

Sand Dunes Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104846
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	377136
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M Coates
Headteacher	Cathy Earley
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2009
School address	Caradoc Road Seaforth Liverpool L21 1HP
Telephone number	0151 928 3010
Fax number	0151 928 3010
Email address	head.sanddunesnursery@schools.sefton.gov.uk

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven sessions led by two teachers and three teaching assistants and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, professionals at the attached children's centre, the day-care provider and a representative from the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at the school's improvement plan, reports from the School Improvement Partner, documentation relating to the safeguarding of children, teachers' plans and records of children's progress. Twelve questionnaires completed by parents and carers were examined.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well the children are supported, challenged and involved in their own learning.
- How well the school has improved the outdoor learning environment since the last inspection.
- Whether quality planning, assessment and observations identify the next steps needed to extend children's learning.
- Whether the school has maintained its outstanding status since the last inspection.

Information about the school

This nursery school is smaller in size to others of its type. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well-above average. The majority of children are from a White British background. A few are from minority ethnic groups. The school has gained Healthy School's status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Day care, on a full- or part-time basis for children aged from six months to three years, before-and after-school provision and a children's centre operate within the school. The headteacher is the manager of all these settings. These settings were subject to separate inspections and reports relating to their work can be found on the Ofsted website.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school which has successfully extended the outstanding status it received at the last inspection. Key to its success are the exemplary levels of care, guidance and support it provides for each child and their family. The school plays a central and crucial part within the community and is highly valued by parents and carers. They are unanimous in saying that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. 'She loves it so much I have difficulty getting her to leave', is a comment typical of the responses received.

All the children achieve well from starting points that are generally low and particularly in their social and communication skills. They make such rapid progress that by the time they move to their Reception classes, their skills are broadly in line with those typical for their age. The provision is outstanding overall. Teachers plan and deliver an excellent range of interesting, practical, challenging activities which foster children's language and social development, and their enjoyment of school, exceptionally well. However, occasionally, planning, assessment and observations are not used consistently well to identify the next steps in learning nor are they always shared with parents and carers in order for them to help with their children's learning at home. A wide range of visits and visitors to the school contributes well to children's outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their excellent contribution to their school and the wider community and the outstanding promotion of community cohesion. Children's behaviour is outstanding; they attend regularly and develop an excellent understanding of what is needed to lead healthy and safe lifestyles.

The headteacher's and senior leaders' thoughtful and inspirational management ensures that there is an accurate and rigorous evaluation of all aspects of school planning and children's achievement. This leads to actions that are well considered and effective in seeking to refine provision. A very strong and experienced team of practitioners makes a valuable contribution to the development and success of the school. The contribution of the governing body to supporting and challenging the school, particularly in ensuring children are safeguarded, is outstanding. The school's actions have resulted in, for example, improvements in the outdoor provision and extended outstanding partnerships with the day-care provision and children's centre. Self-evaluation is thorough, honest and accurate. As a result of these strengths, the school has an outstanding capacity to sustain this high level of performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to refine planning, assessment and observations by consistently identifying the next steps in learning and sharing these with parents and carers in order for them to help with their children's learning at home.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

From the moment they arrive, the children are busy and interested in learning. Progress is outstanding in all areas of learning and for all groups of children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Adults engage very well with the children. Activities such as singing nursery rhymes and songs stimulate children to develop their speaking, listening and singing skills effectively while also helping them to learn to get on with each other. The children develop their early writing skills by writing letters to special people in their lives. At this time, they are fully engaged and thoughtful. They experience a magical moment as their letters are attached to balloons and they watch with much excitement as they release them into the sky. Children from the day care share the outdoor area and the older three- and four-year-old children play attentively and care for the younger ones. Such opportunities help them learn to care for one another. Children have excellent opportunities to play a full part in their own learning by choosing activities for themselves and thus develop skills of decision making and independence. At the end of each session, time is given to review their learning. However, opportunities are missed at this time to share such information with parents and carers so they can continue helping with their children's learning at home.

