



Robert Sandilands Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109861
LEA West Berkshire LEA
Inspection number 278294
Inspection dates 11 July 2006 to 12 July 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Armitage HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Digby Road
School category	Community		Speen
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Newbury RG14 1TS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01635 40318
Number on roll	247	Fax number	01635 580948
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Jeanette Clifford
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Richard Blofeld

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	11 July 2006 - 12 July 2006	278294

© 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Robert Sandilands is a popular school on the outskirts of Newbury. It is slightly bigger than other primary schools. Ninety-one per cent are of White British heritage and the remainder come from a wide range of ethnic groups. The school's locality is varied and some students come from homes experiencing economic and social hardship. Pupils' overall standard on entry to the school is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. Six per cent of pupils do not have English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors, staff, governors, pupils and parents all agree that Robert Sandilands is a vibrant, happy, exciting and safe place. Pupils' personal development is outstanding as the school helps develop their confidence, sensitivity and ability to work with others. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to try new things and to help them to explore their potential. The care and guidance provided by the school is also good. Given this very positive picture, it is surprising that apart from the good progress made by children in the Nursery and Reception and pupils' with learning disabilities, overall academic standards and progress are satisfactory rather than good. In large part, this is due to the variability in the quality of the teaching which is mainly satisfactory but varies between very good and unsatisfactory. The school was aware of this prior to the inspection and had already taken steps to address weaknesses but with only partial success. Measures to improve the quality of pupils' writing have been successful and the introduction of improved ways of assessing pupils' work has yielded useful information. But there is more to be done; for example, using assessment information to focus more sharply on meeting pupils' needs and extending the more able. The school has mixed-age classes which it sees vital to its ethos. This works well where teaching is secure but is less effective where teaching is weaker.

The curriculum is broad and balanced covering all the subjects of the National Curriculum and more including the rich range of additional activities offered. The school has recently introduced a more integrated curriculum which has the potential to work well. However, without tighter long-term planning the curriculum in individual subjects will become fragmented.

The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. He has a clear vision focussing on pupils' personal and academic development in a stimulating, caring environment. However, the quality of management is only satisfactory. Managers have been highly successful in creating a very good ethos but only relatively recently have they begun seriously to address how to raise academic standards to levels that meet their high aspirations. Governors are hard working and supportive and have contributed much to the ethos. They have played an important role in identifying current strengths and weaknesses.

The school currently offers satisfactory value for money. However, the steps it has taken so far to improve pupils' academic performance have been positive and it has realistic plans for future development. As a result, it has the capacity to improve further. Staff and governors agree with inspectors that the school's overall effectiveness is currently satisfactory. However, they are confident that it will improve and inspectors agree.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in all subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2 by following through the results of the new, improved monitoring

- Lift the quality of teaching, making better use of assessment to pinpoint the next steps in pupils' learning
- Monitor and rigorously evaluate the new integrated curriculum to ensure the quality of the curriculum in individual subjects

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, standards are average and pupils make satisfactory progress.

Children's attainment when they start Nursery is about average although it is below average in some key skills, for example, speaking and listening. Pupils make good progress overall in both Nursery and Reception and very good progress in social development. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has been about average over the past few years and their progress has been satisfactory. However, this overall judgement hides variations. For example, in 2005, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was slightly above average in Key Stage 2 but below average in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. Standards have been consistently higher in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Using provisional data, these patterns persist in 2006 but with a further fall in attainment in Key Stage 1. Boys, girls and pupils from the few ethnic and other groups represented in the school make broadly similar progress. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they receive well-targeted support.

Governors and staff have high aspirations for their pupils and for some time now have been concerned to raise standards beyond average. They have been working hard with the local authority to identify weaknesses and address them. This is already beginning to have a positive impact; for example, in the recent significant improvement in pupils' writing in Key Stage 2. However, the school still has some way to go if its aspirations are to be achieved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy their education and many are really enthusiastic about school life. Behaviour is excellent and attendance is above average. Social and cultural development is also excellent in part because of the range of visits and visitors that make such a valuable contribution to learning. In an assembly pupils showed real confidence in expressing their ideas. Their role as audience and participants in the summer show showed very well-developed spiritual and cultural awareness and their keen willingness to value and support each other. They have a strong moral sense, for example about environmental issues and they support many charities. Pupils take responsibility for tasks in the classroom, library and around the school. The school council is very active and all pupils feel that the school is their community. Year 6 pupils are well prepared for secondary school because of visits and the completion of transition work although limited library facilities affect their research skills. Understanding about health issues is exemplary; pupils enjoy

healthy foods like the picnic plate at lunch and take part in physical activities in the Wide Awake Club. The youngest pupils know about sun protection and keeping safe outside school. Pupils' are acquiring sound basic skills in literacy and numeracy, they can work in pairs and groups and they understand how to use computers confidently and safely, all of which prepare them well for citizenship.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's view is that teaching and learning are satisfactory but with many good and occasionally outstanding features. Inspectors agree with this judgement; they too saw variation in the lessons they visited which ranged from very good to unsatisfactory.

Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes provide children with a good range of activities in all areas of learning. As a result, children respond positively, are becoming more confident and are learning well how to cooperate with one another.

In the best lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers have clear plans for lessons which they share with pupils. They set a good pace and give pupils plenty of opportunity to do things, rather than just listen. They provide a good range of resources. They have excellent relationships with pupils, smile a lot and use their voice and mannerisms well to maintain pupils' interest and good behaviour. But these characteristics are not always present. For example, in one lesson, the pace was too slow and the teacher's subject knowledge limited. Another lesson was poorly prepared with inadequate resources. Teachers generally address the needs of pupils of different abilities reasonably well. However, more could be done for the more able. There is also an increasing amount of data on the performance of each pupil but it is not always used effectively to help match work to need or used to guide pupils on how to improve.

The school is very attached to mixed year groupings. This works well where teaching is secure but is less effective where teaching is weaker. Support staff are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, especially in support of pupils with learning disabilities. However, they should also be deployed more to support higher attainers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides breadth and balance. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes matches the needs of young children well and makes very good use of indoor and outdoor space. Elsewhere in the school, a new integrated approach helps pupils make connections between different subjects and provides more opportunities for writing and other skills. The school is monitoring this but it needs to be more rigorous to ensure that the curriculum of individual subjects does not become fragmented and to ensure that the curriculum in individual subjects addresses pupils' needs. There are good links with secondary schools and the introduction of elements of Key Stage 3

work in Year 6 helps prepare pupils for moving on. Some extra challenge is provided for more able pupils and support for pupils with learning difficulties is good. However, the quality varies considerably between classes. Extra curricular provision includes a flourishing French club and the school is very active in competitive sports. Theme weeks, community links, residential and other visits all add a very valuable extra dimension.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of provision is good and pupils benefit from learning in an attractive and spacious environment. Exceptionally good use is made of outdoor space to enhance learning and displays celebrate pupils' work. Child protection, health and safety and risk assessment procedures are secure and are regularly reviewed. Parents are full of praise for the caring ethos of the school. Monitoring of behaviour and attendance is good and links with other schools and outside agencies are used very well. Systems for monitoring academic progress are satisfactory with some good and very good elements. Assessment tasks provide clear, useful, evidence of progress in English and mathematics but there is only limited assessment of standards in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported very well. The school is fortunate in the quality and experience of its support assistants and other ancillary staff. Pupils' work is regularly marked but some comments are more helpful than others. Pupils know their targets and both teachers and pupils work to them; however, sometimes, the strategies for improvement could be clearer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. He has a very clear and appropriate vision of the way in which he wants the school and pupils to develop, academically and personally. He has had notable success in creating a happy, secure environment where pupils grow in confidence and sensitivity. He has inspired staff, including a dedicated and talented senior leadership team to share the same vision. He has excellent professional relations with pupils who clearly look up to him as someone on whom they can rely. He has excellent relations with parents who play a substantial role in the life of the school.

While the quality of leadership is high, the management of change and improvement is more variable. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, managers have only recently begun seriously to address raising academic standards to levels that meet their high aspirations, in particular, by addressing weaknesses in teaching. There is now a clear focus on strategies to raise attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the school has the capacity to improve. Self-evaluation is good and the school's performance is being monitored effectively. New assessment systems have been introduced and the data is

beginning to be used to raise standards. The deputy headteachers and the subject co-ordinators are monitoring the school's work regularly to ensure that the changes to the curriculum and the improvements in the quality of teaching are contributing effectively to raising standards across the school. Resources are generally used effectively. Special educational needs provision is managed well. Staff are being offered a wide range of skills and expertise and professional development links well with performance management. Governors are hard working and supportive and have played an important role in identifying current strengths and weaknesses and advising on how the school should move forward.

However, most of this is relatively new and, as has been stated elsewhere in this report, inspectors have concerns about aspects of it. The changes are already having a positive impact but there will need to be applied more consistently if the headteacher's vision for standards and progress to be good or better is to be achieved.

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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	3	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

Pupils

You know that we have just inspected your school. We were very pleased to meet many of you. We really enjoyed attending the rehearsals for 'The Button Box' and think you performed very well.

We think you have a very special school. It is helping you become more confident, more understanding of other people and you are learning about all sorts of things. It is a very bright, colourful and happy place. There are lots of things to do including sport and other activities. We are really impressed by the way you like coming to school; the way you enjoy learning; and the way that you all get on together. Everyone shows a lot of respect for others. You behave very well.

You know that you do tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 and that how well you do is checked against pupils in other schools. Some of you do really well, some of you less well. Taking everyone together the standards you reach are about average. We, and your teachers and governors think that you could do better so your teachers have been thinking hard about how to make this happen. In particular, we have asked them to improve the quality of some of their teaching and make sure that what they teach you really meets your needs. This will help you learn better. You and your teachers have already had some success but I know you will be happy to work with them to try and improve your results still further. I hope you have found these comments helpful. I would like to thank you again for your help and wish you lots of success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Armitage

Her Majesty's Inspector