

# Shepherds Down Special School

Shepherds Lane, Compton, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 2AJ

## Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Outstanding</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the headteacher took up post in September 2016, the pace of improvement has increased.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school and are driving necessary improvements with enthusiasm and rigour.
- The school is a safe place in which to learn. Parents appreciate how attentive staff are to pupils' needs, which enables pupils to maximise their learning.
- Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Staff find innovative ways to meet pupils' physical and emotional needs. Pupils grow in confidence and self-awareness as they progress through the school.
- Pupils make strong academic progress from their starting points as a result of teaching that is skilfully tailored to meet their needs.
- A range of carefully matched therapies contribute positively to pupils' emotional development, enabling them to grow in confidence and self-awareness.
- Parents support the school's drive to ensure that pupils attend school as often as they can. Consequently, pupils' attendance is better than in similar schools nationally.
- Governors have supported the school effectively during a period of significant change. They are ambitious to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils get off to a good start in Reception. Strong partnerships with parents support the development of pupils' communication and learning well.
- Teachers' adept use of symbols, signing and picture exchange, for example, strongly supports pupils to learn and to work with increasing independence.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They develop mutually trusting relationships with staff.
- Governors recognise the need to know more about pupils' progress, in order to hold leaders more effectively to account for pupils' achievement.
- Teachers do not consistently select teaching strategies that reliably meet the needs of pupils. As a result, on occasions a few pupils lose concentration and their behaviour does not enable them to learn effectively.
- A small minority of staff are not helpfully supportive of leaders' current improvement priorities.

## Full report

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

- Improve pupils' learning and behaviour so it is consistently good, by ensuring that teachers implement strategies that meet the needs of all pupils, based upon their individual starting points and needs.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - strengthening governors' role in monitoring and evaluation in order to hold the headteacher to account for the school's performance effectively, including the progress of pupils currently at the school and groups of pupils such as those who are disadvantaged
  - securing, through effective communication, the commitment of all staff to leaders' school improvement priorities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new headteacher has worked well with other leaders to develop an accurate view of the school through classroom monitoring and analysis of school performance information. As a result, she has put decisive improvement actions in place. Strong systems ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. Senior leaders monitor teaching effectively to provide developmental feedback to staff so that further improvements can be made.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school's future. The middle leaders to whom inspectors spoke are supportive of the headteacher's drive for improvement. They manage staff performance effectively and link this to the school's high expectations. Relevant professional development successfully supports staff to broaden their skills in order to meet pupils' needs.
- Following her appointment, the headteacher identified some gaps in pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy. Recent initiatives are sensibly focusing on these areas. There has also been an effective whole-school focus to support those pupils with limited speech to learn more effectively by improving the use of signs and symbols. Visits to classrooms with senior leaders confirmed that there is evidence of impact from all these improvements in teaching and learning.
- Since September 2016, leaders have implemented a helpful revision of the school's assessment and tracking system. This enables them to evaluate more rigorously the impact of teaching and learning. The system supports teachers well to record the very small steps that pupils make in the different areas of learning that are relevant to their needs. It also helps teachers to set, and pupils to meet, the challenging but achievable targets which are the school's policy.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to extend the range of available therapies to disadvantaged pupils, and to support families, such as in the use of non-verbal communication systems. As a result, disadvantaged pupils quickly become successful learners and achieve well at school.
- Leaders use physical education and sports premium funding effectively. They provide access to activities such as horse riding and dance, which supports pupils' physical, emotional and social development well.
- The curriculum is well designed to interest pupils and provide for their complex needs. It recognises the importance of pupils' personal, social and emotional well-being and contributes to outstanding progress in these areas. The curriculum also supports pupils' spiritual and cultural development well. For example, during the inspection pupils enjoyed making Easter gardens and drumming with a visiting music specialist. In assembly, key stage 2 pupils reflected on the signs of spring and marvelled at the school's hatching chicks. Staff prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain, for example by teaching them to keep to rules and be respectful and tolerant of others.

