

Shocklach Oviatt Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111283
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325336
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Roger Gill

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kate Soragna
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Hinchliffe
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Shocklach Malpas SY14 7BN
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. Further informal discussions were held with pupils during lessons and at playtime.

The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including the school improvement plans, the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress, the work they were doing in their books and the questionnaires completed by parents.

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

- pupils' attainment, progress and learning in Years 1 to 6
- ways in which pupils are helped to evaluate their own work and progress
- learning and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the curriculum, particularly in the way that pupils develop skills to solve problems and find things out for themselves.

Information about the school

Almost all the pupils at this much smaller than average sized rural school are from White British backgrounds. Currently, a few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. All pupils are taught in one of two mixed-age classes. There is one class for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and another for pupils in Years 1 to 2. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) is in the Year 1 to 2 class. The school provides Nursery provision on two mornings per week as part of the Rural Outreach Nursery programme. The school has the Basic Skills and Healthy Schools Award, Artsmark Gold, Activemark, Inclusion Quality Mark and is an Investor in People and a Fairtrade School. The headteacher was appointed in 2007, since the last inspection.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Shocklach Oviatt is an outstanding school. It has been a high-performing school for some time. Judged as outstanding in 2006, it has improved even more since then. This is a school that knows itself supremely well in every detail: governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents work together in harmony to make sure that the school never rests on its laurels. Recent advances have had a marked effect on pupils' learning and progress. For example, the very thorough tracking of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is used powerfully to identify pupils who need additional support. Moreover, children in Reception make wonderful use of, and make exceptional progress in, the new covered outdoor area, in which they can reinforce and extend their learning. As a result of the school's track record and the recent advances, its capacity for further improvement is excellent.

The extremely positive climate in school, the very supportive relationships and the dynamic curriculum are reflected in pupils' outstanding personal development. They are confident in their own abilities and thirsty for new knowledge and skills. For example, in one day, pupils' activities could include solving problems in mathematics using a wireless laptop, learning to play the mandolin, practising French or Italian, writing thoughtful and imaginative prose, tending organic vegetables and, if needed, receiving specialist help for dyslexia. Pupils can discuss their learning with great interest. School council members are convinced that the school offers them a rich and rounded education; they particularly appreciate the 'variety of activities' on offer.

Adults can devote their time to teaching because pupils' behaviour is impeccable. The excellent quality of teaching has a powerful effect on pupils' learning. Even when pupils are not directly supervised in lessons, they concentrate very hard, sometimes for long periods, showing great commitment to their studies. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress very rapidly owing to the very thorough analysis of their learning which leads to tailored, individual work that boosts their confidence and quickens the pace of their learning. This support applies equally to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as it does for those with emotional problems. Information from assessment is used outstandingly well to plan lessons that take account of the next steps that pupils need to take. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly. Teachers' comments contain lots of praise but, despite the use of assessment for learning being first-rate overall, ideas for improvement are sometimes not always specific enough to give pupils a clear enough idea of what they need to do next.

Pupils' first-rate achievement and their enjoyment of learning lead to high levels of attainment at the end of each key stage. Results at the end of Year 6 can vary from year to year owing to the small groups of pupils involved but the general outcome is that attainment is high. Current attainment is also high with pupils reaching well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Moreover, they make rapid progress in other subjects such as information and communication technology, art, music and physical education, including dance.

Leadership and management ensure that pupils are cared for remarkably well and a continual quest for improvement underpins everything that happens in the school. The extremely effective way in which the school is led is seen in its excellent partnership with parents, and many others in promoting high-quality learning. Governors play a crucial role in checking up on the school's work and planning for future developments.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Make sure that marking always helps pupils to understand precisely how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The exceptional quality of learning observed in lessons throughout the school ensures that pupils make swift progress in English, mathematics and science to reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils are very keen to succeed even when tasks are challenging enough to make them literally scratch their heads. For example, some gifted mathematicians were dogged in trying to solve a problem over a period of time; by contrast, other pupils responded avidly to quick-fire questions in French requiring an immediate response. All groups of pupils including boys, girls, the most able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at an outstanding rate because they are guided so well. The school has tackled issues such as standards in mathematics, identified at the time of the last inspection, very well as evidenced by current attainment levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

Pupils are doing well, partly because their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well developed. They show pride in their achievements, sensitivity towards others and curiosity about the faith and the culture of other ethnic groups. These attributes are helped enormously by the school's links with schools locally and in France, Italy and Africa. Attendance is well above average; pupils feel very safe in school and show a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Top-quality learning and personal qualities equip pupils very well for the next stage of their education and life in general.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Outstanding teaching skilfully provides relevant learning for several age groups and a very wide range of ability within each class. Teachers are greatly assisted by well-qualified teaching assistants who make sure that individuals and groups of pupils receive the specific help they need. Excellent subject knowledge is used judiciously to advance learning. For example, in the infant class, progress in writing was accelerated by being effectively linked to the story of *The Lighthouse Keeper*. Pupils of all ages including those in Reception were fired up by the story and rehearsed their writing very well through play, drama and lively conversation. In the junior class, mathematics lessons, for example, are successful because teaching is expert at advancing basic calculation and getting pupils to solve problems, which demand organisational skills as well as the application of arithmetic.