Children have an excellent understanding about the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. This is evident as they diligently ensured their hands were washed before they embark on making cheese sandwiches and, on another occasion, fruit salad for the group to share at snack times. Children learn about staying safe and regular visits from the road safety team help them to quickly become aware of road safety issues. Children's mathematical and social understanding is promoted through the children having the first-hand experience of selling cakes each week. They use the profit to go shopping in the locality to buy further produce. Such activities, even at this young age, prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Children's involvement in the local community through, for instance, raising money for local charities demonstrates well their growing awareness of their place in the local area. Their knowledge and experiences of other cultures have been extended effectively through, for instance, celebrating Black history week when African art and cultures were pursued to celebrate the cultural heritage of some of the families attending the nursery. Such activities bring children's understanding of community cohesion to life in a meaningful way as it relates directly to the children's lives. From these experiences, the children learn to value and respect differences in religious and cultural beliefs.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Adults relate very well to each child. Consequently, children are happy and secure. High staffing ratios ensure that there is always someone available to help if a problem arises. Probing questions from practitioners ensure that the more-able children are suitably challenged to achieve their full potential. Adults act as a key worker for a small group of children focusing on their academic and pastoral needs. This contributes well to children's feeling of security. Ongoing observations of children are carried out, but the information these yield is not used consistently to ensure that further activities always set the next steps in learning.

The main focus of the curriculum is on promoting learning through first-hand experiences. With this in mind, the learning environment has been improved outdoors since the last inspection and provides children with an exciting range of opportunities for their physical development and opportunities to investigate, explore and develop their creativity. For instance, children were delighted to search for insects, filming them and showing the film made to their classmates. They display excellent information and communication technology skills with opportunities for mathematical and language acquisition being developed well through games and play. An example of this was evident as the children engaged in a bear hunt where they developed mathematical language as they went over and under climbing apparatus. This provided them with a greater knowledge and understanding of the world as well as giving them opportunities for vigorous exercise and to be aware of safety at all times.

Adults know and care for the children exceptionally well and quickly identify those who may have additional learning needs. Staff relate well to parents and carers who wholeheartedly praise the outstanding levels of care and support provided. All welfare requirements are met ensuring children are safe. Excellent support is provided, from expertise within the school staff and from outstanding links established with external health and social care agencies, for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those deemed more vulnerable than others.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The extremely strong team of highly effective staff is totally committed to equality and diversity, celebrating the individual qualities of each child and their family. Teamwork is strong and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures successfully drive improvement. The governing body has a clear understanding of the nursery's strengths and areas of development. It is very supportive of the school and equally effective in holding it to account. There is a close partnership with parents and carers which ensures the personal needs of the children are addressed extremely well. However, there are missed opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in advancing their children's learning at home. Resources are very well deployed and the nursery provides excellent value for money. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding, policies are comprehensive and procedures ensure children are protected and supported very effectively. Training for all staff is first class, as is the quality of all risk assessments.

There are very strong links with a wide range of external agencies and those shared through management of the day care and the children's centre. Consequently, these on-site links contribute very effectively to children's outstanding learning and development. The ethnic and cultural diversity of families is celebrated, and community cohesion is promoted very strongly within the school community and beyond the immediate locality, outside the United Kingdom and within the wider world.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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

Views of parents and carers

More than half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. All of these expressed their full support for the work of the school. They value highly the welcoming, family atmosphere that adults generate. Inspection evidence supports their exceptionally positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sand Dunes Nursery 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 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 21 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	67	4	33	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)	8	67	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	100	0	0	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 all its children's 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 children.
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 children. 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



11 November 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Sand Dunes Nursery School, Liverpool L21 1HP

I really enjoyed visiting you at your nursery school. It was marvellous seeing how much you enjoy everything you do. You were so busy! When you were playing outdoors, I was astonished at how much there was for you to do. You really enjoyed searching and filming the spider's web and worms you found, making fruit salad or looking for the bear in your bear hunt. Your parents and carers think your school is fantastic and I agree. It is outstanding. The grown-ups look after you all so well and give you so many things to do that I am not surprised you all love it.

I saw you all busily working, playing and learning lots of exciting new things. You are especially very good at doing things for yourselves and playing well with other children. Your behaviour is excellent and you get on very well together. You have lots of places to run around and explore in your outside area. I think all of you need to give yourselves a clap for working and playing together so well.

Even when a school is as good as yours, there is always a way to make it even better. I have asked the grown-ups to make sure the plans and checks they make of what you are learning help you to learn as much as you can. I have also asked them to share this information with your parents and carers so they can help you to learn at home.

It is really great that you are all learning so well and I hope you carry on enjoying nursery school.

Yours sincerely

Clare Henderson
Lead inspector

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