

Shepton Mallet Infant School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123660
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340390
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2009
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Barham
Headteacher	Celia Higgs
Date of previous school inspection	0 January 2007
School address	Waterloo Road Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 5HE
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Age group	0–7
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2009
Inspection number	340390

**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, documentation in relation to safeguarding procedures and the 16 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- the quality of provision for reading in Years 1 and 2 and its impact on current standards
- how successfully provision meets the needs of pupils of average and above-average ability and its impact on their progress
- the quality of provision for communication, language and literacy for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and its impact on their basic skills.

Information about the school

This is a small infant school. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in the Sure Start Children's Centre, which includes the maintained Nursery, and in two Reception classes. The Children's Centre, including the Nursery, was inspected by Ofsted in February 2009 and the report is available on the Ofsted website (reference EY 371694). Currently, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in two mixed-age classes. Most pupils are of White British background, with a small minority from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is below the national average.

At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was on a long-term absence. The deputy headteacher was designated the acting headteacher from 2 November 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

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

The school has a number of strengths. Its procedures for child protection and safeguarding children are good. The governing body has robust systems in place to ensure it meets fully its statutory duties. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and, as a result, children make good progress in their learning. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is good, especially in the teaching of letters and sounds. A significant strength is the quality of planning for these sessions where teachers clearly identify what all children are expected to achieve by the end of the session. The school is successful in supporting pupils with special educational needs, as well as those who are learning to speak English as an additional language. Successful intervention programmes and good quality support from teaching assistants mean that these groups make good progress and their attainment is higher than similar pupils nationally.

A significant weakness in Years 1 and 2 is that pupils of average and above-average ability make inadequate progress and their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is low. The key reason for this is inadequate teaching. Teachers' planning does not meet the needs of all pupils. Expectations of the amount of work these pupils should achieve in lessons are not high enough, with the result that pupils do not work hard enough and achieve as well as they should. Weaknesses in day-to-day assessment and marking of pupils' work do not give pupils an understanding of how to improve their work nor of their next steps in learning. There are no targets for the class, groups of pupils or individuals to aim for. Assessment of children's progress in reading is weak because the mistakes pupils make are not recorded and there is no indication of how they might be rectified.

The school does not have an accurate, reliable or up-to-date evaluation of its own performance. The self-evaluation document made available to the inspection team is dated February 2007. This is because, in the absence of the headteacher, leaders and governors are unable to gain access to the information they need from the computer systems. The current senior leadership team does not play a strong part in evaluating the school's performance and they have had insufficient training and preparation to step up into acting leadership roles. As a result, the school does not have the necessary capacity to improve.

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Pupils' attendance for the last school year and the school year to date is too low. The school is not rigorous enough in identifying reasons for poor attendance nor in promoting to pupils and parents the value of good attendance in supporting their learning and progress.

Partnerships with the Children's Centre are good and contribute to the smooth transition from the Nursery into Reception. The school works hard to involve parents in supporting their children's learning, especially through its induction procedures when children start school. For example, interpreters are provided to work with parents who speak little English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable the senior leadership team to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in monitoring and evaluating whole-school performance through additional training and coaching by 30 April 2010.
- Ensure that by 31 July 2010 all teaching is at least satisfactory, with a significant proportion that is good by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning meets the needs of all pupils
 - ensuring that pupils know what they are expected to achieve by the end of lessons
 - ensuring that day-to-day assessment and marking give pupils a clear understanding of their next steps in learning.
- Ensure that by 31 July 2010 pupils' attendance is above 94% by raising pupils' and parents' understanding of the importance of regular attendance to support good learning and progress.
- Improve pupils' learning and progress so that all groups of pupils achieve as well as similar groups nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by 31 July 2011.

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

In lessons, many pupils find it hard to concentrate for any length of time, particularly when working independently. In one lesson, pupils working in the computer suite quickly stopped because they were not clear about what to do next, once they had completed the first task. In whole-class lesson introductions, there are instances of low-level disruption, usually amongst boys, which are linked to insufficient challenge and work being too easy for them. When talking in pairs, pupils show greater success and are willing to listen to each other. Boys tend to dominate question-and-answer sessions, with girls sitting compliantly but not taking part.

Boys' results are similar to the girls' in the national assessments, except in writing, where they are lower. Girls perform significantly less well than girls nationally, especially in reading. Inspectors' observations confirm that this is likely to continue. For pupils of average and above-average ability, both boys and girls, work is not matched to their needs and too often the whole class does exactly the same work. The amount of work

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produced is limited because pupils are not told how much they are expected to do. In one numeracy lesson, a pupil stated, 'I can do this already!'

