

Sandfield Close Primary School

Sandfield Close, Leicester, LE4 7RE

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as it is not consistently good enough, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- As a result, pupils' achievement requires improvement in these areas.
- Pupils make slower progress in developing key skills because they have too few opportunities to practise them.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use computers to support their learning.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils of different abilities can achieve are not high enough.
- The work teachers set in lessons does not take sufficient account of what pupils already understand or can do. It is sometimes too easy or too hard for them.
- Until recently, governors have not been effective in holding the school to account for its performance and quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The experienced headteacher inspires staff to work as a team to support one another and bring about improvement.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Phonics (the sounds letters make) and reading are taught consistently well.
- Behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe because of their relationship with staff.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress.
- Additional government funding is being used effectively to promote good progress for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Parents are supportive, fully involved in all activities and hold positive views about the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Four lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the pupil council, a group of six Year 6 pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, senior leaders, and teachers with leadership roles.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority about the support and advice it gives to the school.
- There were 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspectors took account of these and also sought the views of parents and carers they met in school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, records of governing body meetings, and checks on teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne McAvan

Additional Inspector

Sarah Davey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- All pupils, except a very small number, are from a minority ethnic background, the largest group being of Indian origins. A large proportion of these pupils speak English as an additional language but most are from second- or third-generation families living in Britain.
- There are two classes for each year group from the Reception class to Year 6. Further expansion of the school is planned.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is below the national average. In this school, it mostly applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Over the past two years, there have been significant staff changes due to eight maternity breaks. Five new teachers started this year and four are newly qualified.
- There is a breakfast club, organised and managed by the school each morning. This was included in the inspection.
- A privately run pre-school is available on the school site. This is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching to raise achievement, particularly in mathematics and writing, by ensuring that all teachers expect more from pupils of all abilities, and use information on pupils' known capabilities and attainment to give them challenging tasks at the right level of difficulty.
- Review the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) so that pupils have ready access to computers that enable them to develop their key skills in ICT and other subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the school to account for its performance and teaching quality.

An external review of governance has already been arranged early in 2014 in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress pupils make varies in different subjects and classes and this is linked to the quality of teaching. Most pupils make good progress in reading and spelling, punctuation and grammar because of the strong emphasis given to raising standards. However, in writing and mathematics, overall achievement is not good. Pupils are not able to develop their mathematical and writing skills well enough when they are given tasks that are too easy or too hard for them.
- Although attainment is improving by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, it is still below average by Year 2 and in line with the national average in English and mathematics by Year 6. Pupils' books and the school's own assessment data show that some pupils are making good progress, but for others, including less-able pupils and some of the many who are learning English as an additional language, progress is not fast enough for them to reach or exceed expected standards. Pupils of Indian heritage often make slower progress than their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are being supported effectively in lessons and school data shows that most are currently making good progress from their various starting points. This represents an improvement, as recent national data showed that their performance was previously below average compared to similar pupils in other schools.
- Pupils do not have well-developed ICT skills. This is at least in part due to the fact that they do not have ready access to computers in lessons. Where pupils have discrete ICT lessons in one of the computer rooms, they are all expected to do the same work. That means that the work is too easy for some and too hard for others. Pupils have relatively few opportunities to use computers as a tool for learning in other subjects.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils benefit from additional, well-targeted use of the additional funds to provide support as they work in lessons and to enable them to take part in all school activities such as residential visits. As a result, these pupils make good progress and most have closed the gap in learning with other pupils. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 is around a term behind that of their classmates in writing and mathematics. The gap is less than a term in reading.
- The school successfully promotes phonic skills by teaching phonics to pupils of similar ability in small teaching groups. Pupils make good progress, with a higher proportion than nationally achieving the expected level by the end of Year 1. Secure skills help pupils to spell simple words correctly and read longer words by sounding out letters. There is a strong focus on teaching pupils to read through guided reading sessions.
- Children join the Reception class with skills and understanding that are low for their age. A high proportion are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Speaking skills and children's personal, social and emotional development are particularly weak when children first arrive. Children settle in quickly and enjoy a wide range of interesting tasks, indoors and outside, such as role play wearing animal masks to encourage talking in English, taking apart old electrical items using tools, and creating hand-print Christmas trees to decorate. They work well independently and with staff, and make good progress in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills. One-to-one tuition develops early number and writing skills effectively.
- 'Activate', which is a brain gym session to speed up thinking, peer massage sessions, and the close support of adults, ensure that children have the support they need to make good progress in Reception. They are well prepared, socially and academically, for the next stage in their

education. Despite making good progress, most children join Year 1 with skills that are below the level expected for their age.

