

Shepherdswell School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110378
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	337484
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	RICHARD POTTS

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	null null
Headteacher	Sandie Jenner
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors saw seven teachers at work in seven lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding and other documents. Questionnaires from 60 parents and carers and 18 staff were scrutinised.

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

- the progress made by boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage and girls in Key Stage 1, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the attainment of boys and girls to see whether teaching is consistently challenging
- the way the curriculum promotes pupils' creative development
- improvements in the rate of attendance.

Information about the school

Shepherdswell is a small infant school serving its local area. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils on roll fluctuates because the school is used as an overspill school when any of the three neighbouring primary schools are full. In consequence, unusually high proportions of pupils enter and leave the school each year.

Shepherdswell is federated with its neighbouring junior school (Orchard Junior) and shares two specialist units for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. One unit is for up to five pupils with communication (autistic spectrum) difficulties, while the other is for up to five pupils with physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than average. Over half the pupils speak English as an additional language and many enter school with little or no English. Shepherdswell shares its premises with a pre-school facility. The school and its governors are not responsible for this extended provision.

The school holds a number of awards, including the Artsmark and Inclusion Quality Mark.

Orchard Junior School was inspected at the same time but by a separate inspection team.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils enjoy coming to this outstanding school. They were right when they said, 'It's a fantastic school and we get so many treats every day.'

Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where exemplary teaching and a rich, stimulating and varied curriculum mean that their differing needs are well met.

Good teaching in Key Stage 1 enables pupils, many of whom join the school at various times during the year, to settle quickly and to make good progress in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the specialist units, make outstanding progress because the teaching builds on their individual education plans which are exceptionally well matched to their learning needs. Teachers plan a diverse range of exciting activities that capture pupils' interests. As a result, pupils develop exemplary learning habits. Highly detailed and accurate assessment information is extremely well used to adjust tasks for pupils of differing ability, so that all groups of pupils learn effectively. Occasionally, teachers spend too long explaining tasks so that learning does not proceed as fast as it might.

By the end of Year 2 attainment is average for all groups of pupils, including those who join for short periods and those who start school speaking little or no English.

Attainment is broadly similar in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils behave exceptionally well and say they feel entirely safe at school because of the outstanding care, guidance and support that members of staff provide. As one pupil put it, 'We don't get sad much, but when we do, there is always somebody to make things better.'

Exemplary procedures for self-evaluation and for monitoring teaching and learning enable the school's high-quality leaders to know what needs to be done next to drive the school forward. Rates of attendance and the number of pupils doing well for their age in their reading, writing and mathematics have improved since the last inspection, demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve. Leaders are aware that teaching needs to be even better if all pupils are to make outstanding progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 from good to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all lessons comprise an appropriate balance of teacher explanation and pupil activity

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- the pace of learning in all lessons is consistent with that found in the best lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils are highly motivated to try hard in lessons and achieve well because teachers provide an extensive range of interesting and appropriate activities. For example, in an English lesson, Year 1 pupils enjoyed creating a story involving pirates and mermaids. Drawing on learning from other subjects, one pupil suggested, 'The pirate ship ran into the mermaid's rock, but it didn't sink because it was made of plastic, so it just bounced off.' Activities are extremely well matched to pupils' differing needs, so all groups make at least good progress and some, including the more vulnerable, make outstanding progress.

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils have resulted in pupils' exemplary behaviour and a readiness to learn. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above average. Pupils work extremely well, either on their own or in groups and pairs. They are deeply concerned for the welfare of their classmates and highly tolerant and supportive of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Attainment is average by the end of Year 2, with boys and girls reaching broadly similar levels in their reading, writing and mathematics. The school has developed a detailed and precise system to track pupils' progress and consequently can demonstrate that the rate of progress is accelerating. Pupils, many of whom arrive at the school with little spoken English, rapidly acquire sound literacy and numeracy skills, which prepares them well for the next stage of their learning.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness is excellent. Pupils appreciate and follow the school's behaviour code and are skilled at solving moral dilemmas. Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of cultural experiences and demonstrate high levels of creativity in their art, drama, dance and music. Their awareness of cultures other than their own is growing and they celebrate the diversity of their own and others' heritage. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community by undertaking a range of responsibilities around the school, acting as mentors for the new arrivals, raising funds for charity and through their musical and dramatic performances for the general public. Parents and carers are right when they say that the school is an exceptionally safe, welcoming, place. Even the youngest children have a good understanding of healthy foods and the importance of sleep and exercise. As one said, 'My 15-year-old sister watches too much television and I tell her to get off the settee.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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

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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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers share their good subject knowledge with the pupils and make it clear what is to be learned in every lesson. They use questioning to good effect, to help pupils think more deeply and to encourage them to develop a wider and richer vocabulary.

