

# Shephalbury Park Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135084
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341613
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Gray

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	186
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Gardner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jackie Ashley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Burydale Stevenage Hertfordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited ten lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, conducted a scrutiny of pupils' past work and looked at data about pupils' progress in all classes, school records and curriculum plans, and the school improvement plan and analysed 53 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- The percentages of pupils making at least satisfactory progress in each class
- The extent to which teaching and assessment enable pupils' needs to be adequately met
- The impact which leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, have on pupils' progress.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is similar to what is usually found. An average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups although the proportion who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need or who have learning difficulties is above what is normally found; the largest group has behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school holds the Activemark for Sport.

**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**

**3**

### 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 significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' progress in mathematics.

Shephalbury Park Primary School has improved markedly over the last five terms. The headteacher's good leadership and the vision which she shares with her colleagues mean that the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. One of the biggest changes has been in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children now make good progress. This means that pupils are now starting in Year 1 with higher skills than pupils had done previously. The school has built a good partnership with parents, so that they play a bigger part in their children's learning. Virtually all those parents who responded to the questionnaire gave the school very positive support; one parent wrote, 'Both my children are happy at this school. The teachers are kind and helpful to parents and carers. I feel well informed about what goes on as regards to my child's education.' A focus on writing across the school has borne fruit, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1, 4 and 6.

Pupils' progress in mathematics remains inadequate. The deputy headteacher took on the responsibility of mathematics coordinator last term. She has ensured that teachers' planning follows the national framework and focuses on what they intend their pupils to learn, though the teaching of mathematics is still inconsistent. There has not been long enough for the impact of the coordinator's work to show. Teachers often give different work to pupils of differing ability, but, because they do not have a detailed breakdown of what pupils have achieved previously in each area, these activities are sometimes too easy or too hard. This slows down the rate of pupils' progress and has meant that there are gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good, and parents agree. This enables pupils to feel very safe in school. They show a well developed understanding of the importance of respect and understanding for other people. Behaviour is satisfactory; as one pupil said, 'Most people behave well for most of the time.' However, some pupils have not developed the ability to push themselves to work hard enough.

Recent improvements in the school are the result of effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders have analysed problems accurately and devised good plans to remedy them. They monitor the success of plans and make changes where necessary. Middle managers are only just beginning to be involved in this process.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress pupils make and so raise standards by the end of the 2009-10 school year especially in mathematics by:
  - refining assessment procedures to give a more detailed picture of individuals' skills and knowledge
  - ensuring that teachers use this information to plan work more closely matched to all pupils' needs
  - encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and progress
  - sharpening the focus of the monitoring of teaching and learning to achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching
  - strengthening the role of middle managers to take a greater part in monitoring and evaluation.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**4**

It is pupils' progress in mathematics which causes the overall outcomes to be judged inadequate. Standards have declined in recent years because pupils have gaps in their understanding, such as poor recall of times-tables or inaccurate grasp of place value. Progress has been inadequate over a number of years. A scrutiny of pupils' work so far this term shows that progress is improving, but not as quickly in all classes. In a good lesson in Year 4, pupils worked enthusiastically at subtraction sums because the tasks were carefully designed to build on what they already knew. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress in reading and writing. A recent focus on story writing inspired a Year 4 boy to write exciting work about chasing pandas. This project had a big impact on promoting boys' enthusiasm for writing.

Pupils with special educational needs make better progress than other groups because they are given good support by teachers and their assistants, so that their needs are met. School records show that some have made good progress. Pupils of differing abilities achieve at similar rates to each other. In lessons where there is a mismatch of tasks to pupils' abilities, progress is slowed sometimes for higher attaining pupils but, at other times, it is lower attaining pupils who struggle. This happens chiefly in mathematics, but there are occasions in other subjects where pupils do not receive appropriate challenge. The school has exceptionally more boys than girls, but there is no marked difference in the performance of either group.

Pupils enjoy school, as they and their parents agree. One child wrote on a questionnaire, 'This school is a great place and I am proud to come here. The teachers are friendly.' Most pupils are keen to learn, especially when they understand what is expected of them. They understand why it is important to keep healthy; as one boy put it, 'If not, you can die young.' They say they eat healthily at home as well as at school and take lots of exercise.

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Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. When asked what are the important lessons to learn in life, pupils considered 'Being responsible for your own things' and 'Treating others as you want to be treated' as key ideas. Although the school has few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, pupils have a good understanding of different beliefs and explain that 'Everyone should believe in what they want to'.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. One of the reasons for improvement is the work the staff as a whole have done to improve planning. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are to learn in every lesson and ask pupils at the end to assess their learning, though pupils do not always do this accurately. Most lessons have the same learning intention for all pupils; one result of this is that higher attaining pupils sometimes do the same task at a slightly harder level, rather than going on to a fresh aspect to take their learning further. Where teachers have a good understanding of pupils' levels of skills, they make good progress. This is best in the teaching of letters and sounds; teachers keep detailed records of each aspect of every child's learning, so that the next teacher

<sup>1</sup> 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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knows exactly where to start. It is the absence of such a system for mathematics that is holding up pupils' progress.