- Pupils benefit from a strong focus on promoting science and art and design skills. A science week, frequent visits to places such as the National Space Centre and other local industries result in good progress. The learning environment is bright and attractive because of the range and good quality of artwork on display.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations for what pupils of different ability levels can achieve are not high enough in some lessons. Tasks are sometimes too hard or too easy, and this restricts pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Although teachers have access to data on pupils' progress, some are not taking enough account of pupils' known ability levels when planning lessons or ensuring that tasks are challenging.
- Reading is taught well throughout the school. Pupils are able to make good use of their secure phonic skills, and work out what longer and unfamiliar words say. The strong emphasis on phonics and reading skills also ensures that spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught well and are understood by pupils.
- The school has three computer rooms for pupils to use on a timetabled basis but pupils otherwise have little access to computers. This limits their progress in developing key ICT skills. It also means that pupils are given too few opportunities to use ICT to improve their other key skills; for example, in writing. By contrast, children in Reception made good use of the interactive display board to sequence numbers and computer-based cameras to record activities for their learning journals.
- In lessons where teaching is good or outstanding, teachers convey high expectations for pupils of all ability levels and plan tasks that challenge pupils and require them to apply their skills to extend their learning. In three different mathematics sets, where pupils of a similar ability were taught together, pupils from Years 4 to 6 were highly motivated by engaging and challenging tasks. Most made exceptional progress in these sessions. However, teaching of this quality is not widespread enough to ensure consistently good progress.
- Marking pupils' work has been a focus for improvement recently. Most teachers mark work carefully and give clear direction about how pupils could further improve.
- Additional staff are generally used purposefully and work effectively to support individuals and specific groups of pupils, such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Support staff are used to keep phonics groups small, with pupils of similar ability. This results in good progress for pupils and is successfully building their reading skills.
- Children in Reception benefit from good teaching and this ensures that they have a good start to school and make good progress. Here, teachers consistently ensure that skills in all areas of learning are practised in indoor and outdoor activities. This helps new skills to be learnt quickly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour was judged as good in the previous inspection and pupils' good behaviour has been maintained. Pupils are polite and show respect to adults and one another. School records show that exclusions are rare.
- Pupils typically demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons and this leads to an orderly and industrious atmosphere. All are keen to win house points for doing well. Pupils sit quietly, listen to their teacher and try to do their best to complete work, even on those occasions when it is too easy or too hard.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and that 'everyone is super happy'. Those who spoke to the inspectors said that they are well looked after by staff and are proud to come to the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and an anti-bullying award from the local authority has recently been re-validated. They are clear about internet safety and know about cyber-bullying. School records show that incidents of bullying or racist behaviour are extremely rare.
- The breakfast club is popular. Behaviour in the club is excellent and all ages join in together with the good variety of activities, both indoors and outside. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of each pupil's family circumstances and ensure that every pupil feels at home.
- The few parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire had positive views about the school. Almost all strongly agreed with each question and agreed that they would recommend the school to others. Those spoken with during the inspection were equally positive about the school. 'It is a nice close-knit school with even the food catering well for the Indian culture' and 'Teachers are happy when I see them' were typical comments.
- Attendance is average. Pupils are punctual and there is hardly any persistent absence.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not yet succeeded in making teaching and achievement consistently good. They allowed the many staffing changes to lead to a dip in standards. Working well now as a team, staff are beginning to improve teaching and increase the rate of progress for most pupils. This is shown in the much improved data for individual and groups of pupils. Newly qualified teachers are closely supported by more experienced colleagues.
- The headteacher, supported by external advice and support, and a willing senior leadership team, is leading the work to ensure that all pupils should enjoy high-quality learning and achieve their full potential. Already, relevant priorities for improvement have been identified and the staff team are tackling them. Inadequate teaching, for example, has been eliminated. However, too much teaching still requires improvement.
- The experience and expertise demonstrated by the leader responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that children have a good start to school in the Reception class. The school makes good use of outside specialists to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs from entry and right through the school.

- Bilingual staff with expertise in teaching English ensure that pupils who are at the early stages of learning English have the support that they need to speak and understand the language. The ability to use pupils' home language often saves time and makes it clear to pupils what is expected of them.
- The national standards for teachers are used by the headteacher to judge the quality of teaching, so accurate judgements are made on how well teachers are performing. Other teachers with leadership responsibilities are becoming more involved in checking teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. The governing body ensures that these assessments inform decisions about pay, so that teachers only receive pay rises when these are merited by the progress their pupils are making.
- Pupils are provided with a wide range of learning opportunities beyond the normal timetable, such as the Punjabi and Gujarati speaking clubs, judo and an Eco club. Residential visits for Years 2 and 6 add to pupils' enjoyment of school. Learning French, and the study of different faiths, give pupils an understanding of other cultures and contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Frequent trips and visits to places of interest, such as a farm, museum or shopping centre, provide valuable additional learning experiences.
- The additional funding allocated to increase sporting opportunities is being used effectively to enhance the quality and breadth of physical education and sports provision. It has significantly increased participation by enabling coaches with specialist skills to motivate pupils and share their expertise with staff.
- Parents regularly attend workshops such as 'Stay and play' in Reception. These show parents how they can support their children's learning. Almost all expressed positive views in the inspection questionnaire. They correctly believe that staff treat every pupil equally, their children are safe and looked after well, and that discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils are well prepared for life in Britain and a global society.
- The local authority has supported the school effectively and continues to offer its support, helping to make teaching more consistently good. Governors are keen to be more involved and effective, and benefit from regular training events which develop their skills and expertise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors check that there is an appropriate link between teaching and how well pupils are achieving in comparison with others nationally. The governing body is starting to focus much more on helping the school to check how well it is tackling its identified priorities for improvement. However, governors have not been effective in holding the school to account for pupils' achievement and teaching quality.
 - Governors ensure that all current national requirements relating to employment and safeguarding are met. A recent audit by the local authority judged health and safety as outstanding. Governors carefully check the impact of the pupil premium and the funds allocated to provide additional sporting opportunities on the achievement and behaviour of pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120047
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	428884

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shilen Pattni
Headteacher	Amanda Dhillon
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2009
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