

Shephalbury Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135084
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	360689
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Gardner
Headteacher	Jackie Ashley
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed learning in 17 lessons taught by nine different teachers. Inspectors also met with school leaders, members of the governing body, pupils, representatives from the local authority and teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, records tracking pupils' progress, governors' minutes, policy documents and work in pupils' books. Inspectors considered the views expressed in questionnaires by pupils, members of staff and 62 parents and carers.

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

- The school's impact in reducing gaps in performance between different groups, particularly boys.
- The effectiveness with which the school has tackled underachievement since the last inspection.
- The impact of leaders in supporting the development of teaching.
- The usefulness of marking and feedback given to pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. The school was last inspected in 2009 when it was deemed to be requiring significant improvement and given a notice to improve. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are White British. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and Reception class. The school is part of a federation with Longmeadow Primary School and a co-located children's centre. All of these establishments are governed by the federation governing body and are each subject to their own inspection. A private pre-school runs from a building on the school site. This is also subject to its own separate inspection. The school has the Activemark.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Recent significant improvements in the quality of teaching have been at the centre of this school's improvement. Teaching is now good overall. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning a great deal and underachievement is being eradicated. Leaders have a good understanding of individual pupils' progress and are quick to provide high quality intervention that helps them catch up. There remains a significant legacy of underachievement within school, particularly where teaching last year was not good enough. It is clear that the accelerated progress now being made means that even the considerable number of pupils who have underachieved in the past, are catching up to make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve in line with their peers.

The headteacher has led improvements with tireless rigour. The approach taken to eradicate inadequate teaching and accelerate pupils' progress whilst maintaining good standards of pastoral care is impressive. Leadership at all levels has improved and, as a result of their actions, standards of attainment have risen in English and mathematics to be broadly average. Leaders have effectively focused their efforts on the areas most in need of improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and improvement planning is sharply focused on the appropriate priorities for the immediate future. The school's capacity for continued and sustained improvement is good.

The quality of guidance given to pupils to help them improve their work varies across the school and is satisfactory overall. In a minority of lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not gauge pupils' understanding as well or as frequently as they could. Marking also varies in style and effectiveness. Some marking is highly effective because it gives pupils opportunities to improve their work. Other marking either lacks focus or concentrates too much on the quality of presentation in work.

Gaps in achievement between boys and girls are closing but are not yet fully eradicated. Inspection evidence shows that boys are now doing much better as a result of improved teaching. However, more could be done to ensure boys engage fully with the curriculum. It is noticeable, in a few lessons, that boys engage less well than girls. Some opportunities to develop basic skills across different subjects are missed. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development and, as a result, they behave well and contribute meaningfully to the cohesive school community. Opportunities to engage with and learn from people within the United Kingdom with different backgrounds from their own are at an early stage of development. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. After a very good start in Nursery, progress in Reception is less rapid, particularly in areas connected to literacy development.

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Effective partnerships exist that support the school in meeting its ambitious aims. The federation has allowed the school to better support pupils and their families through shared resources, such as a learning mentor and the facilities and services provided by the children's centre. The local authority has provided additional support, monitoring and intervention. Most usefully, the local authority brokered the support of a senior leader from another school to increase capacity during the period of rapid improvement. This link has been particularly useful in working with senior leaders to develop and manage robust and sustainable systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying pockets of underachievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - creating a whole school curriculum plan which makes clear meaningful cross-curricular links with English, mathematics and information communication technology
 - providing opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures represented in the United Kingdom beyond their own locality
 - evaluating and developing the curriculum to ensure activities are interesting and challenging for different groups of learners, particularly for boys.
- Improve the consistency and usefulness of feedback and guidance by:
 - ensuring marking helps pupils improve their work
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to read and respond to comments and marking
 - developing questioning skills so all teachers ask questions that help them understand and develop pupils' thinking and learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Reception by:
 - building on the good practice seen in Nursery
 - ensuring all staff have the appropriate skills to develop language skills, including early phonics
 - ensuring that all adult led activities in reception take into account the starting points, interests and abilities of each child.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Pupils enjoy their learning a great deal. They are excited by the opportunities they are given and work hard to meet the high expectations of their teachers. Behaviour is very good most of the time. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. Pupils are polite around school, supportive of each other in class and thoughtful in the way they talk to adults. Some pupils become distracted when teachers talk for too long and they lose interest. This happens in only a small number of lessons. A considerable legacy of

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underachievement is beginning to be eradicated as result of effective support for groups and vastly improved teaching, most notably this term.

