

Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115099
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311831
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Tim Potter
Headteacher	Mr Philip Hays
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2002
School address	The Street Sheering Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire CM22 7LU
Telephone number	01279734210
Fax number	01279734446

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Sheering C of E is a much smaller than average primary school. The school provides education for pupils from Sheering village, surrounding villages and from further afield. A significant number of pupils come from outside the normal catchment area. Most pupils have White British backgrounds and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A significant proportion of pupils join the school at different times during the year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sheering C of E Primary is a good school. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards because of good teaching and a well planned curriculum. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. Effective care, guidance and support and a positive school atmosphere lead to good personal development for pupils. Parents hold the school in high regard and over half of them choose to send their children to Sheering from considerable distances. Parents are very pleased with both the care and education provided for their children. In return, parents give the school considerable support. Typical of parents' comments are, 'Teaching is good', and 'Children are very happy at school'.

Good leadership and management are key features contributing to the school's effectiveness. The experienced and established headteacher provides clear leadership and is well supported by the rest of the staff. In this small school, leadership responsibilities are shared effectively among the few members of staff. Teamwork is good. Other key leaders, particularly the deputy headteacher, have had a positive impact on improving teaching and the curriculum. Effective monitoring of performance means that the school has an accurate view of what it does well and what it needs to do to improve. Governors are actively involved in the school's developments, provide considerable support, and challenge what the school does constructively.

Improvements to teaching and to the curriculum mean that pupils are now achieving well. Across the school, teachers have good relationships with their pupils. Instructions, questioning and explanations promote learning well. Activities and tasks are usually well matched to pupils' abilities, so that they are challenged appropriately. Just occasionally, learning slows because of lengthy introductions or tasks not being sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities.

The assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is effective. Pupils have clear learning targets for writing and mathematics, so they know what they are working at to improve. The headteacher, with his staff, has created a caring and positive climate in which pupils learn. This is much appreciated by pupils. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen participation in activities. Pupils' behaviour is good because of the high expectations of all staff and the close working relationships between adults and pupils. Their positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute significantly to their good achievement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most years, children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are broadly expected for their age. Good teaching and an interesting range of learning activities enable children to make good gains from their starting points in all the areas of learning they study. Children's standards of work meet national expectations by the end of Reception and sometimes exceed them. Children benefit from teachers' clear instructions and explanations. They are keen to participate and express their ideas clearly. Just occasionally, over-directed work restricts children's opportunities to explore and work independently or tasks are not sharply matched to children's specific needs. Children enjoy their learning and relate extremely well with adults and their peers. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the outdoor facilities. The addition of a covered area has extended the classroom and children make good progress with outdoor activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching by ensuring that all lessons maintain a brisk pace.
- Improve pupils' progress by ensuring that activities are always well matched to their abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points through to the end of Year 6. Standards vary from year to year because numbers in each year group are small and significant numbers of pupils join the school from others at different times. By the end of Year 2, pupils have consolidated what they have learned in Foundation Stage. They make satisfactory progress and standards are typically average in reading, writing and mathematics, although standards dipped in writing in 2007. The school has taken action to raise standards in Years 1 and 2, which is having a positive impact on pupils' progress this year. National test results for Year 6 in 2007 were above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in the current Year 6 are also above average. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress because they receive helpful adult support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and show very positive attitudes to learning. They are friendly, polite and considerate to others. Attendance is satisfactory. Despite the school's good efforts to monitor and promote good attendance, attendance levels are just below average. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show a clear understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Members of the school council and play leaders take their additional responsibilities seriously. Pupils contribute well to the local community through links with the church. The raising of funds for charities contributes well to the wider community. Pupils are well prepared for the future because by the time they leave they have good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. In addition, they have well developed personal and social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have established clear expectations of learning and behaviour and pupils respond well to these. They effectively share the purpose of the lesson, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Instructions, demonstrations and explanations by teachers are clear and informative. Pupils are attentive and respond extremely well to their teachers. Questioning is used well to challenge the pupils' thinking and check their understanding. Teachers usually use assessment information effectively to match tasks to pupils' abilities and needs. When this happens, pupils' interest is maintained and they make good gains in their learning. Just occasionally, tasks are not sufficiently well matched and learning declines. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who need it. However, when lesson introductions are too long, pupils are not actively involved and the pace of their learning slows. The marking of pupils'

work is positive and constructive. Good work is praised and there are clear comments to help them to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A recently revised and improved curriculum enables pupils to make good progress and contributes well to their personal development. There are good links between subjects, which add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Positive action has been taken to raise achievement in writing by providing a wider range of opportunities in lessons. The school now uses visual stimuli well and interesting topics to inspire pupils to write. Opportunities for pupils to apply and develop investigative skills in mathematics and science have been increased. A 'thinking skills' project is improving teachers' questioning and is challenging the pupils well. These changes are beginning to have a positive impact on standards in Years 1 and 2. A good range of additional activities enriches the curriculum. A residential visit to an outdoor centre in Norfolk for Years 5 and 6 provides new activities such as archery, climbing and canoeing as well as building pupils' team skills. Pupils commented, 'Norfolk gave me the opportunity to learn more about my friends', and, 'I really enjoyed doing the activities'. Healthy lifestyles and personal safety are promoted well across the curriculum. Since the last inspection, the addition of a computer suite supports learning well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Effective procedures ensure that pupils are protected, safe and secure at school. Pastoral care is strong. All staff know the pupils extremely well and have established very good relationships with them and their families. Parents commented, 'The school has caring staff and teaches good values'. Pupils who find learning difficult receive effective support and this enables them to make good progress. Assessment systems have improved and are now good, with information usually used well to plan teaching. Pupils have clear individual learning targets in writing and mathematics, so they know what they need to do to improve. The school has not yet extended this good practice to science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management promote effective educational provision and care, which enables pupils to achieve well. The headteacher provides good leadership and other staff all make a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness. The governors are enthusiastic and are actively involved in the life of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's performance.

Effective self-evaluation means that the school knows what it does well and takes effective action to bring about improvements. Challenging targets are set for each year group as part of the drive to raise achievement and standards. Good improvements to assessment, teaching and to the monitoring of performance demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. The school provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Sheering C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Sheering, CM22 7UL

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I found out. Sheering C of E is a good school and one you can be proud of.

These things are strengths of the school.

- You clearly enjoy school and take part in activities with enthusiasm.
- The school has a very positive and pleasant atmosphere.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start.
- Teaching is good, which is why you are making good progress and standards are currently above average in Year 6.
- You are friendly and polite and get on extremely well with other pupils and adults.
- A good curriculum and a wide range of additional activities are provided, including a residential visit.
- Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Your headteacher leads the school well and receives good support from other staff.
- Staff know you very well. They take very good care of you and give you good support.
- Your parents are very pleased with the care and education provided.

There are just a few things the school has been asked to improve.

- Occasionally, your teachers could challenge you more, involve you more in your learning,
- and ensure that lessons move on at a quicker pace.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards

Derek Watts

Lead inspector