

Sandhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106583
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	309166
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Parry
Headteacher	Mrs J Hirst
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
School address	Dearne Street Great Houghton Barnsley South Yorkshire S72 0EQ
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

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. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is around average. The number on roll has fallen over the last three years, as has the proportion entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school holds the Bronze Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People Status and Activemark. The school has recently moved into a new building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sandhill Primary School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Children's personal development is good. They are very well behaved and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They take pride in their school and have good relationships with their teachers and other adults. Children value the opportunities they have, such as the school council and becoming 'playground friends', which enable them to take responsibility and make decisions. Much of this is because the quality of the care and guidance they receive is good. The school works very effectively both through the work of the mentor and with outside agencies to remove barriers to pupils' learning. Individual pupils' progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is closely tracked and challenging learning targets set. Pupils understand their targets and they understand what they need to do to improve. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to make sensible choices for healthy living. The school follows government guidelines to ensure pupils' safety and the safe recruitment of staff.

Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their starting points. Action taken by the school to raise standards is proving successful. Pupils are becoming more confident, particularly in speaking and reading and this is having a significant impact upon their achievement across the curriculum. Standards at the end of Year 2 are average. This represents good achievement from their starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards in science and mathematics are broadly average. In English, standards are broadly average, but weaker in writing. This is largely due to some underachievement by these pupils in the past. In Year 6 national tests there has been a significant improvement in standards in all subjects, but particularly in science.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, but varies throughout Years 3 to 6. As a result, pupils' progress, especially in writing in Years 3 to 6, is uneven. Assessment information is usually used effectively to meet pupils' individual needs in lessons. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons. However, in Years 3 to 6, higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged effectively enough, although the school is aware of this and is beginning to address the issue.

The curriculum is good. It is well planned and enables pupils to develop their skills through a variety of experiences which interest them. The school has worked hard, and in the most part successfully, to improve the quality and scope of the curriculum. However, pupils have too few opportunities to write for different purposes across a range of subjects. Pupils' experiences are effectively enhanced by a good range of out-of-class activities, outside visits and specialist teaching in sport, music and French.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has created a strong leadership team who work together very effectively to rigorously check on pupils' progress and to provide clear direction. As a result, there has been good improvement since the last inspection with a significant improvement in standards, particularly in science. The capacity to improve further is good. The school has been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, there is still a need to share good practice and to eliminate the variability in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 so that all pupils make the same good progress and to ensure the better progress of higher-attaining pupils in these classes. Governors are very well informed and provide strong support. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children learn very effectively in a welcoming, stimulating environment. They quickly settle into school and thoroughly enjoy learning. All groups of children achieve well during their time in the Nursery and Reception. Almost all meet the goals set for them nationally by the time they enter Year 1. This is because teaching and learning are outstanding. The curriculum is carefully tailored to children's needs and interests. The many varied activities such as playing in the fire engine and completing a 'job sheet' activity capture children's interest. Teachers quickly establish children's starting points and give effective support or challenge so that most achieve well. Children's behaviour and attitudes to school are excellent and they make excellent progress in their personal and social development. This is because staff have very high expectations. The outstanding levels of care, support and guidance and the excellent way in which staff work in partnership with parents and other providers support children's needs. Leadership and management are excellent and teachers and other adults work very effectively as a team. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Provision and the impact it makes on children's learning are regularly reviewed and effective action is taken.

What the school should do to improve further

- Throughout Years 3 to 6 raise standards in writing, particularly for higher-attaining pupils.
- Eliminate the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. When children enter the Foundation Stage standards are below national expectations for their age and in some cases well below these expectations. Because of the outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage children achieve very well in relation to their starting points and enter Year 1 with an enthusiasm for and a good understanding of how to learn. Throughout Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to achieve well. In particular, higher attaining pupils respond well to the challenging targets set for them. Standards at the end of Year 2 are average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, although pupils' progress is slower, they achieve well in relation to their starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, standards are less good in writing. Higher attaining pupils do not always do as well as they should. The school has already focused on improving pupils' achievements in science and reading and this has had a positive impact on standards. This is particularly evident in the way that pupils confidently investigate ideas for themselves.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and they work and play with enthusiasm and confidence. They relish the many different sporting opportunities and extra-curricular clubs. They appreciate 'interesting lessons' and say, for example, 'We use practical activities in science and we have quizzes in maths which are fun.' Pupils are proud of their achievements. They behave well and older pupils support younger ones. Children play an important role in the day-to-day running of the school; for example, taking on roles as lunch time and library monitors, school council representatives,

