

Sharples Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105162
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	324171
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	236
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Shirley Buckley
Headteacher	Mrs Aleksandra Hartshorne
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hugh Lupus Street off Ashworth Lane Bolton Greater Manchester BL1 8RX
Telephone number	01204 333077
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They investigated achievement and standards, the effectiveness of target setting and review in promoting progress and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was collected from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data, school documents and parents' questionnaires. In addition, there were discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized school draws its pupils from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. Many pupils live outside the immediate area of the school. The school is resourced for visually impaired learners and currently there are seven of these pupils throughout the school who are taught with their peers for most the time. Slightly more than half the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with the largest group being of Asian Indian origin. A much greater than usual proportion of pupils are from homes where the first language is other than English and there are currently eight pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is much greater than average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and a Reception class. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and Level 1 of the Internationalism Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that promotes the personal development of its pupils exceptionally well and provides them with exceptionally good support so that they reach well above average standards and their achievement is excellent. The school has gained the support of the vast majority of parents, who appreciate what the school does for their children, shown in a typical comment, 'She enjoys every aspect of school life and has made excellent progress both in her personal/social skills and academically.'

The key element of the school's success is the continuous drive for improvement led by the headteacher and supported by all staff. The result is that over the last five years there has been rapid and sustained improvement in the standards attained by pupils of all levels of capability. Pupils enter the school with standards that are below those expected for their age and a substantial proportion has limited knowledge of English. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English and well above in mathematics and science. Given pupils' starting points, it is particularly noteworthy that an above average proportion of pupils reach higher than expected levels in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with visual impairment are fully included in all the school has to offer and they make excellent progress. Specialist help is readily available to provide extra support as needed.

Pupils' excellent personal development contributes greatly to their achievement. They thoroughly enjoy their time in school. Attitudes and behaviour are exemplary so that no time is wasted and pupils try hard to do their best. They get on very well together and support each other exceptionally well in lessons with a consequent positive impact on learning and progress. The school celebrates and builds very well on the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and experience. Much learning is centred on the local community, but pupils also gain a very good understanding of the wider world through their extensive fundraising activities and work that is recognised by the school's Internationalism Award. As a result, pupils gain a very well-developed understanding of other cultures. The full inclusion of visually impaired pupils in classes contributes much to pupils' awareness of the needs of others. They respond exceptionally well to the school's aim of making a contribution to the community. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities; the school council is very involved in decision making and its members are very proud of the improvements they initiated to the toilets and outdoor play areas. The opportunities pupils are given through the creative curriculum to work in teams leads to them being confident, articulate and mature for their age. Their exceptionally well-developed personal qualities, together with high standards of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills prepare them very well for the future. They are able to express their ideas and listen to each other well and respect others' opinions. A typical comment from an older pupil reflects this well, 'Cooperation means that you sometimes don't get your choice.' Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to stay safe, fit and healthy. They enjoy healthy playtime snacks, make healthy choices at lunchtime and enthusiastically participate in a very wide range of physical activities available to them. They take advantage of the many enrichment opportunities, such as in art and music, that they are offered. Attendance is satisfactory overall, but despite the school's best efforts the number of families taking extended holidays impacts negatively on levels of attendance.

The curriculum is outstanding in the way that it meets pupils' needs. Visually impaired pupils are supported in the classroom for most the time so that they are enabled to participate fully in the curriculum. They are also appropriately withdrawn for specific skills teaching, for example,

