

Shepherds Down Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116642
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357996
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Pratt
Headteacher	Jane Sansome
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed 11 teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Pupils' work, information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from 37 parents and carers, 71 staff and 32 pupils were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How challenging targets are so that all pupils and children make the progress they should.
- Whether children of Reception age are making the progress in all areas of learning that they should.
- How well data concerning pupils' progress are used to drive improvements in provision and whether governors are able to challenge the school to improve.
- How effectively the school empowers pupils to make decisions about healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- How well teachers use assessment to ensure work is matched to pupils' abilities and help pupils to understand how well they are doing.

Information about the school

Shepherds Down Special School caters predominantly for pupils with severe and complex learning disabilities. An increasing number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders and others have additional needs associated with physical disabilities and medical conditions. All have a statement of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in the care of the local authority. A number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are educated in classes other than in the Early Years class. Many of the classes are mixed-age range and occasionally include pupils from different key stages.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Shepherds Down is a good school that ensures that pupils are at the centre of all that it does. As a result, it has a number of outstanding features. The high priority placed on pupils' care and welfare is reflected in the excellent arrangements for care, guidance and support. In particular, external agencies are used exceptionally well to support pupils' needs when necessary. Parents and carers are overwhelming in their support of the school, not only because of what it does for their children, but also in the way it supports their families. This extremely positive support shown by parents and carers is indicative of the outstanding success of the school's engagement with them.

Pupils clearly enjoy school and become increasingly confident in their abilities. They benefit from a good curriculum that is well focused on improving their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and in developing their personal and social skills. The commitment of staff is shown in the way that they take full advantage of every minute of each day in working with the pupils to help them develop their independence and become confident young people. As a result, pupils make excellent progress in many aspects of their personal development. Their knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe is excellent. They talk enthusiastically about healthy living and know that exercise is good for them. In discussions with inspectors, pupils gave lots of examples of the different things they did in school, as illustrated by one young person who commented on how much he 'liked press-ups and cartwheels'. Pupils' views are clearly valued and pupils make an outstanding contribution to the way the school is run.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, as they get older, they continue to achieve well. Effective teaching and the excellent teamwork within every class ensures pupils' progress is good. In most lessons, there is good attention to planning so that work is matched well to the individual needs of pupils. This, though, is not always the case. In a few lessons, all pupils do the same task and there is not always sufficient focus on pupils' individual learning targets. Senior leaders are in the process of using national guidelines to ensure all pupils' targets are appropriately challenging and that they are used effectively to better focus their learning.

Strong leadership by the headteacher has brought about considerable improvements since the last inspection. She has been effective in encouraging staff to take on more responsibilities and has developed a strong middle management team who are well focused on raising standards even further. Self-evaluation processes are good and staff and governors are actively involved in reviewing the school's progress. As a result, there is good awareness of the strengths and areas for development and quick action taken where concerns are identified. All of these factors contribute to the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. Governors effectively challenge the school about many aspects of its work. They are also instrumental in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are

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extremely rigorous. Although the school has initiated a number of effective actions to develop provision, it does not always make clear, in planning, how these will have a positive impact on pupils' achievements. As a result, the governing body and other stakeholders are not always able to fully question the school about the impact of developments.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
 - pupils' learning targets are challenging
 - teachers consistently set work based on the different ability levels in each class.
- Improve planning for developments so that the impact of actions on raising pupils' achievements is clearly shown.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All pupils, including those with particularly complex needs, make good progress in their learning and achieve well. There is no evidence of any group of pupils achieving less well than their peers. Where the school does identify any anomalies, such as the progress of girls in literacy, quick action is taken to address this. Good progress is evident in many lessons. In a Year 5/6 group, pupils confidently talked to the class about their experiences from the previous day, describing how they were 'saturated' on the trip out. They showed good recall of previous learning, identifying features of rivers, using terms such as 'estuary' and recognising that the book they are reading on rivers is non-fiction. In a numeracy lesson for pupils on the autistic spectrum, pupils joined in counting songs and one young person was quick to select the right number that showed how many ducks were left in the pond.

The excellent development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in many aspects of the school. Break times, lunch and snack times reflect the very positive relationships that pupils have with each other and with staff. These times enable pupils to develop their social and personal skills extremely well. They respond very positively to staff's input and try their best to succeed. One young person, for example, was determined to feed himself and, although this took time, he succeeded in raising the spoon to his mouth to eat his dinner. This was greeted with cheers and applause from staff for such a huge achievement.

Pupils are very clear about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they explained to an inspector why it was important not to run in the corridors in case they hurt someone. Behaviour is good and pupils are very aware of right and wrong. For a small number, behaviour can vary and incidents do occur. Staff manage these well to ensure all are safe. Pupils have a very good sense of healthy eating, choosing fruit and drinking plenty of water. For the majority of students attendance is high, although it is lower for some because of their medical needs. Overall attendance is above average.