helping younger children in the playground and organising the tuck shop. They take their responsibilities seriously and feel that their views are valued and acted upon. For instance, pupils have discussed ways in which they might alleviate traffic problems that occur outside the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall is good. Their understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is outstanding and a large proportion of pupils take part in sports activities after school. In lessons relationships are good. Pupils listen attentively and concentrate on tasks set. When they are given the opportunity to work together in groups or pairs to solve problems, they organise themselves well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Foundation Stage with some instances of outstanding practice. However, in Years 3 to 6 the quality varies considerably from one class to another, but is stronger in upper Key Stage 2. In the most effective lessons, presentations are very clear so that pupils rapidly understand new ideas. Activities are interesting and fun and immediately interest pupils. Tasks are well sequenced so that pupils build effectively on what they have previously learned. Pupils make most progress when they are given the opportunity to investigate ideas for themselves or to discuss their ideas with a partner. Where this is the case, they speak confidently to explain their ideas and present their work to a wider audience. In some lessons, steps in learning are sometimes missing so that some pupils struggle to complete the tasks set. In all lessons, teaching assistants give very good support to lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This enables these pupils to participate confidently in whole class activities and to complete tasks successfully. Assessment information is used effectively to enable most pupils to succeed. Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own and each other's work. However, there is scope to develop this further so that pupils can learn more effectively from each other.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The approach to learning through topics and themes effectively promotes pupils' interest and their thinking skills, creativity and enjoyment. Pupils' learning is enhanced as a result of visiting specialists teaching French, music and physical education. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support and extend pupils' learning but this varies across the school. Activities outside the classroom such as the visit from the school nurse, trips to Jorvik, Wentworth castle and Kingswood enhance the curriculum, excite pupils and inspire them in their work. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and a large proportion now play in the local band. A large proportion of pupils eagerly participate in sports, arts and crafts and gardening clubs after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school where pupils are given good guidance and support. The school works well with outside agencies. Robust systems have been developed to support the needs of pupils, their families and the local community. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in school and because of the very good care provided pupils behave well and develop positive attitudes to their work.

All aspects of child protection, risk assessment procedures and other health and safety measures are in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the skilled support from learning support assistants and the special learning programmes the school provides for them. The school has very effective, rigorous systems to track and record pupils' progress. This means that most teachers plan lessons that build on pupils' previous learning and show them how to improve their work. Targets in English and mathematics are set and pupils are regularly asked to check if they are meeting them. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory. In some classes, teachers' marking does not give pupils a clear idea of how well they are doing or what they need to do next in order to improve. The school works in partnership with parents and carers. However, a significant number of parents do not feel that they are well informed or that their views are taken into account. There is scope for parents and carers to be more involved in the life of the school and for communication between school and home to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's evaluation of its progress is accurate and the headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear vision of the way forward. The school has taken successful action to improve standards. All staff work effectively together and play a full part in the school's self-evaluation and in development planning. Roles and responsibilities are clear and the senior leadership team work closely with class teachers to check their plans and pupils' progress on a regular basis. Improvement planning is good and based firmly upon the rigorous analysis of assessment data. Effective checking systems are now in place, pupils' progress is tracked closely and appropriate targets set. Training and support for staff have been provided where necessary in order to improve provision. However, there is still scope to share good practice in teaching to ensure smooth progress through Years 3 to 6 and to ensure that pupils make better progress in improving the quality of their writing. Governors are very well informed, play a full part in the life of the school and act very effectively as critical friends.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We saw how well you behave and how well you get on with the adults in your school. You play an important role in improving your school. We were impressed by the way you help younger children, especially in the playground and in the dining room.

I'm sure you will be interested, but not surprised, to hear that yours is a good school. You are well looked after. The teachers have been working hard recently to help you improve your speaking, reading and science and this has been successful. However, we think you can do better in your writing, especially those of you who find learning quite easy. So we have asked the school to make sure that you do as well in your writing as you do in other subjects.

You are taught well and this helps you make satisfactory progress. We were particularly impressed by how well you worked together in pairs and small groups to explore ideas for yourselves in lessons. We also noticed how excited you were about the work based on the visits you have made and the topics you have been finding out about. However, we noticed that some lessons were more fun and more interesting than others. We have asked the school to make sure all lessons are as interesting as the best.

Younger children in the Foundation Stage 2 class make very good progress and thoroughly enjoy their learning because of the way their teachers plan exciting activities for them.

We hope you continue to work hard and enjoy your learning. We wish you every success in the future.