



Sandhill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106583
LEA Barnsley
Inspection number 283007
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Stephen Hardwick HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rotherham Road
School category	Community		Great Houghton
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Barnsley, South Yorkshire S72 0DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01226 753126
Number on roll	305	Fax number	01226 341801
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs E Parry
Date of previous inspection	16 March 1998	Headteacher	Mrs J Hirst

Age group 5 to 11	Inspection dates 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	Inspection number 283007
-----------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------

© 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

When Sandhill Primary School was inspected in April 2004, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor progress, and reinspected the school in December 2005.

Description of the school

Sandhill Primary School is of average size and serves the village of Great Houghton in a former coal-mining area in South Yorkshire. Almost all the pupils are white British. Twenty per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is around average. The number on roll has fallen over the last two years, as has the proportion taking free school meals. There are 46 pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including four with a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average or just below average. Work is scheduled to start on a new building in 2006, as part of the private finance initiative.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Sandhill Primary School provides well for its pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and satisfactorily for those in Key Stage 2. This reflects the relative quality of the teaching and, as a consequence, the pupils' standards. Some of the younger pupils reach standards that are above those expected for their age and, while standards at Key Stage 2 have risen, they are still below what they might be, particularly in writing. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good: they are keen, interested and mostly well-organised learners. They benefit from a curriculum that gives proper emphasis to basic skills, but one that is enriched by specialist work in sport and the arts as well as additional activities. The headteacher has provided determined and effective leadership and management, supported by a strengthened staff who have worked hard to bring about improvement.

The inspection of April 2004 required the school to improve standards in the core subjects, the quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management, and the quality of the curriculum. There has been reasonable progress in raising standards and good progress elsewhere.

The school is well placed to continue to improve as a result of: the leadership and management of senior staff; the consistency of approach across the school; frequent assessments of the pupils' progress, with action taken accordingly; and a thorough programme for monitoring the critical aspects of performance. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities are to:

- raise standards at Key Stage 2, particularly in writing
- improve the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, particularly in settling to school and in learning basic skills. Some of the standards they reach are beyond those expected for their age; for example in the way Reception pupils use letter sounds to aid their spelling and reading; and in the ability of some Year 1 pupils to write in punctuated sentences. Around four fifths of the pupils have reached the level expected at Year 2 in the national tests for Key Stage 1 over the last three years. Overall, these results have been in line with those of similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Standards in Key Stage 2 have been less consistent, although most pupils have made good progress in their final year, making up some of the ground that had been lost previously through weaknesses in provision. Nonetheless standards have improved: the school's results in the national tests for Year 6 pupils rose considerably in 2004, when compared with the previous year, and the gains were generally sustained in 2005, though there was some fallback in English. The school's recent results have compared more favourably with those of similar schools, having been below or well below them previously.

On the basis of their performance in tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils in Year 6 who took the national tests in 2004 and 2005 made average progress during Key Stage 2. This is again an important improvement on the position in 2003, when the pupils' progress was significantly below average. The improvement was even more marked in lessons, where progress was mostly good, particularly so in the younger classes and in Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Overall, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in classrooms and around school are good; they are commonly outstanding in the younger classes. The need to use exclusion as a sanction is rare.

In the Foundation Stage, the pupils rapidly learn to share, take turns and follow routines, for instance in tidying away and sitting quietly. They enjoy school and take pride in what they can do. These qualities are built on in Key Stage 1 and in most of the older classes, but not consistently. Nonetheless, most pupils develop good work habits in the way they organise their materials, settle quickly and move from one part of a lesson to another without fuss.

The pupils' attendance has been similar to the national figure for the last year. The school is vigilant in reminding parents about the importance of regular attendance.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies are well organised and allow pupils to reflect on appropriate themes, such as the key events in their lives. The pupils play sociably on the yard at break times and there are well-judged opportunities for them to undertake responsibilities, for instance as members of the school council or as monitors at lunchtime. The curriculum involves good provision for arts and many pupils take advantage of the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument or perform in concerts with the choir. The school offers many extra curricular activities, such as a computer club, circus skills, crafts, and games. Classroom topics are regularly supported by visitors and visits, for instance to a nearby country park, where some of the pupils have worked with rangers on conservation projects.

Much has been undertaken to promote a healthy lifestyle, an area in which the school council has been involved. Water bottles are available, snacks are restricted to cereal bars and fruit, and pupils gain points in a team competition for choosing a balanced

diet at lunchtime. A fitness programme has also been introduced, led by teaching assistants.

There are appropriate links with the locality, for instance with a church and in the help given by local businesses and services, especially over visits to support different topics. Parents are kept well informed about school life, for example in newsletters about the topics and targets for each class, and their views have recently been sought about the provision in the Foundation Stage.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the inspection in 2004; unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and a much higher proportion of the lessons

are well taught. As a consequence, the pupils are making brisker and more consistent progress. The teachers have worked hard to implement the guidance arising from training and observations of their practice, and recruitment has strengthened the staffing

as a whole. The quality of teaching was outstanding in three lessons, good in five and satisfactory in three.