Personal development is good. Pupils talk about spiritual and cultural issues with maturity and thoughtfulness beyond their years. They care about their school and their peers. Pupils are very happy to talk about their achievements. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They say that they feel safe and talk with maturity about the dangers they may face and how these should be avoided. Pupils develop a positive attitude to leading a healthy lifestyle. They say they enjoy the range of physical activities provided by the school. They understand the impact of their lifestyle choices such as diet, drugs and exercise and amounts of sleep.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and most considerably during this academic year. Many classes are buzzing with excitement as pupils engage in interesting activities. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' academic and personal development and this is demonstrated clearly through their discussions with pupils. In the best lessons, teachers are well skilled at asking open-ended questions which allow them to evaluate the level of understanding of each pupil. Learning is most rapid in these lessons because teachers adapt their approach and the level of challenge based on their accurate and dynamic understanding of individuals' learning. In the minority of satisfactory lessons,

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teachers spend too much of the time talking so pupils do not get the same opportunities to show how well they understand the what they are being taught. Marking in books varies in quality. Where it is particularly useful, marking and guidance give pupils a clear idea about how they can improve their work and, consequently, when pupils respond to this, their learning accelerates. In some classes, marking is less helpful because it does not give specific guidance to improve pupils' work or, where it does give guidance, it is too sharply focused on presentation skills.

The satisfactory curriculum provides a range of memorable experiences that most pupils enjoy. Literacy and numeracy teaching has been strengthened and are driving the improvements in standards of attainment. Some work has taken place to link different parts of the curriculum together through themed weeks and teachers' individual plans. However, the school does not plan the curriculum as a whole and, consequently, there are missed opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across different subjects.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Pupils are well cared for and know that adults will support them when needed. The school has robust systems for identifying when pupils' circumstances make them particularly vulnerable, and works with a range of partners, including the children's centre, to provide effective support for them and their families. As a result of the exceptionally caring ethos, pupils and parents and carers have resounding faith in the school. One parent stated, 'I feel that Shephalbury Park provides a great environment for my children not only to learn, but to enjoy school. I love the "feeling" of the school.' Another stated, 'I have always been extremely happy about the way our school and its teaching staff have shown genuine concern and care for my children and their education.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team has become increasingly effective in overcoming previous inadequacies. There is a clear determination to improve pupils' achievement further. This drive for improvement is effectively led by senior leaders who are clear about what the school needs to do to continue to improve.

The school works well with key partners to enhance the work of the school. Close links with the children's centre are leading to good engagement with families joining the school. Popular courses are held to help parents and carers learn skills to support their children's learning.

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The governing body is supportive and well informed. It has a sound overview of the school's main priorities. However, some of its systems for reviewing the impact of teaching on learning and its monitoring of key policies are underdeveloped. For example, governors do not routinely monitor the effectiveness of policies for promoting equality of opportunity. Safeguarding procedures are robust and fully meet requirements. Staff and governors are well trained and there are clear policies outlining correct procedures, which adults are familiar with.

The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. Gaps in attainment are closing considerably. Incidents borne out of prejudice are exceptionally rare. The school has robust strategies for proactively encouraging harmony amongst groups of pupils within the school. Community cohesion within the school is very strong and pupils get on well with each other and their teachers. Leaders recognise that their work to build links beyond the immediate community is at an early stage.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision, including the outdoor environment, is welcoming and provides a range of exciting opportunities for children to learn through play and exploration. Children's development is best supported when both age groups mix and take advantage of a wide range of independent and adult-led activities. Adult-led activity in the Nursery is of a high quality and, as a result, children make good gains in their learning. However, the quality of adult-led activity designed for Reception children varies considerably, and is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is weaker, children continue to try hard but some of the approaches used to teach new skills are ineffective. This is particularly noticeable in some activities designed to develop language skills.

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Leaders have quickly recognised this inconsistency, which has come about as a result of very recent staff changes. Their self-evaluation is accurate and their actions have made some improvements in other aspects of provision. However, it is too early to see any significant impact on this particular priority.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The 62 parents and carers who returned a questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. The comments made show that they are happy with the improvements made and the way that the school cares for their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shephalbury Park 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	71	18	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	71	18	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	65	22	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	55	24	39	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	55	28	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	56	27	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	42	36	58	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)	30	48	30	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	45	33	53	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	37	35	56	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	48	27	44	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	61	23	37	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	65	22	35	0	0	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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shephalbury Park Primary School, Stevenage, SG2 8AX

You may remember that we came to inspect your school recently. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

We found that your school is now doing much better than it was when we last came to your school and it is providing you with a satisfactory education. In the past, many of you were not making the progress you should have been. Because teaching is now good, we found that you are making better progress and catching up in your learning.

We have asked your school to work on some other things that will help your school get even better.

We would like your teachers to find opportunities for you to develop your literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in different subjects. We have also asked that your teachers make sure that all your lessons are as interesting as they can be to as many of you as possible.

We would like your teachers to make sure their marking and comments help you make even better progress by showing you how to improve your work. You can help by reading and listening carefully to your teachers' comments and trying hard when improving your work.

We have asked your headteacher to make all the activities in Early Years Foundation Stage help children do as well as they can in their learning.

I would like to finish by saying thank you to all of you who talked with us. We were all very impressed with your manners, maturity and behaviour. You really are a credit to your parents and your school.

You have my best wishes

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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