



Sand Dunes Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104846
LEA Sefton
Inspection number 277233
Inspection dates 27 March 2006 to 27 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Graham Martin CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Rawson Road
School category	Community		Seaforth
Age range of pupils	3 to 5		Liverpool, Merseyside L21 1HP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 928 3010
Number on roll	42	Fax number	0151 928 3010
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr M Coates
Date of previous inspection	22 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs D Clark

Age group 3 to 5	Inspection dates 27 March 2006 - 27 March 2006	Inspection number 277233
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is one of four nursery schools in the Sefton local authority. It is a popular school in an area of significant social-economic deprivation and is part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ). Almost all children attending are white British. Attainment on entry is very low, especially in language, number and personal and social development. A small number of children are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark (October 2005) and the local authority's Sure Start Excellence Mark (July 2005).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, providing good value for money. It has outstanding features in its rich curriculum, its provision for children's personal development and well-being and its links with parents and other partners. Inspection findings agree largely with the views of staff, parents and governors although in some respects the school has been modest in its own judgements. All children make good progress, many from very low starting points. They achieve well although, because of these low starting points, standards are below average overall when children leave the nursery. The headteacher has led the school's improvement well since the last inspection, providing good quality resources and learning spaces. She has introduced very good systems for assessing and tracking learning and, although they are not yet used well by all staff, training is in place. All this indicates that the school has good capacity to continue improving. Opportunities for outdoor learning on site are limited but, with recently completed improvements to perimeter fencing, the school can fulfil its plans to improve these opportunities.

Teaching and learning are good. Staff work well as a team, helped by the good example of the headteacher. They value the support of parents, who in turn value the guidance and training given to help their children learn better. One parent with a third child at the nursery said that she could not find one better and wished that 'all schools were managed in this safe and caring way'. Parents appreciate the excellent 'Start Right' program to give the very youngest children a good start in their learning. Alongside the rich curriculum, excellent relationships foster excellent personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment systems consistently well to raise standards and achievement.
- Increase the range of outdoor activities available to improve physical development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with very low skills, especially in language and number. They make good progress and, by the time they leave the nursery, some, though not all, achieve the standards expected for their age and a small number exceed them. This represents good achievement from a low starting point. Particularly good attention is paid to developing language, number and social skills so that the children can be better learners. Children achieve very well in these areas because their learning is carefully and regularly checked. Detailed checking of assessment information shows that the 'Start Right' programme to develop the early skills of three-year old children gives them confidence, has a good impact on early skills and quickens the pace of learning. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally as well as other groups. Their needs are identified early through an efficient home visit and assessment programme. The school then provides all the necessary support to enable these children to achieve as well as they can. Children who show an early gift for some aspect of their

learning are supported sensitively so that their gift is developed well alongside their other learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their attendance is good and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Their enjoyment of achieving is affirmed by parents, who all say that their children are happy and do well at school, evidenced when children showed complete joy and excitement in the activities observed during the inspection. The happiness on the children's faces when they succeed at difficult tasks, such as balancing on a beam, shows their determination to learn. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with that for moral and social development being outstanding, resulting in very positive attitudes. Teachers set very good examples in co-operation, in consideration for others and in working and playing safely. As a result children learn to be thoughtful, share resources well and use them carefully. The enriched curriculum helps children to appreciate the richness of their own and other cultures, such as when celebrating 'Pancake Day' and learning the Chinese New Year dragon dance. This curriculum also makes good provision for children to learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle, to contribute to the community and to develop the basic skills needed for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, as is the teamwork to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good for all children. Teachers and teaching assistants plan and supervise activities well together to ensure that the good quality of learning is sustained in all activities. Teachers provide a good range of methods to interest the children; in the very best instances exciting activities capture the children's imaginations, making learning great fun. Good use of questions develops the children's language skills well. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities have good adult support to help them achieve their best, while those with particular gifts or talents benefit from opportunities that the school provides to extend their learning and skills.