Occasionally, teachers spend too much time in describing tasks, so that pupils have fewer opportunities to extend their learning through practical activity and exploration. When this happens, pupils make less progress.

Teachers work together closely to produce high-quality plans that ensure the systematic and successful development of pupils' learning across the school. Because so many pupils join mid-year, the school has developed exemplary assessment procedures that rapidly identify pupils' learning needs and monitor their progress at regular intervals. This enables the school to target tasks to the varying needs of all pupils exceptionally well.

Information and communication technology is used well as a teaching tool and to aid learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly and used as a basis for discussion on next steps. Teaching assistants are deployed extremely well and make an exemplary contribution to pupils' learning.

An exceptionally broad range of additional activities, provided by the school and a variety of its partners, enriches the outstanding curriculum and underpins pupils' enjoyment of the school. Cross-curricular links are very well developed and subject leaders ensure that skills are taught in a logical sequence throughout the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the specialist units, is excellent and contributes to the outstanding progress many pupils

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make. The school fulfils its mission statement of 'learning, caring and achieving together' extremely well. All members of staff care deeply about the pupils and are totally committed to their welfare. Effective systems to induct newly arrived pupils and to ensure transition help all pupils to become confident about moving class or school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders work extremely well to improve the school. Self-evaluation is excellent. The leadership engenders a passion for enhancing pupils' life chances, leading to a shared understanding of priorities for development. Attainment, particularly at the higher levels for pupils' ages, has risen since the previous inspection and this shows a good capacity to go on improving. The school is totally committed to equality of opportunity and uses its excellent tracking procedures to ensure that, as far as possible, all individuals and groups progress at similar rates.

Governance is good. Under the federation arrangement, governors have a good understanding of the challenges facing the community and are influential in contributing to the school's strategic direction. Their role in monitoring the work of the school and in holding it to account is well established.

Leaders have an excellent relationship with parents, carers and external agencies, enabling them to effectively support pupils who are finding life difficult and to ensure that there are no forms of discrimination. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding arrangements were found to be exemplary. The school promotes community cohesion well and, in collaboration with parents, carers and pupils, has introduced themed days that successfully extend pupils' knowledge of cultural diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children join the school working below the levels expected of their age group. Highly skilled leaders ensure that provision is exemplary. Teaching reflects practices influenced by a leading academic in the field of children's early learning, enabling most children to make good progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities sometimes make outstanding progress. Around a third of the children enter Year 1 with average attainment, although this is often affected by high rates of mobility, which mean that an unusually high proportion of children join and leave the school each year.

Children are exceptionally good at taking the initiative in their learning and they work together sensibly and happily. When compiling their healthy lunchboxes, they discussed the relative merits of bread and pasta and debated which fruit went best with pizza. Members of staff work closely with children to plan an excellent balance of themes and activities that are very well matched to children's learning needs. Assessment is highly detailed and underpins planning. It provides a basis for discussion with parents, carers and the children themselves, about how best to support them in their next steps.

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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are pleased with the school and the vast majority are especially pleased with the way that it helps them to support their children's learning and keeps

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their children safe. A few parents and carers, who replied to the Ofsted questionnaire, were unhappy about the way the school deals with behaviour and the extent to which their children's needs were met, but the inspection team found that behaviour was outstanding and that children's needs were exceptionally well met.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shepherdswell 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 102 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	65	19	32	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	60	23	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	57	24	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	63	19	32	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	66	19	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	57	25	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	52	25	42	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)	24	40	26	43	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	50	20	33	4	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	42	23	38	5	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	40	28	47	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	47	19	32	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	57	21	35	2	3	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.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shepherdswell School, Springfield, Milton Keynes MK6 3NP.

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly during our visit. We can understand why you enjoy coming to school because we found that your school gives you an outstanding education.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- You learn quickly in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes.
- You enjoy school and are good at keeping safe and healthy.
- It is good that you behave well and are polite and helpful.
- The adults are really kind and caring and plan lots of interesting things for you to do.
- Your headteacher and the other leaders are doing an excellent job and know what needs to be done next to make the school even better.

This is what we are asking your school to do next to improve:

- help you to achieve even more by making sure that teachers do not spend too long telling you what to do, so you can start to work more quickly.

Thank you again for talking with us about your school and showing us your work. You can help your teachers by making sure you always listen carefully to their advice about how you can do better work.

Yours sincerely

Richard Potts

Lead inspector

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