Music is a strength of the curriculum; the youngest children were overheard singing nursery rhymes to the accompaniment of a variety of instruments. Work is planned to appeal to the interests of the children. A good example is the work on display in the library of the aspirations and ambitions of Year 6 pupils. A good range of extra-curricular activities is on offer, especially considering the small size of the school. Pupils' needs are generally met by the curriculum, but less so in mathematics.

The impact of the school's good care, guidance and support is seen in a comment from one parent: 'The staff at this school are brilliant. My daughter used to be quite anxious about going to school now she is always eager.' This level of care is also apparent in the way pupils treat each other. 'The most important thing you could do for a new child' said one pupil, 'is to make him or her go home having felt welcomed.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

This school is on a long journey of improvement. The headteacher was appointed in January 2008 and is experienced in helping schools in difficulty move forward. The successes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the writing project, the engagement with parents and improving the consistency in teaching that have already been described indicate the ability of leaders to drive improvement. The headteacher has been successful in communicating her ambition to the rest of the staff. An indication of this is the willingness and thoroughness with which all teachers participate in the school's half-termly tracking, introduced last year. The headteacher meets with each teacher individually to discuss the results of assessment. This highlights pupils who are not making enough progress, and support is planned. This demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equality. One-to-one tuition is given to those pupils who need to make the biggest advances; this is provided through a link with a local school and is an example of the good use of partnerships with others. Middle managers are developing their involvement so that they can monitor the impact of this work. The school has recently begun to receive support from the local authority in its 'Improving Schools Programme'. This is to enable a small staff to make more rapid progress and is not a reflection on the school's satisfactory capacity to improve itself.

Governors make a satisfactory contribution to the work and strategic development of the

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school but the challenge they offer is limited. The large budget surplus has now been reduced to within recommended amounts; however, because outcomes are inadequate overall, the school gives inadequate value for money.

All safeguarding requirements are fully met. Community cohesion is promoted well at the local and school level, as is shown by the family atmosphere in the school. There is no evidence of discrimination; a young pupil wrote, 'My school is nice to everyone in the school.' However, exploring the wider context of community cohesion - for example, at the global level - is at the early stages.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. From below average starting points, children make good progress and learn well in all areas. Good teaching and a thorough assessment of children's attainment on entry mean that the curriculum for each child is well matched to the necessary next steps in learning. This is maintained by frequent, pertinent observations and annotations. Planning is thorough and the indoor and outdoor areas promote good and exciting learning. Children reach standards in line with expectations by the time they enter Year 1 and above that in some areas; some higher attaining children produce written work at Level 1 of the National Curriculum. The welfare offered to children is of good quality and ensures that children feel safe. One parent commented, 'My son is very happy at this school, and I can't wait till he starts full time in January.' Children work and play happily together, as when Reception were sitting in a circle, accurately beating out on percussion instruments the rhythm of a piece of music. Parents are involved well in their children's



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learning which increases the children's sense of security. Leadership and management are good and, with the support of the headteacher, have brought about great improvement in the provision.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

The response of parents to the questionnaires represents about a quarter of all families. This is a huge increase on the response parents made to a similar exercise a year ago. The positive nature of virtually all replies demonstrates the good engagement with parents that the school has established. This is summed up in the words of one parent: 'I would just like to say that when I picked this school for my child I didn't know much about it, but it was the best decision I have ever made.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shephalbury 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	75	11	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	86	6	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	59	16	36	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	68	13	30	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	61	14	32	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	64	14	32	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	59	17	39	1	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)	22	50	21	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	59	16	36	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	50	20	45	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	45	22	50	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	66	12	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	77	9	20	1	2	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shephalbury Primary School, Stevenage, SG2 8AX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed sharing your lessons and helping some of you with your work. It was good to meet groups of you to hear your views about school and what is important to you. Perhaps some of you might recognise in the report quotations from what you told us.

You make satisfactory progress in reading and writing, but you need to do better in mathematics. Some of you are not as good at tables or number work as you should be for your age, so we have asked the teachers to help you make better progress. To do this, they will find out what each of you knows and where you might have gaps in your knowledge. In this way, teachers will be able to plan more work for you at exactly the right level - neither too hard nor too easy. At the end of our visit, we gave your school a notice to improve. This means that the school must focus on your progress in mathematics, and that another inspector will visit you next year to see how you are getting on.

Your school is good at looking after you, keeping you safe and sorting out any problems you have. Adults listen to your views and act on them when they can. You told us how you like to keep fit and healthy, and about how much exercise you take. We could see that you enjoy school and your written work shows that you take pride in it. On some occasions, some of you could make yourselves work harder or faster, rather than leaving it to your teachers to drive you to it.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at Shephalbury Park Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead inspector

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