- The school engages well with the useful training and networking provided by the local authority for its special schools. The local authority judges the school to require minimal support and has supported the new headteacher appropriately. The school contributes to the authority by providing special educational needs support to over 70 mainstream primary schools. Evaluations show how much mainstream teachers appreciate the professional development that the school provides.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the achievement of individual pupils and the overall achievement of previous year groups. However, leaders and governors do not have a shared detailed overview of the progress of pupils currently at the school, including disadvantaged pupils. As a result, governors are not well placed to hold leaders fully to account for the progress pupils make.
- Leaders have not yet secured the engagement of a small minority of staff in the changes they are making. This is contributing to inconsistencies in teaching that affect pupils' learning and behaviour. Governors and senior leaders are aware and are taking steps to address this so that all staff are fully behind the school's vision.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has provided much needed stability to the school during a period of change. However, governors are now eager to challenge, as well as support, the headteacher. They have undertaken recent training to ensure they are skilled to ask and follow through questions to hold the school to account.
- Governors understand well their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and finance. They discharge these effectively as a result of the training that members of the governing body have attended. They are working rigorously with the headteacher's support to fulfil their other responsibilities, for example in reviewing statutory information to ensure it is fit for purpose. They are aware of pupil premium spending and its impact, although their 2016 review lacks precision.
- Governors have worked with the headteacher to understand the school's current effectiveness. Governors do not hold leaders to account fully for the achievement of pupils currently at the school because they are not provided with suitable information. They are not yet involved in improvement planning.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have developed a culture in which pupils' safeguarding is a priority. Leaders, governors and staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. School staff know pupils very well and they liaise effectively with parents, carers and outside agencies. They support children's safeguarding and healthcare needs through regular reviews, such as for education, health and social care plans.
- Checks on the recruitment of staff and the safety of the site are rigorous. All record-keeping is well maintained. The headteacher, in her role as one of the school's designated safeguarding leads, has made a significant contribution to strengthen the school's procedures. She has also provided staff with up-to-date training.

- All parents who spoke with the inspectors, or responded to the Ofsted questionnaire Parent View, expressed their confidence that the school is safe. Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe in school because they know that they can go to any adult if they have a problem.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- At the beginning of the current academic year, the new headteacher introduced a number of relevant initiatives in teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teachers have improved their use of symbols, signing and picture exchange, for example, to improve communication within lessons. This improvement strongly supports pupils to understand their learning tasks and to work with increasing independence.
- Teachers personalise pupils' learning skilfully. They carefully record their observations of pupils' learning and use this information accurately to identify pupils' next steps. Where teaching is most effective, tasks engage pupils well, by taking into account pupils' interests and current needs.
- The school has very recently agreed and implemented a refreshed approach to developing literacy, to ensure pupils learn, practise and apply skills in phonics and reading, as well as in writing. Pupils enjoy practising skills in phonics and linking these with reading and writing.
- High-quality teaching motivates pupils with severe learning difficulties and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Teachers make effective use of sensory materials to stimulate pupils to think and communicate. Pupils learn to communicate in a variety of ways that are appropriate to their needs. Staff have a secure understanding of pupils' abilities and skilfully adapt their challenge to meet needs.
- Staff and parents meticulously maintain regular communication. This supports pupils to practise important skills at home. Helpfully, for older pupils and the most able, communications often focus on the learning of literacy and numeracy skills, while for younger pupils the focus is on their personal and social learning.
- There is early evidence of impact from recent improvement strategies, both in children's work and through listening to pupils' reading. The use of songs and repetitive rhyme, for example, is supporting pupils to reinforce and generalise what they are learning.
- While teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, leaders are aware that there is some variation. There are examples of excellence in the school, where teachers lead learning that is precisely matched to pupils' abilities, for example by asking meaningful questions and providing clear explanations to support the understanding of new concepts. On occasions, there is some teaching that does not match pupils' needs, which means they do not learn well.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff ensure that individual pupils develop emotionally, socially and physically to become successful and confident learners who enjoy the many opportunities that the school provides.
- Pupils develop socially and emotionally through collaborating in learning and play, and they make firm friendships. A successful residential visit that takes place in Year 6 helps pupils to develop their readiness for secondary school.
- Pupils' well-being is paramount and staff communicate frequently with parents to ensure that care is continuous. Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, commented on the staff's dedication to support pupils' safety and learning. For example, one parent summed up the outcome of the school's work with her child by saying, 'My child goes to school smiling and comes home smiling.'
- Inspectors saw how quickly pupils learn to be confident at school and to develop mutually trusting relationships with staff.
- Teachers treat pupils' safety as a priority and carefully weave safety issues into lessons. In discussion with an inspector, pupils said that the school helps them to stay safe. They know who to tell if someone is unkind, which results in very little bullying. Pupils talked about their awareness of road safety, 'stranger danger' and how to behave safely when online. Should any unkindness occur between pupils, staff deal with this swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils benefit from an extensive range of creative and physical therapies provided by staff and outside agencies. These strongly support pupils with more challenging personal development needs to become more self-aware and self-managing.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Almost all pupils are ready to learn and engage positively in all parts of the school day because of the diligent support that staff provide. Staff consistently encourage pupils to make positive choices about learning, intervening quickly when they need to do so. Consequently, almost all pupils are engaged in lessons and they concentrate well to enjoy their learning.
- Pupils enjoy learning and take a pride in their work. In almost all lessons they concentrate very well, listen appropriately and collaborate effectively with adults and each other. For example, in a parachute game a large group of pupils took turns and followed instructions. They showed trust and supported each other's learning.
- Leaders have recently implemented a revised behaviour policy to reflect the school's high expectations of pupils. This is resulting in improvements to the consistency of behaviour management. The complex needs of some pupils occasionally present challenging behaviour. Leaders ensure that risks are well managed and strategies are in place to support these pupils effectively.

