



Sandy Hill Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111904
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278807
Inspection dates 29 June 2006 to 30 June 2006
Reporting inspector Trevor Watts AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sandy Hill
School category	Community		St Austell
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Cornwall PL25 3AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01726 75858
Number on roll	305	Fax number	01726 75199
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Tristan H Scott
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Andrew Fielder

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Nearly all pupils are White British. The pupil population is very stable. Almost a third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. This is well above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that this is a good school, giving good value for money. Pupils make good progress throughout the school, and their standards improve from being below expectations when they begin in the nursery to above average at the end of Reception. Pupils' standards continue to be above average at the end of Years 2 and 6. In English, particularly writing, this is the result of good teaching that is solidly based on clear assessment of pupils' previous learning, supported by very positive relationships. Assessment information is not always used to such good advantage in guiding pupils' learning in all subjects, however. Pupils are well looked after. They develop well personally and socially. Almost all pupils are very happy: 'He can't wait to get to school,' wrote one parent. The curriculum is well organised, providing a good range of activities for all pupils. It includes a good variety and number of clubs, visits and visitors to enliven pupils' learning. The school is developing its curriculum to more fully meet the needs of its gifted and talented pupils. The Foundation Stage provides a good start for all children, with well-organised staffing and good resources, a well-balanced and appropriate curriculum, and good teaching. Children progress well and attain above average standards at the end of Foundation Stage. Leadership and management are good because the focus on reaching high standards is the clear aim through the school. Good use is made of outside agencies to support pupils' well-being and their academic learning. The school's self-evaluation is good. However, the process of self-evaluation did not initially present clear explanations for the low rate of progress reported at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2005, nor explain what action the school had taken. The school plans to organise and present its self-evaluation in a much more focused way. School leaders have overseen a good improvement since the previous inspection; the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus the self-evaluation process more sharply, and present its conclusions clearly.
- Use assessment information to ensure progress of pupils in all subjects
- Continue development of the curriculum to provide for the needs of gifted and talented pupils

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils progress well, attaining above average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. Children begin in the Nursery with skills below the expected level, especially in social, personal and communication areas. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception years because of very appropriate teaching and careful management of activities. When children begin in Year 1, most have reached national expectations. This is particularly good when considering the high proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils progress well in Years 1 and 2. They attained well in national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2005, continuing the rising trend in