Pupils' involvement in the school community is very good and they are confident that their suggestions are listened to and acted upon. Pupils make good use of local facilities to enhance their education. All these factors greatly contribute to pupils' good preparation for

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life when they move on to secondary school. Their cultural awareness is very well promoted through their links with other countries, such as St Lucia.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

A strength of teaching is in the high-quality teamwork evident in all lessons. Support staff are very clear about their roles and, through their very good understanding of the pupils, ensure that learning is good. In a reading session with older pupils, the teaching assistants worked extremely well with their groups, recording and supporting pupils' reading skills very well. The vast majority of teachers plan their lessons in detail, ensuring work is linked to pupils' targets and it is clear what pupils are expected to learn. This, though, is not always the case, for example when pupils are expected to complete the same written task even though many are struggling still to form letters. Subject knowledge and teachers' knowledge of special needs is used very well, particularly in working with those pupils with the most complex needs and those on the autistic spectrum. The use of symbols is good, enabling pupils to understand the next steps of the lesson. There are good records kept that reflect pupils' experiences and these are annotated well. The school is in the process of updating its assessment policy to ensure it reflects the many aspects of good practice

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that exist. Not all teachers, though, are consistently effective in informing pupils about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum provides a good range of experiences. The lunchtime clubs and holiday clubs do much to enhance pupils' learning. Time during the day is used very well. One parent commented that pupils are learning from the time they start to when they leave each day. Planning for the curriculum is detailed and is rightly being revised to ensure it meets the changing needs of pupils within the school. While there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum, the school is in the process of auditing these to ensure a clearer overview of provision in these areas.

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. The high level of training and collaboration between staff ensures that pupils are very well cared for and their intimate care needs addressed in a manner that ensures their dignity. The very close work with multi-agencies and with parents and carers does much to support pupils and their families. Much-valued support is provided to families by the school and multi-agencies after school through the School Home Integrated Partnership (SHIP) initiative. Parents and carers are very well informed about what goes on in school. Their views are listened to and there are strong links to ensure that work in school can be supported at home.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Under strong, effective leadership, the school has made good progress since its last inspection. A strength of leadership has been in developing the skills of staff. As a result, middle managers play an important role within the school and carry out their responsibilities effectively. Systems for monitoring provision are rigorous and incorporate a mix of formal and informal observations. This ensures the headteacher and senior staff have a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development in the school. Effective support has enabled staff to extend their expertise and ensured that the quality of teaching and learning are generally consistent.

The school has successfully gathered a good range of data about pupils' achievements and uses this well to check the individual progress of pupils. Through regular meetings between staff and senior leaders, pupils' progress is monitored closely. This ensures that there is no discrimination and pupils' equality of opportunity is assured. The recent use of nationally recognised guidance has resulted in the school starting to review its targets to ensure they are challenging for all pupils.

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The governing body has a good understanding of all that goes on in the school through a range of effective strategies. It provides a good level of challenge in many aspects. School improvement planning is detailed and well focused on a range of initiatives but it is not always evident what impact developments will have on raising pupils' achievements. Governors are very vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety and, as a result, safeguarding procedures are excellent. Community cohesion is good because the school places great importance on establishing links both locally and internationally. Very strong links with the local community, including local schools, benefit all those involved and have done much to raise the profile of the school and its pupils. The school is in the process of developing links further with organisations and other schools nationally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children benefit from effective teaching and this is enabling them to make good progress while in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a good understanding of the range of needs of the children, and targets to support their learning are well thought through to enable them to achieve well. Children clearly enjoy their time in class and respond well to sessions such as those at the start of the day. They are keen to participate, and interact well with staff. They begin to learn to manage their behaviour and to stay safe. Many are beginning to recognise symbols for activities and can choose which activity they want to move to. Pupils respond well to the different stimuli and enjoy the different tastes at snack and lunch times. Teaching maintains a good pace of learning. Children usually stay on task and concentrate well, but at times this varies and children are not always encouraged to complete the tasks set. There is good teamwork amongst the staff and good attention is paid to health and safety and safeguarding. Knowledge of children's special needs is used well and there is continuous interaction with children, ensuring they understand what is happening. For example, staff work very well with a child with very complex needs,

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explaining how they will move him and what they are doing. Importance is placed on giving children choices and children are encouraged to decide, for example, whether to press a switch or not. The curriculum is planned well to ensure children have a good range of experiences.

Leadership and management are good. The new leadership team has a very clear understanding of what needs to be done and aspects of provision are constantly being reviewed. For example, the school is working hard to review its system for tracking children's progress to ensure they will have a better overview of progress overall.

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

The return of the Ofsted questionnaire was broadly average as a percentage of pupils on roll. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact it has had on their children, particularly on how safe they feel their children are. Many make very positive comments about staff and the progress their children have made. Their comments can be summarised by one parent who wrote, 'We are extremely lucky to have such a wonderful school so close - from the escorts on the buses, the teaching and catering staff, through to the headteacher's calm and efficient leadership. The children are safe, motivated and taught to the best of their abilities.'

A very small number of parents and carers raised concerns about their child's progress and use of the home-school book. During this inspection, the inspection team found pupils' progress to be good and communication with parents and carers excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shepherds Down 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	92	2	5	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	78	7	19	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	76	7	19	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	81	7	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	73	8	22	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	73	9	24	1	3	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)	23	62	10	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	84	5	14	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	76	5	14	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	89	3	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	89	4	11	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



11 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shepherds Down Special School, Winchester SO21 2AJ

Thank you so much for being so friendly and helpful when we came to visit your school recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you all and a special thank you to those of you who came to the meeting to talk to us about your school.

We think your school is good. We know that you work hard in lessons and, because of this, you do well in your learning. It was good to see how happy you are in school and that you feel safe. The school is very good at making sure you are well cared for. We were very impressed at how much you know about keeping healthy and it was good to hear how much you enjoy all the different sports and activities. Your teachers know you well and help you learn a lot of things.

The school is well led by the headteacher and all the staff work hard to make sure you do well. Because the school wants to be even better, we have asked them to make sure that the targets you are set help you to make the best possible progress in your work and that teachers use them to set work that is just right for you. We have also asked the school to make sure that when they plan for improvements it is clearer how this will help you to learn even more.

We wish you well for the future and hope you continue with all your hard work.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall

Lead inspector

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