Assessment is highly useful as a tool for finding out what pupils can do and what they need to do next. Pupils know, in principle, what they need to do to improve their work because tasks are devised after taking their previous achievement into account, despite the lack of precision in some marking. The curriculum and the care pupils receive make major contributions to pupils' learning and development. Close links with nine other primary schools and a local international language college ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for enrichment during and after school. For example, pupils enjoy activities such as fencing and tennis as well as attending the college to experience taster days in Russian and Chinese. When pupils feel upset, concerned or worried, the school's well-honed systems of support are used to lift their spirits and boost their confidence again.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership is particularly effective because the headteacher has skilfully created a climate in which everyone feels involved in the decision making progress, including pupils. The drive for improvement is relentless. Attention to detail in every respect makes sure that equality and diversity are promoted outstandingly in ways that ensure the excellent progress of every pupil. Moreover, the governors and the headteacher are highly ambitious for the school, as represented by their application for International School status and their plans to build a Children's Centre at the school. The newly built covered outside area for Reception children demonstrates how leadership takes swift and effective action to benefit the school. The first-rate quality of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils is justifiably a source of pride for all concerned. Furthermore, the headteacher and staff take a leading role in this aspect among its local cluster of schools. The strong sense of community in school is mirrored by beneficial links within the local community, productive learning partnerships with other schools locally and abroad. Relative rural isolation does not prevent pupils at this school from having a national and global perspective, not least through their eco committee and its work in sustainability.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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 community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make very rapid progress in Reception because the balance between being taught knowledge and skills directly and then developing these skills through freely chosen play is so well struck. They also benefit from sharing their ideas with pupils in Years 1 and 2 during the frequent discussion sessions. For example, Reception children communicated their discoveries about plant growth very well to their older classmates by using a 'talking book' into which they had recorded their ideas while studying plants outside. The combination of effective learning through play and mixing with older pupils promotes attainment that is regularly above what is typical for their age by the end of the year. This year children are making very rapid progress towards higher levels of attainment in writing, reading and number work as a result of the extra opportunities they have to develop their ideas outside in all weathers. The excellent leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage makes sure that all children thrive very well including the most able and those

that need extra support. A driving force in the unit is the productive partnership between the teacher and the teaching assistant whose collaboration is highly successful in terms of children’s learning and development.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of those who responded were very satisfied and happy with the school, seeing it as successful academically and in caring for their children’s personal well-being. There were no particular trends in the very small number of criticisms received. Parking outside the school and the arrangements at home time were mentioned. The governors, headteacher and eco committee are vigorous in their efforts to solve the issue. Some parents were pleased that pupils are going to discuss road safety outside school with a senior police official.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shocklach Oviatt C of E Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 29 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 84 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	27	6	0	0

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. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.



1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Shocklach Oviatt C of E Primary School, Malpas, SY14 7BN

Thank you for your help when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you. As soon as I walked around school and saw the exciting work going on in your classrooms, the high quality of art work, the exciting things to do in the grounds, including making dens in the wild area and growing your own vegetables, I knew that I would enjoy my visit.

You go to an outstanding school. The levels pupils reach by the end of Year 6 are high. Many things are excellent, such as your learning and the progress you make. The school is led superbly and you benefit from the way that you are taught and cared for. I found it fascinating to talk to some of you about your work and what you enjoy most. You certainly have a healthy outlook, are free from bullying and take part in helping to run the school with great enthusiasm. What impressed me most was how keen you are about Shocklach and the activities you can do there, such as sport, residential trips (to London this year), music, dance, drama, French, Italian and your links with a school in South Africa. The children in Reception now have many more things to play with in an area that has improved since the school's last inspection.

You say that teaching is great and it helps you to learn very well and I agree. You do your best by behaving thoughtfully and keeping positive. Your school is a thriving place in which to learn. It is also outward looking; you have many local connections and international links.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have asked your school to do one thing to help. Your teachers need to make sure that all the advice they give you when marking your work is clear enough to help you understand exactly what to do next.

Thank you and best wishes – your school motto is to create a place where everyone 'longs for childhood'; it certainly worked for me.

Roger Gill
Lead inspector

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