

Sherington Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110407
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	337494
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Anderson
Headteacher	Ms Anne Shedden
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. About half the time was spent observing learning. Seven lessons were seen and a number of additional sessions were sampled. The two teachers present during the inspection were observed at least twice each and teaching assistants were seen working with groups of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, with governors and staff. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, work on display, teachers' lesson planning, data relating to the tracking of pupils' progress, evidence of monitoring and self-evaluation, and records relating to safeguarding. Questionnaires returned by 22 parents and carers, 23 pupils and seven staff were analysed.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- to what extent the school is on track to raise standards following a dip in attainment in 2009
- in the absence of a substantive headteacher, how rigorously governors and staff drive improvement and ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can
- whether the school is accurate in judging that provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and, if so, what factors need to be improved to make it outstanding.

Information about the school

This is a very small school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, though the proportion varies within different year groups. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school is in a 'soft' partnership with another small school in Milton Keynes.

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Reception class.

The previous headteacher was absent with long-term illness from May 2008 and retired in July 2009. Up to Christmas 2009, the headship role was filled by two interim headteachers. A new interim leader, who joined the school at the beginning of this term, has taken on the headship role for a year, after which the governing body intends to appoint a permanent headteacher.

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

This is a good school where pupils are happy and say that they feel extremely safe. The school is held in very high regard by parents and carers, who are unanimous in their praise for its work. They particularly appreciate the school's strong community ethos, its friendly, warm, inclusive atmosphere and the way the staff instil in their children a love of learning.

Pupils achieve well and in some years since the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 have been high in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2009, attainment in national assessments was above average overall, although standards in mathematics dipped to average. Attainment at the end of the Reception Year in 2009 was lower than in previous years. This is largely explained by the low prior attainment of some of the children in that year group. Pupils throughout the school are now making good progress and, in mathematics in particular, there is evidence of accelerated progress in Years 1 and 2. Attainment in Year 2 is currently above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a very thorough grounding in literacy and numeracy, so that several children are working above expectations for their age in these areas. They have good opportunities to develop physically and to make progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Opportunities for children to learn through investigation and exploration are less well developed. The lack of a covered outdoor area limits opportunities for a free-flow between the inside and outside in inclement weather. Settling-in arrangements are good when children join the school. Parents and carers are informed in general terms about how well their children are doing and what topics are being covered, but they are less involved in assessment and in supporting the next steps in their children's progress than they should be.

Teaching is consistently good and pupils have well-developed learning skills. Recent improvements in the tracking of progress mean that teachers now have more detailed information about the precise next steps in each pupil's learning. For much of the time, however, they set the same tasks for all pupils and vary the amount of support provided according to each pupil's needs. Consequently, more able pupils are not always challenged as much as they should be and lower attaining pupils find some of the work difficult. This is more evident in writing than in other subject areas. Teachers are beginning to make greater use of interactive whiteboards, although this stimulating resource is used less frequently than in most schools.

The school's curriculum promotes pupils' basic skills well and learning is enriched by a good range of clubs, by opportunities to work alongside pupils from another local school

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and through exciting projects led by visitors such as artists-in-residence. The school has begun to form links between subjects but its curriculum is not yet as creative and innovative as it could be.

The school is led and managed well, and staff and governors alike are committed to doing all they can to make the school outstanding. The stability provided by the governing body and the assistant headteacher, and the dedication of other members of staff, have enabled the school to sustain the good quality provision found at the last inspection despite changes in leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate. In her short time in post, the new interim headteacher has sharpened staff awareness of those aspects of the school's work that need to be refined to build on its good quality practice. The school gives good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and build on existing good practice by:
 - ensuring teachers consistently match work to the prior attainment of individuals and different groups of pupils
 - making greater use of interactive whiteboards in day-to-day teaching
 - developing closer links between subjects so that the curriculum becomes more exciting and creative.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing a covered outdoor area
 - providing children with more opportunities to learn through in-depth investigation and exploration
 - involving parents and carers more closely in their children's learning and assessment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

With such small numbers, attainment on entry varies from year to year depending on the prior attainment of individual children: overall, it is in line with national expectations. The school was quick to take action in response to a dip in the 2009 results and increased the amount of support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has ensured that these pupils make good progress in developing basic skills.

