Club to support its 'Bike A Cow' event. In turn, the local community strongly supports school events, including fund-raising events run by the Friends of Sholden School which provides funds for school visits to enrich the curriculum.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good across the school. Work is closely matched to individual pupils' prior attainment so that the needs of the different age groups in each class are met well. Pupils respond well to the high expectations adults have of them and relationships between pupils and adults are warm. Teachers use interactive whiteboards successfully to illustrate and enliven learning. They follow this through with clear explanations of the requirements of the tasks so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and what they have to do. On a few occasions, adults do not give pupils enough time to do things for themselves, guiding the work of different groups too closely so that pupils do not think things through enough for themselves. Teachers make regular and accurate assessments of pupils' performance and use this information well to target intervention and support when the progress of an individual slows. Pupils use and develop their information and communication technology skills well because staff make effective use of laptops as learning tools to supplement other computers in the classroom. Teachers use display well to record pupils' achievements and provide prompts for learning, limiting as far as possible the constraints of the building.

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 curriculum is increasingly linking subjects together effectively, which makes learning coherent and interesting for pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy visits and opportunities to 'dress up', for example during their study of the Second World War when they visited a local museum and local people visited the school to share their memories of living in the area during the war. The themed activities involving the whole school provide good opportunities to share learning across all age groups. Provision for personal development through physical activity is outstanding, with many pupils attending sports clubs in addition to the well-planned curriculum giving pupils good access to swimming and regular visits to a local gymnasium. High-level care for pupils is an outstanding feature of the school. The school has strong links with a wide range of external agencies to provide additional expertise when this is not available in the school, so that individuals, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, receive support which is matched closely to their needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership is well focused on making learning effective and engaging for pupils. The headteacher has taken robust and concerted action to bring about improvements in teaching and stabilise the school after a period of significant staff turnover. Staff have used the input from local authority consultants to sharpen their focus on accurate assessment so that potential underachievement is picked up quickly. Lesson planning is focused on ensuring that any gaps in learning are addressed speedily. These improvements have been achieved through strong teamwork, with adults showing a clear understanding of which actions will have the greatest impact on improving pupils' progress. Governors are well involved and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where improvements can be made, based on first-hand experience, which gives them a good basis to support and challenge senior leaders. The governing body has undertaken training and is reviewing its practice with a view to further developing its capacity to set objectives and provide strategic support.

Procedures to protect children, including those who are potentially vulnerable, are excellent. Systems to check on the suitability of adults who work with children are extremely robust, and regular health and safety audits are carried out within the school and for visits out of school. Relationships with parents and carers are very strong because of the care taken on a daily basis. Parents and carers appreciate the effort

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made by the school, for example that the headteacher and staff are in the playground most mornings, recognised by one parent in the comment, 'A small thing but it makes the school more friendly.' Parents and carers enthusiastically join in school activities, shown during the inspection when parents and carers and toddlers joined in the 'Wake and Shake' session organised by pupils on the playground at the start of the day. Such joint activities give parents and carers excellent opportunities to share minor concerns or information in an informal setting. The school council has helped to audit the school's response to promoting community cohesion, strengthening pupils' understanding of building cohesive communities locally and globally. Further opportunities, including email contact with a London school, are being developed to help pupils' appreciation of life in different areas of the United Kingdom. The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination effectively, shown in the way it monitors and values the skills and talents of individual pupils, and takes prompt action if any pupil begins to fall behind.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers are delighted with their children's first experience of school, and show this in offering additional support such as making 'a castle' in the outdoor area. Most children start school with skills in line with those expected, though in each year group there is a proportion with below expected levels. The environment is well planned and welcoming, with parents and carers joining in activities as they leave their children off at the start of the day. Children engage in a rich and vibrant range of indoor and outdoor activities during the day, promoting their personal and academic development exceptionally well. Children's experiences are further enriched by visits and visitors

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which extends their understanding of the world around them. Themes such as 'Castles' allow children to develop skills across the full range of early learning experiences, shown in the way children engage in role play and act out the roles of a queen and her servant, building on the knowledge acquired from a visit to a local castle. Consequently, most children are working at or above the expected levels by the time they join Year 1 and have developed a real enthusiasm for learning. Children are proud of their writing, using it daily to sign themselves into the classroom, and many choose to write when given free choice. They confidently spell simple words phonetically and write stories for one another. Children benefit from high levels of support from adults, who observe children's progress carefully and use this in their planning for learning. One example of the outstanding leadership of Reception is seen in the excellent links with parents and carers, who regularly share children's achievements at home in their 'Adventure Book' because they know that their input is valued. Increasingly, children are involved in contributing to what they want to learn about next through their 'review leaves'. For example, a child's question about how the stars shine led to a study on the theme of space for the whole class.

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	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are positive about the school, shown in the good response to the inspection questionnaire and in additional written comments. They particularly enjoy the family atmosphere of a small school. Parents or carers of pupils with medical needs paid particular tribute to the dedication and support of staff. Inspectors agree with these comments. A few parents or carers raised their concern about the disruption caused to their children's education through the high level of staff turnover and this has been addressed earlier in the report. A very small minority indicated that their concerns and views are not taken into account. The inspection found that the school actively seeks the views of parents and carers and acts appropriately on issues raised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sholden Church of England 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 107 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	59	29	35	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	71	24	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	45	40	48	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	53	28	34	6	7	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	47	57	27	33	2	2	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	45	42	51	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	52	38	46	2	2	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)	28	34	43	52	6	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	42	43	52	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	43	42	51	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	34	44	53	8	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	34	48	58	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	55	29	35	8	10	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

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.



28 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sholden Church of England Primary School, Deal, CT14 0AB

Thank you for being so helpful and making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about what you do and found the information you gave us very valuable. This letter is to explain to you what we found out. We agree with you that Sholden Primary is a good school and you are right to be proud of it.

Here are some of the things the school does well:

- Children get off to an excellent start in Reception.
- You get on very well together and many of you organise activities to help others, so that you enjoy school a lot and your attendance is high.
- Your behaviour is excellent and this helps you to learn well in lessons.
- You know a great deal about how to live healthily and keep safe, and many of you join in a wide range of sports activities.
- You make good progress and your teachers help you to understand what you have to do to improve the level of your work.
- All staff care for you exceptionally well.

The headteacher, governors and staff constantly try to make the school even better and we agree with them about the most important things that will help you to make even better progress. They are:

- to expect you to do more and give you longer to work on your own or in groups so that you are sure that you have understood the new learning in the lesson
- to set aside time for you to look at the comments teachers make when they mark your work.

We know that you will help by continuing to do your best and remembering to ask if there is anything you do not understand.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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