There are outstanding features in recently introduced assessment systems but not all staff are fully trained in how to use them to raise achievement. Teachers regularly assess how well children are doing and they are beginning to make good use of the information to plan challenging work. Good support in 'progress groups' ensures that the learning of all children is regularly and carefully checked, enabling them to achieve well. This work is improving key learning skills in speaking, listening and writing, seen in the quality of work during the inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and better than the school judges it to be. It goes well beyond that normally expected, providing excellent opportunities that enrich children's personal, spiritual and cultural development through creative and physical activities. Outstanding partnerships, such as with the EAZ, enable the school to fund rich learning experiences by organising visitors to run learning workshops, such as for music, dance and art. One parent commented on the school's 'excellent work to improve my child's learning by giving her lots of different and interesting opportunities'. The school makes good arrangements for outdoor learning by taking the children for exciting and adventurous off site visits to parks and red squirrel sanctuaries. Improvements to the school site to provide even better outdoor learning opportunities have still to be completed. Provision is enhanced through the school's commitment to sustaining its Sure Start Excellence Mark. Parents value the positive impact of teaching the children important life skills, such as living a healthy lifestyle and learning to be aware of dangers and hazards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and guidance for children is outstanding and support for their academic development is good. The school is a welcoming and happy place. Staff know the children and their families very well, enabling them to provide an excellent level of care. Parents say that their children are very happy at the school and they are confident in the quality of care given to children. Adults who work in the school are highly skilled in caring for the children and giving them suitable guidance, responding sensitively to any concerns and needs. Child protection arrangements are secure and reviewed regularly. Any child who may be at risk, for any reason, is quickly identified and supported. The school has robust systems for keeping children safe. An outstanding 'Start Right' programme helps the children to feel confident about starting school and staff training in using assessment is improving learning. Although the children transfer to a number of different primary schools they are very well prepared for the move. Outstanding links with other agencies provide excellent support to assist in helping vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads the school well, with a clear vision for improvement, such as through introducing very good systems for assessment, although not all staff are fully trained in their use yet. She shares her vision well with the whole school community, developing outstanding partnerships with staff, parents and other education partners. The school's good ethos and aspirations are clearly expressed in its work. Parents value the commitment given to their children's learning and personal development. The school regularly seeks parents'

views, which are consistently positive, and acts very well on any suggestions they make. The headteacher has a clear knowledge of the school's needs from her good self-evaluation procedures. She has identified the correct priorities for improvement and has set out a clear plan for involving all staff in achieving them. By identifying and developing the individual and collective skills of staff well, she ensures that all know their part in a working team who jointly improve the school and check its effectiveness. There are good systems for checking and improving teaching, learning and assessment. Together, these things give the school good capacity to improve. Governors make a good contribution, supporting and challenging the staff well. They have a good knowledge of the school's priorities. They understand the importance of being prudent with school resources, such as keeping a contingency fund to ensure that safe staffing levels are maintained in the event of the absence of a member of staff.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me to Sand Dunes Nursery School. I was very pleased to meet you all when I came to check that the nursery is as good as your headteacher says. She is right, you do have a good school. I found out lots of good things about your school. I have lots of happy memories of how much you enjoy learning.

I will always remember how friendly you are and the way you care for each other. You are getting good at chatting about the games you play. Your teachers and the mums and dads who help them are friendly and helpful. They look after you very well and they give you lots of very exciting ways to learn. I saw some photographs of you looking very happy playing in the snow. You must have had so much fun!

When I watched you playing games with the adults I noticed that you are learning to be good at listening. When you were telling me your news, you described it well. I heard about Mother's Day and it sounded as if you all looked after your mums very well.

I liked it when one of the boys made sure that his friend had the same amount of play clay. That shows that you have learned to be kind and thoughtful to other people. You are good at counting, too. One of the girls was very clever and counted twenty-two candles without any help!

Mrs Clark and the teachers work very hard to make sure that you all have the things you need to learn. She has organised your nursery well to make sure that you have some peaceful spaces for quiet learning. Mrs Clark is doing a wonderful job. She has promised me that she will help your teachers to help you learn even better and to work hard to give you much better play spaces outside so that you can get good exercise on your outdoor toys.