Outstanding opportunities to express their ideas verbally mean that pupils are confident and articulate speakers, who are able to explain their ideas in considerable detail. Lessons, school data and work in pupils' books show that standards are above average. The fact that teachers do not always match work to the full range of prior attainment in each class does not prevent pupils from making good progress, because they receive so much individual support and encouragement. It does explain, though, why progress is good rather than outstanding despite the excellent level of individual support available.

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In a lesson at Key Stage 1, individual discussions with the teacher provided excellent opportunities for pupils to talk about the possible ending of a story. The written task was too difficult for the lower attaining pupils, however, and so they managed to record few of their ideas.

Pupils enjoy learning a great deal, behave well, often exceptionally so, and are highly cooperative. For instance, in two separate mathematics lessons in Years 1 and 2, pupils eagerly answered teacher's questions and quickly settled down to their practical work. One pupil, carefully checking the number of edges on a triangular prism, said, 'I'm doing this and I like it very much.' Pupils respond exceptionally well to visiting specialists and to opportunities to work with pupils from the 'partner' school. For example, high quality writing and artwork was produced through an extended project with an artist-in-residence, where pupils developed an excellent range of skills. They talk with enthusiasm about the colourful weaving they did with another artist and the beautiful writing they produced when they learned about Beatrix Potter in a joint project.

Gaining the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards reflects the school's commitment to promoting pupils' good understanding of healthy living. Pupils' very positive attitudes contribute a great deal to the school and local community. Pupils feel exceptionally safe because they learn and play in a harmonious environment where there are very few disagreements. Members of the recently formed school council take their role extremely seriously and are already ensuring that their classmates' views contribute to decision making. Pupils' above average grasp of basic skills and their good personal development ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good because teachers and teaching assistants provide purposeful activities, use practical resources well to introduce new concepts and communicate very clearly what they expect pupils to do. Time is used effectively and activities are varied, with plenty of opportunity for pupils to work individually and in pairs or small groups. Relationships are excellent and pupils learn in an atmosphere where they are all valued and very well known as individuals. They receive an outstanding amount of guidance and advice because of the very high adult to pupil ratio. Teachers give pupils a great deal of individual attention, particularly in talking about their work, explaining things and listening to their ideas. This does much to build their confidence and instil in them a love of learning. Pupils have individual learning targets in the core subjects and they know how well they have done in each lesson because of the continuous feedback they receive. A minority of pupils feel less clear, however, about their overall progress.

Literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education are given high priority, which ensures that pupils make good progress. The use of visitors, joint projects with the partner school and involvement in performances in the church and local community contribute a great deal to pupils' learning and enjoyment. The school makes very good use of its extensive grounds, enabling pupils to grow vegetables, watch birds nesting and observe frogs and newts in the pond. The school celebrates a range of cultures and working with the partner school enables pupils to experience a wider range of social, academic and creative opportunities. Clubs provide stimulating opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, for instance through learning French and tennis. Visitors promote pupils' skills and imaginations exceptionally well, but the afternoon timetable tends to focus more on individual subjects than on in-depth topics that are capable of exciting pupils and expanding their horizons.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for throughout the school. It works very well with a wide range of external agencies in supporting pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1
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How effective are leadership and management?

In the absence of a permanent headteacher, very good collaboration between governors, the assistant headteacher and staff, supported by the interim headteachers, has kept up the drive for improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are influential in determining its strategic direction and readily challenge the school. The new interim headteacher has taken swift action in working with governors and staff, especially by sharpening monitoring and assessment and strengthening the way teachers' performance is managed. This has made the analysis of pupils' progress more accurate and is enabling the school to identify best practice in teaching and what might be improved.