- Occasionally, the engagement and behaviour of a small minority of pupils is poor because the teaching strategy does not meet their individual needs. When pupils do behave poorly, adults manage their behaviour very well.
- Attendance is above the national average for similar schools, and persistent absence is lower than the national average. Robust actions by leaders and staff have ensured that parents support the school's drive to ensure that pupils attend well. As a result, almost all absence is for understandable reasons, such as illness or medical appointments.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is low because of their complex special educational needs. Taking account of their starting points, pupils of different abilities make equally good progress. Nevertheless, historic performance information shows that during recent years there has been a small decline in pupils' academic outcomes.
- Overall, most pupils currently at the school make strong progress in reading, writing and number. Current pupils in the school are on track to make expected or better progress to meet or exceed the relevant targets they are set.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least as good as that of other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally with similar starting points. This is as a result of the effective additional support, such as for communication, that they and their families receive.
- Almost all pupils currently in the school make strong gains in their personal, social and emotional development. Parents are particularly appreciative of this aspect of the school's work. Inspectors saw pupils rapidly developing their communication skills and physical mobility.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress through, for example, the use of real objects that motivate their different senses. This gives them a good grasp of their surroundings and helps them to communicate well.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder quickly become familiar with their environment and daily routines to cope with increasing challenge, both in their academic work and by being introduced to different social situations. As a result, they too make good progress.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills and talents in a wide range of other subjects of the curriculum, such as in music, sport and in art and design.
- Until recently, the progress of pupils in English has not been quite as strong as in mathematics. Leaders recognise this and have very recently introduced an effective whole-school approach to secure improvement. This strongly supports pupils to participate in the learning activity. However, inspectors and leaders saw on occasions that pupils responded less readily when the approach was not sufficiently adapted to meet individual pupils' needs.

## Early years provision

Good

- Pupils make good progress from very low starting points. They settle quickly into school as a result of well-targeted support that also helps parents. Pupils make strong progress in communication, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. The early years curriculum extends across Years 1 and 2, which enables pupils to make a seamless transition.
- Teaching staff in Reception Year provide pupils with a suitable range of different practical resources and learning experiences. For example, inspectors saw pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulties enjoy repetitive songs to learn numbers to five. Pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties were stimulated by the tactile experience of planting seeds in soil. The most able pupils engaged productively in their free choice of play.
- The care that teaching staff provide for pupils is highly effective and they are alert to their needs at all times. From their early years, an effective range of therapies is available to support pupils' developmental needs.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to support the families of disadvantaged pupils. Teachers work with parents to develop consistent approaches, which help pupils' readiness for school.
- Statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils are met. Children feel safe and happy both to play and learn.
- Leaders have a secure understanding of the curriculum and oversee effective teamwork to plan and assess learning across the different developmental areas. However, on occasions, teaching strategies do not meet individual pupils' needs, learning time is not maximised and pupils do not engage in learning.

## School details

Unique reference number	116642
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10024889

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Vardy
Headteacher	Deborah Gooderham
Telephone number	01962 713445
Website	<a href="http://www.shepherdsdown.hants.sch.uk">www.shepherdsdown.hants.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@shepherdsdown.hants.sch.uk">admin@shepherdsdown.hants.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2014

## Information about this school

- Since it was last inspected, the school has a new headteacher who has been in post for seven months. The chair of the governing body is also new to the role.
- The school caters for pupils with complex learning difficulties, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. A small number of pupils have degenerative or life-limiting medical conditions, or are terminally ill.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Boys outnumber girls by 3:1.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- The school works collaboratively with a range of partners including social care, occupational therapists, local authority services, multi-sensory team, physiotherapists, and speech and language therapists. Some of the school's staff are also commissioned by the local authority to provide an outreach service to local primary schools.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in each class. All of the observations were carried out with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair. She also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of school documentation, including documents related to safeguarding, attendance, the pupil premium, the school's website information, leaders' school improvement evaluation and planning and governors' minutes. They reviewed pupils' assessment information, including case files and teachers' formal and informal assessment records. Inspectors reviewed the school's published performance information and the school's own analysis of its historic performance.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other school leaders.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons, and met a group of pupils outside class. Inspectors considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. Inspectors also listened to Year 2 and Year 6 pupils read outside of lessons, as well as listening to some pupils reading during classroom visits.
- In addition to speaking to a number of parents at the start of the inspection, inspectors considered 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 13 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered 25 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

## Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gary Anderson

Ofsted Inspector

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