Pupils feel safe in school and they have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is satisfactory, although a few pupils present very challenging behaviour, which is usually managed effectively by staff. Pupils' contribution to the school and local community is satisfactory. Their awareness of the wider community is limited, but through learning about festivals, such as Diwali, they have an awareness of other faiths. Poor attendance and inadequate skills in reading, writing and mathematics mean that pupils are not well prepared for their next stage of education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teaching assistants work effectively with groups of pupils to support their learning and work exceptionally hard in whole-class lesson introductions to ensure that all pupils pay attention and listen. At the start of lessons, there is insufficient focus on sharing what is to be learnt and making explicitly clear what pupils, especially those of average and above-average ability,

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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should achieve by the end.

The classrooms are not welcoming learning environments. A particular weakness is that there are no attractive and stimulating reading areas which encourage children to want to read. Many resources are well worn and appear never to be used. Classrooms do not celebrate children's writing and do not promote sufficiently an interest in and enthusiasm for number. While the curriculum is successful in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language, it is not stimulating or creative enough to meet the needs of other groups of learners.

There are strengths in the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with those learning English as an additional language. Staff work hard and effectively to engage parents and outside agencies to support these groups. However, the school does not promote good attendance with sufficient rigour, for example in engaging pupils through 'Class of the Week' for best attendance. There is insufficient guidance and support for pupils of average and above-average ability, which contributes to their inadequate achievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher, ably supported by the special educational needs coordinator, has in the short time she has been in post started to identify the weaknesses in the school

Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are good and monitored rigorously by governors. The school does not promote equality of opportunity or tackle discrimination effectively because too many pupils underachieve in the school. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with those learning English as an additional language, is good. Teaching assistants play an important role through the successful implementation of support programmes for these particular groups. There are strengths in the engagement of parents and a wide range of other agencies to support vulnerable groups, including those with challenging behaviour.

The acting headteacher and governors have evaluated how effectively the school promotes community cohesion. While there are strengths at the local level, the school recognises and, through its improvement plan, addresses the need to broaden links

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nationally and internationally. A good start has been made in establishing links with a school in the London Borough of Brent.

The acting headteacher has appropriate plans to ensure that some of the school's budget surplus is spent to benefit the pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

There is a distinct upward trend in children's progress and the standards they reach at the end of Reception. Children enjoy their time in school. They concentrate and persevere, for example when constructing models of rockets and overcoming the challenge of joining materials together. In the role play 'Space Station', a group of boys worked together successfully, taking turns to 'program the computer' and using clipboards and mark-making skills in recording their 'daily logs'. Children make particularly good progress in learning letters and sounds because they listen attentively and are motivated by exciting teaching. In Reception, children make good progress and reach the levels expected for them by the end of the year, relative to their starting points.

Teaching is good, with strengths in the teaching of key skills. Whole-class teaching is effective because teachers are clear about what they want children to learn and the progress and gains in knowledge they should make. Teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting children working independently and/or in groups. Together with teachers, they ask questions skilfully to encourage children to explain their thinking and, in turn, develop their speaking and listening skills.

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Leadership and management are good. Because of constraints with the building, the two Reception classes are at opposite ends of the school. However, planning is done jointly and resources shared equally, including for outdoor learning. Currently, the outdoor learning areas, while secure and partially covered, are not resourced sufficiently to ensure the provision of activities in all six areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents returned questionnaires and very few made any written comments. One parent commented on the support for a child moving into the school. Inspection findings confirm one concern about reading. The inspectors found no evidence during the inspection to substantiate other individual concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shepton Mallet Infant 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	56	6	38	1	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	56	6	38	1	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	56	6	38	1	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	63	6	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	69	5	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	56	5	31	2	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	44	5	56	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)	9	56	7	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	50	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	25	8	50	3	19	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	38	8	50	2	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	56	3	19	2	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	63	4	25	1	6	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.



26 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shepton Mallet Infant School and Children's Centre, Shepton Mallet BA4 5HE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave my colleague and me when we visited your school recently. My colleague would like to say 'thank you' to the school council for giving up time to meet with her. At the moment, there are some good things happening in your school. However, there are a number of important areas where it is not doing as well as it should be. Because of this, your school is being placed into a category that we call special measures. This means that the school will get lots of help to put things right and inspectors will visit each term to check up on how the school is improving. Your school is successful in:

- keeping you safe
- helping those of you who find learning hard or who are learning English for the first time to make good progress
- helping those of you in Reception to make good progress in your learning

The most important things that the school has to do to make sure it is doing as well as it should be are:

- to make sure that all of you in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and that by the end of Year 2 you reach standards expected for your age
- to make sure that teachers plan work that challenges you and that you know exactly how much work you should do in lessons
- to make sure that teachers tell you how to improve your work
- to make sure that those who lead and manage your school check up on how well you are all doing in your learning
- to encourage you and your parents to make sure you come to school regularly.

You can help your school and teachers by coming to school regularly and working as hard as you can in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis

Lead Inspector

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