Braille lessons. Clear links are made between subjects by grouping them in themes in ways that help pupils make sense of their learning. The strong focus on the development of literacy, numeracy and other skills that are developed by working in this way has a very positive impact on pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching is good overall and much of it is outstanding. Outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 ensures that here progress accelerates and learning is consolidated. This means that by the end of Year 6 achievement is excellent in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school. Teachers make lessons interesting and fun so that pupils are engaged in a variety of activities that promote learning. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Teachers have consistently high expectations for work and behaviour to which pupils respond very well. Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies in the way that some lessons are taught. Most lessons move at a good pace, but occasionally teachers do not ensure that pupils understand fully what they are expected to do so that learning is not as effective as usual. There are also times when teachers miss opportunities to ask pupils additional questions to stretch their thinking further. In the best lessons all pupils have to think hard about the topic being discussed and make a contribution because teachers ask searching questions that build upon pupils' answers. A major factor that helps raise pupils' achievement is the excellent, sensitive support provided by classroom assistants. This not only benefits pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but contributes greatly to the progress of all.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school's excellent use of data to track pupils' performance enables prompt intervention to tackle any potential underachievement. Pupils know their targets well. They are clear about what they need to do to improve because the very good feedback from teachers builds their confidence by ensuring that they know how well they are doing. High-quality pastoral support is provided for pupils and for families. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements.

Excellent leadership is at the heart of the school's outstanding performance. The school's planning documents show that the headteacher's vision for the school's development takes account of detail without losing sight of the big picture. She has established a commonality of purpose among all staff that contributes much to the school's excellent community cohesion. All aspects of performance are reviewed constantly and improvement sought. The system of delegated leadership enables senior staff and middle managers to provide first-rate support for the school's work. Monitoring of classroom standards linked to target setting and training has increased accountability and plays a major part in outstanding improvement. Governors are knowledgeable and astute in supporting the school and in holding it to account. They are fully involved in setting the strategic direction of the school. The governing body provides strong links with the school's community.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to a very good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. On entry to Nursery their skills are below those expected for their age and a significant number of children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There are also particular weaknesses in children's early reading, writing and calculation skills. Excellent teaching, exceptionally well-planned activities and very effective leadership and management ensure that children make very good progress across all areas of learning. As a result, most have exceeded the expected goals as they enter Year 1. Children and parents are warmly welcomed into this secure and friendly learning environment and children settle quickly and happily into school routines.

Relationships are very good and children are exceptionally well cared for in a secure and attractive setting. Welfare requirements are fully met. Children quickly grow in confidence and independence as they register themselves at the start of each session and choose their own activities and resources. Adults readily accept children's own ideas and suggestions, making learning very relevant to their needs. Children work and play very well together, sensibly taking turns and sharing resources as they explore the varied range of activities provided for them. Very good emphasis is placed on developing their speaking skills through thoughtful questions and high-quality role-play activities. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language are supported extremely well by very able teaching assistants. This enables them to be fully included in all activities. Staff work very well as a team to provide the best possible learning experiences for all children. Children's progress is very carefully recorded and information is used effectively to plan the next steps in learning. Parents are enabled to play a significant part in their children's learning and are delighted with the very good start they make to school life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching to match that of the best.
- Work with parents to improve attendance.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Inspection of Sharples Primary School, Bolton, BL1 8RX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the other inspector and I when we visited your school. We enjoyed being able to talk to so many of you and hearing how proud you are of your school. As some of you told us, 'If you want to achieve, enjoy and play, Sharples is the way!' - it's a fine slogan for the school. You will be pleased to know that we agree with you that your school is outstanding. You reach high standards and make excellent progress because the school is run exceptionally well and everyone helps you to do your best. You know that you will get help if you need it. We admired the way that you work so well together, particularly the way that you listen to each other's ideas, because this helps you to make rapid progress. You told us that you enjoy learning because your teachers make lessons interesting and fun. When we visited classrooms, we could see that you are right. I particularly enjoyed listening to Year 1 as they tried to work out what some toys from the past were for. The work on display around the school shows the wide variety of activities that you enjoy. There is lots of excellent art work, but I was particularly impressed by the batik 'princesses' that show wonderful use of colour and attention to detail. At the end of the inspection, I told the staff and governors that you had done them proud because your excellent attitudes and behaviour help to make the school such a happy place to learn – well done!

Part of my job is to suggest things that will help to make the school an even better place to learn. I have asked the school to work with your parents to improve attendance so that you do not miss any opportunities to learn. I have also asked the school to make sure that all lessons match the high quality of the best.

Thank you again for helping us with our work. I wish you well for the future and hope that you will all continue to play your part in making your school an excellent place to learn.