standards over the past three years. Year 6 pupils attained above average standards in the 2005 national tests, especially in science. Writing, however, was weaker than expected, and some higher ability pupils did not attain as well as predicted. In response, the school very determinedly supported these areas. The success of the support is seen in this year's very recent results, with a further rise in standards, including in writing and for the higher ability pupils. The school's targets were appropriately challenging in the past, but following a reassessment of results, they are much more challenging now. The school confidently predicts that current Year 5 pupils will perform very well in next year's national tests. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because of the clear tracking of their progress, careful planning of activities, and good inclass support. Girls attained better than boys in the Year 2 tests in 2005, and boys did significantly better in the Year 6 tests. Following an analysis of the reasons, and some adjustments to what is taught and how it is taught, the very recent test results show that there is now almost no difference in their standards. The very small number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds progress equally as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, with some outstanding aspects. Pupils are friendly and well behaved. They enjoy their education very much, and care about the school. As one school councillor said, 'A few new pupils don't know what it means to be in this school'. However, attendance is only average. The school makes all appropriate efforts to improve attendance. From the Nursery onwards, staff ensure that pupils feel safe and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils have excellent opportunities to take responsibility. Year 6 pupils organised the last parents' consultation evening. The 'head boy' and 'head girl' provide excellent role models, including showing the inspection team round the school very capably. School councillors are articulate and effective in putting their views forward. Such opportunities enable pupils to develop good skills for their future economic well-being, taking responsibility, organising their time and learning, and supporting charitable fundraising. Pupils are well involved in the local community through a range of local and in-school projects. Very good links with the local college ensure a confident transition to the next stage of education. Pupils learn the importance of keeping healthy. They engage in a wide range of sporting activities. Their understanding of a balanced diet is good, as a result of changes to school lunches as part of the Healthy Schools Award, and 'Fruit Friday'. Younger pupils are particularly enthusiastic about healthy eating, following a school initiative that has not been undertaken with older pupils. Pupils' spiritual development is good. Their social and moral development is outstanding. The overwhelming and spontaneous support for a pupil with learning difficulties on sports day was a joy to behold. Pupils' cultural awareness is good. It is better than it was at the time of the previous inspection, with improved opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the multi-cultural diversity of Britain, including through links with a London school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Exciting and stimulating activities immediately capture pupils' imagination, interest and attention. Relationships between pupils and adults are outstanding. Consequently, classes are happy places where pupils are eager to participate and keen to learn, without being afraid to make mistakes. From the Nursery onwards, teachers use questions very effectively to probe and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. This challenges pupils' thinking and helps staff to assess how much pupils have learned. Teachers provide detailed explanations, effectively using electronic whiteboards to illustrate important points and bring pupils' learning to life, such as in lessons about "Exciting Sentences" or "Division Duck". Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning by providing unobtrusive and sensitive support for pupils who have difficulties with aspects of their work. Others might teach a literacy group, organise a computer activity, or teach a foreign language class, for instance. Teachers effectively use a good range of assessment systems for measuring and tracking pupils' progress and attainment in various subjects. They use the information carefully in making sure that writing activities are appropriate for all pupils, and to a lesser extent, in mathematics. However, the use of assessment information does not always extend sufficiently into guiding individual pupils' work in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced across all subjects, with some outstanding features. The linking of different subjects, especially the encouragement given to writing, greatly enhances learning. The curriculum is carefully adapted to pupils' needs through a clear understanding of each child, based on tracking pupils' progress and talking with parents and pupils. During the past year, the school has focused on ensuring that the needs of gifted and talented pupils are more closely met. This initiative is showing signs of success, but the school wishes to develop this aspect further. Health and safety elements are skilfully woven into the curriculum, including awareness of sex education, healthy living and the dangers around them. The Foundation Stage curriculum emphasises children's learning well through practical experiences and finding out things for themselves. Many pupils greatly enjoy the very good range of additional activities that bring variety to their learning, including visits to the Eden Project, an adventure centre on Dartmoor and a Sea Life Centre. Others include residential experiences, and sporting, foreign language and other clubs such as computing, dance and chess. Recent visitors include a theatre group and the coastguard.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good. Pupils are safe and well cared for. The school has a positive ethos. Pupils are confident to talk to staff about any concerns. They have a clear understanding of how to behave. Staff and 'peer mediators' help pupils with difficulties in the playground or in classes. Child protection procedures are rigorous and all pupils are safeguarded well, including vulnerable children, who are monitored carefully. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or behavioural difficulties is well supported by agencies beyond the school. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and given good guidance on ways to support them at home. Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in evaluating their own achievements. The school uses assessment and monitoring procedures effectively to track pupils' progress and to decide on their future targets. Most of this work is focused on the school's priority to improve writing. Assessment is used in other subjects, particularly mathematics, but to a lesser extent. The school is actively and effectively addressing several minor shortcomings and intends to further develop the use of assessment as its confidence in the success of its writing focus grows.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The good improvement since the previous inspection is due to the high expectations of school leaders. This improvement, and the successful action taken since the 2005 national test results, indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior managers work closely and effectively together. They are well supported by other staff who have clear responsibilities for particular aspects or subjects. Governors already perform their duties well, but their role is being further developed to allow closer involvement within school. The school's aims are clearly focused on improving pupils' standards through the provision of high quality teaching and resources. Self-evaluation is good, accurate and matches the judgements of inspectors. Plans to make the organisation and presentation of the self-evaluation more sharply focused are in place, but have not been actively addressed yet. All pupils have equal access to all subjects and many wider activities. Parents are often asked for their views, formally and informally. Their proposals have guided the school in developing, for instance, playground facilities, some security measures and language classes. Resources are abundant and well used. Teachers make particularly good use of electronic whiteboards, and support staff are deployed where very good use is made of their skills. The school provides good value for money.

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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
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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?	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?	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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?	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?	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

3 July 2006 Dear Pupils I'm sure that most of you will remember when three inspectors visited your school recently. We want to thank you for being so helpful, friendly and polite to us, and for answering all our questions. We would now like to tell you what we decided about your school. We think you go to a good school. As the School Council told one of us, your school is a special place and many of you feel very lucky to be in such a school. Nearly all your mums, dads and carers told us that they think the school is good as well. Many exciting things happen during school time and after school as well. You learn about lots of different things, and there are many extras that you can join in with. Some of you told us how much you enjoyed your visits to the Sea Life Centre and to the activities centre on Dartmoor. Mostly, you pay attention and work hard in lessons, and you enjoy your learning. Sometimes it seems that the harder you work, the more you like it. You learn well in different subjects, such as maths and science, but also in physical activities, computing and music. Your writing has improved a lot recently. Your teachers plan your activities well. They are very well helped by other adults who also do a lot to support your learning in classes and in small groups. You are growing up as friendly and confident young people. We don't think your school needs a lot of advice from us about how to improve. Your teachers work very well with the headteacher in organising the school and planning your lessons and different subjects. They already know about the few small things that we noticed could be improved, and are already doing something about them. However, we are asking them to write down their ideas more clearly. Thank you again for all your help
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