The basic features of sound teaching underpinned all the lessons. Planning, preparation and organisation were good. Appropriate learning objectives were shared with the pupils

at the outset of each lesson and the teachers recapped on previous learning to establish a secure foundation before new work commenced. The teachers have rapidly come to terms with new interactive whiteboards, which were used to aid the pace, the clarity of demonstrations and the level of interest among the pupils. Tasks were usually carefully differentiated to match the pupils' various levels of attainment. The classroom assistants provided skilful support, particularly in leading small groups of pupils.

The better teaching was marked out by high expectations, well-timed and chosen activities, and firm routines. The individual weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory lessons related to question-and-answer sessions that involved too few pupils and tasks that were overcomplicated or lacked sufficient structure.

For their part, the pupils showed interest in their tasks and co-operated well in pairs and

groups. They worked hard and concentrated, recognising when it was appropriate to discuss with a neighbour. There was little sign of the wasteful chatter that has slowed their progress in the past. Occasionally in the Key Stage 2 classes, too many pupils sat passively during whole-class instruction and relied on a few classmates to answer the teacher's questions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets national requirements. It is enhanced by a wide range of after-school clubs. The school has responded well to criticisms of provision that were raised at the inspection in 2004. Proper emphasis has been maintained on literacy and numeracy, but the pupils benefit from specialist teaching in the arts and sport and their standards have risen as a result. Care is also taken to make the context for work interesting and relevant to the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils' attainment and progress in the core subjects are checked regularly through assessments by the teachers and twice-yearly formal tests. The system is thorough and the outcomes are acted upon to provide additional support for particular pupils or extra effort in weaker aspects of performance. Since September, for instance, there has been a successful initiative to improve writing following disappointment over the results in the 2005 national tests. The pupils have their own targets in English and mathematics and know what they need to do to reach the next level. This is being complemented by a scheme to help the pupils assess their own progress.

There has been concerted effort to improve the pupils' presentation and their handwriting; the pupils have targets and reminders on their desks about what is required. This has been effective to date, but these aspects of work still require development, especially handwriting.

Due regard is paid to the pupils' safety, for instance in the way they are supervised at lunchtime and instances of bullying are rare. Personnel from the police and health services help over sex education and over making the pupils aware of the dangers associated with smoking and taking drugs.

The school's good care for the pupils is mirrored in the efforts made to ensure that classrooms are clean, tidy and attractive, despite the age of most of the building.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has managed the process of special measures well, showing determination to ensure that tasks scheduled in the school's action plan were fulfilled

on time and brought about the necessary improvement. She has been well supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher and by the staff, who have worked hard and as a team to play their parts.

Key responsibilities have been carefully delegated, and where necessary realigned, allowing staff to oversee important aspects of the school's work. The deputy headteacher, for instance, organises the system for tracking pupils' progress and analyses the outcomes, and the co-ordinator for literacy has led the drive to improve the pupils' writing. A senior classroom assistant also heads the team of assistants, holding regular meetings to share practice; the assistants make an important contribution to the school's work.

There has been a well-judged and thorough programme for monitoring the key aspects of the school's performance, for instance by scrutinising work, checking planning and observing lessons. The range of people involved in this work has been extended, to provide a broader base of management expertise within the school. Good use has been made of individual plans to guide initiatives on specific aspects of work. Once the overall action plan was largely complete, the school was quick to recast the plan, based on an appropriate set of priorities.

The governing body has fulfilled its responsibilities to the school, though there has been some disharmony at times. The governors have followed their own programme for monitoring, including a considerable number of visits to observe work and discuss progress with the relevant members of staff.

The local authority has provided a good deal of effective support to the school through the work of consultants and advisers, particularly in picking up issues that arose following termly monitoring inspections. The school has valued the help of external consultants it has employed, and it has benefited from shared initiatives with local schools.

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	3	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Congratulations to you and all the adults who help you: Sandhill School no longer requires special measures.

There have been a lot of improvements to the school over the last year, thanks to the hard work of Mrs Hirst and the staff, especially the teachers and their assistants. You now learn a lot more in lessons.

You too have played your part by doing as you are told and getting on with your work. However, a few of you in the older classes still need to concentrate a bit harder and be ready to answer the teachers' questions; some of your work is not yet as good as it should be, particularly your writing. The school knows this and the teachers have introduced lessons that should help you.

Your school offers you a lot of extra activities. Earlier this year I particularly enjoyed an assembly when some of you played musical instruments together and the work on displays shows how you have gained from visits out of school and from the special lessons in art.

I have appreciated the welcome you have given me during my visits to Sandhill and the polite way you have explained what you were learning. Good luck for the future.