The school engages parents and carers well and enjoys a very supportive relationship with them. Through partnerships with other schools and very close links with the local community, the school promotes community cohesion well. It has analysed thoroughly its existing provision and identified clearly what more needs to be done to extend its range of influence internationally. The school provides pupils with a great deal of individual support and carefully tracks their progress to ensure that all groups make good progress and receive equal opportunities. There are good systems for safeguarding pupils and staff check very thoroughly to ensure adults are suitable for working with children. Pupils and parents and carers alike express absolute certainty that the school is a safe environment.

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	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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve well during their time in Reception. They make good progress in communication, language and literacy and in their knowledge of numbers. Progress is good in personal, social and emotional development and in physical development, and satisfactory in other areas of learning. Children behave well and concentrate for long periods of time, practising their letter formation and recording a great deal in their books. Teaching is good and children benefit from a high level of adult attention. They receive much advice about how to improve their work and have many opportunities to talk about their ideas and experiences. During the inspection, more time was given to adult-led sessions than to learning where children made choices for themselves or developed skills through investigating and expressing their individual creativity. Although the outdoor area is spacious and supports physical development very well, there is no cover to allow all-weather access outside the classroom. Staff regularly observe children's learning, keep thorough assessment records and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader carefully tracks children's progress. Good liaison with the pre-school that most children attend, home visits and an open-door policy for parents and carers when children join the setting ensure that they settle in well. Staff make good use of children's reading records and keep parents and carers well informed about the topics that are going to be covered. However, parents and carers do not receive regular specific guidance about how to promote learning at home and they are not fully involved as active partners in their children's assessment. For example, the school does not provide a pictorial record of each child's learning journey that is readily available for parents and carers to consult or to which they are invited to contribute. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides good guidance to the part-time staff who work in the Reception class.

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

Almost all parents and carers returned the questionnaire: this is a much higher rate of return than is found in most schools. The response to the questionnaire shows an equally high level of satisfaction with the school's work and there were no negative comments. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the fact that their children enjoy school, have the opportunity to develop a healthy lifestyle and say that they feel well

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informed about their children's progress. Inspection findings support parents' and carers' positive views, although there is scope for the school to build on parents' and carers' obvious support for its work by involving them even more closely, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sherington Church of England 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 inspector received 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 24 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	82	2	9	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	59	9	41	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	77	5	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	68	7	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	95	1	5	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)	16	73	5	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	55	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	50	11	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	32	15	68	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	82	4	18	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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



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21 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sherington Church of England School, Newport Pagnell, MK16 9NF

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed seeing the work that you have been doing, talking to some of you and finding out what it is like to be a pupil at your school. You go to a good school where everyone gets on well together and there is a lovely family atmosphere.

You say that you are happy at school and that you feel extremely safe, which is very important. Your parents are really pleased that you go to this school. You make good progress with your work and reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are better than those in most other schools. Those of you in the Reception class are making good progress with your reading and writing and in finding out about numbers. In all the classes, you are really good at talking about your work because the teachers are able to give each of you a lot of their time. You have produced your best work when visitors, such as artists, have come into school to do exciting projects with you. I could see how much you loved working on the display in the entrance hall, with the bell-shaped flowers hanging down, the weaving and the writing you did about Beatrix Potter.

Although there have been some changes in headteacher, the governors, teachers and other adults have worked very well together to make sure the school is led well. They want to make the school even better for you, so I have asked them to:

- make sure teachers always give you work that is not too easy and not too difficult, and you can help by always working hard
- use the interactive whiteboards more and link subjects together, like when visitors come, to make learning even more exciting
- provide a covered area outside the Reception class and let you learn more through finding things out for yourselves
- get parents and carers more involved in your learning in the Reception class.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead Inspector

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