

Sharmans Cross Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104049
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	377010
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2012
Lead inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicky Robinson
Headteacher	Mark Pratt
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Lewis	Additional inspector
John Taylor	Additional inspector
Nicola Harwood	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons, including joint observations with the headteacher, and saw 13 teachers. A group of pupils read to the inspectors and lessons teaching the sounds letters represent (phonics) were observed across the school. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and members of staff. Questionnaires from 160 parents and carers were analysed. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, looked at documentation including teachers' planning documents, and examined tracking and assessment data.

Information about the school

Sharmans Cross is a larger than average Junior school. Only a small proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, although the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average. Currently, two children have a statement of additional need. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Sharmans Cross is a good school with many strengths. It is not outstanding because there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In addition, although there are strong and effective assessment systems in place for reading, writing and mathematics, this is not yet the case for other subjects.
- Achievement is good. By the end of Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly above average and pupils' progress from their starting points is good. These high standards have been maintained over the last three years.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use curricular themes imaginatively so that pupils are engaged and excited by activities. The emphasis on reading, writing and on problem solving across the school effectively increases pupils' confidence and develops their communication and social skills. In a small minority of lessons observed, however, after a brisk start, the pace of learning slowed and pupils made only satisfactory progress with their tasks. Teachers' marking provides good guidance to pupils about how to improve their work and there is a strong focus on pupil self-assessment.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and say that learning is fun. Attendance is well above average. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning, work well with others and are courteous and polite. They say they feel safe in school.
- The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body monitor the school's work closely and provide clear direction. Actions taken to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection have proved successful, providing a clear indication of the school's good capacity to improve further. The monitoring and performance management by the senior leadership team have had a positive impact upon improving the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment. The school provides effective, carefully tailored support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work to raise the overall quality of teaching in the school to outstanding by: ensuring all lessons are as well paced and challenging as the best and so ensuring that pupils' high level of motivation is maintained throughout each lesson.
- Improve assessment and tracking systems for the foundation subjects.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The great majority of parents and carers have very positive views about the school and agree with inspectors that achievement is good. Many pupils join the school with attainment which is above average in relation to that expected for their age. Pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and there is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups. As a result of well-tailored intervention programmes and individual support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, these pupils make good progress and are able to participate fully in activities alongside their classmates. By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is exceptionally high and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average. Most pupils read a variety of texts fluently and with understanding. Older pupils are able to skim and scan for information and use this effectively in their own writing. Most pupils apply their mathematical skills confidently to solve problems. Inspectors own observations confirm that the quality of learning in lessons is good and pupils participate enthusiastically in activities, especially when working with a partner or a small group to explore ideas and solve problems. In one outstanding Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils writing a section of 'The Highwayman' poem from a character's point of view, were using drama techniques confidently to create a 'freeze-frame' of the main events. Pupils knew precisely what they were expected to do and as a result were well motivated and made excellent progress. Pupils respond positively to frequent opportunities they are given to explore ways of solving problems and confidently explain their conclusions to the rest of the class, having discussed their ideas with a partner. Occasionally, where the pace of learning was allowed to slow, some pupils failed to push on to achieve truly outstanding work. In addition, the lack of any systematic assessment outside English, mathematics and science meant that individual pupils were not always aware of how they were doing and how, therefore, they might improve.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers say that teaching is good and inspection findings endorse this view, although there remain some minor inconsistencies across the school. Displays, including 'learning walls', are used very effectively to stimulate pupils' interest,

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support their learning and celebrate their achievements. Teachers give clear demonstrations and explanations so that pupils rapidly understand new ideas. Teachers and teaching assistants are skillful in their use of questioning to support and extend pupils' thinking both in whole-class activities and in small-group work. Pupils are frequently asked to share and explain their thinking to others. This effectively develops their speaking and listening skills and promotes their respect for the views of others. Teachers use the curriculum well so that in most lessons imaginative activities engage and excite pupils' interest. This promotes pupils' confidence and enjoyment in learning as well as their spiritual and cultural development. Teachers encourage pupils to work together collaboratively and to respect one another's views. Teachers use assessment information effectively to place pupils in teaching groups and to plan pupils' next steps. Although a number of outstanding lessons were observed, in a small minority of lessons, teachers allowed the pace of learning to slow after a brisk start and failed to provide pupils with clear time targets for their activities. Marking in the core subjects of English and mathematics is regular and typically gives good guidance about how to improve. Pupils regularly evaluate each other's work and know how they are getting on and are becoming increasingly involved in deciding how to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good. The school has an effective system of rewards and sanctions and the great majority of parents, carers and pupils are confident that their children are safe and that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively and promptly. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. They confirm that behaviour is usually 'really good' and understand that 'the little arguments in the playground aren't really bullying'. They say learning is fun and they are enthusiastic about their learning and their reading. They say they enjoy school and this is demonstrated in their very high levels of attendance. They understand the need for healthy lifestyles and exercise. They have very good relationships with each other and are courteous and polite to visitors. Pupils display high levels of concentration and, when working in pairs or groups, organise themselves swiftly and without fuss. Pupils show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to contribute to school and local communities through the work of the school council and regular collections for a number of charities. They take on responsibility and play a constructive role in the school and, through the school council, have had some influence on decisions about school life.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, strongly supported by senior staff and the governing body, provides very clear educational direction, based firmly on a rigorous analysis of pupils' progress, close monitoring and an accurate evaluation of the school's work. Members of the governing body play an active part in the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement-planning processes. Though some minor inconsistencies remain, strategies to improve the quality of teaching, such as joint

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planning across year groups, have proved successful in sharing good practice and in achieving a good level of consistency in curriculum planning. Subject leaders are fully involved in driving improvement in the teaching of their subjects and spreading best practice across the whole school. All teachers are involved in the termly assessment and tracking of individual pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics although assessment systems for other subjects are less well-developed. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements, policies are regularly reviewed by the governing body and staff are kept up to date with training. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. The curriculum is good and ensures a suitable balance of activities. It meets the needs of pupils well, including those pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs. As a result, the promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The focus on reading and writing, together with the development of a more imaginative curriculum, has had a positive impact upon pupils' progress as well as on their enjoyment and independence as learners. A wide range of activities, such as themed weeks and days devoted to specific subjects, broaden pupils' experience significantly and lead to an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils learn to reflect and appreciate their own skills and the skills of others. This reflective approach, together with collaborative work, is very successful in increasing pupils' confidence and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. There are strong links with a wide range of external agencies which contribute well to pupils' progress. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and its track record in improving and maintaining high standards since its last inspection demonstrates its good capacity to improve further.

Glossary

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.
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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 March 2012

Dear Pupils/Students

Inspection of Sharmans Cross Junior School, Solihull, B91 1PH

I would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and listening to some of you read. You told us how much you enjoy your learning and how proud you are of your school. We agree with you. You go to a good school. It's an exciting place to learn with lots of things to do. We were very impressed by your good behaviour and the way you get on with each other and adults in your school. You make good progress and your attainment is high in English and mathematics. Your teachers have a very good idea of how well each of you is doing in your reading, writing and mathematics but less information about how well you are doing in your other subjects. Your teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting and fun and their teaching is good, but we have asked the teachers to continue to work together to make sure all lessons are as good as the very best. We were particularly impressed by how well you read and you told us how much you enjoy your reading. You told us that the staff look after you very well and we agree. The headteacher and staff are working very hard to make your school even better. You can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you every success for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

To improve your school further we have asked your teachers to:

- develop ways of checking how well you are doing in all the subjects you are learning.
- work together to find ways of making teaching and learning even better.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis
Lead inspector

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