

Sandford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109100
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	309880
Inspection date	16 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melissa Humphry
Headteacher	Louisa Munton
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	49 Greenhill Road Sandford Winscombe BS25 5PA
Telephone number	01934 852602
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

Two Additional Inspectors carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

This is a small village primary school, with five classes, all of which consist of mixed-age groups. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average. Children start school with standards expected for their age. The school's governing body was reconstituted in September 2007.

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 with outstanding features. At the heart of the school's success is very effective leadership and management. This is a school which has a detailed and accurate view of its own performance. The school's analysis of the performance of its pupils is excellent. It uses the results of information collected to set challenging targets for pupils for subjects and for their learning. The school's significant improvement from 2004 when it was in the local authority 'causing concern' category is testimony to its outstanding capacity for further improvement. The headteacher, who was appointed after the school was placed in that category, has been the driving force in bringing about school improvement, especially in raising standards and achievement.

Achievement is good and pupils reach above average standards by the time they leave the school. Although standards in mathematics are good, more able pupils do not spend enough time solving problems and carrying out investigations. Good progress starts in Reception because of effective provision in the Foundation Stage. This good progress continues in Years 1 to 6 because of good teaching which is linked to an exciting and stimulating curriculum. Pupils say, 'We learn things which we will use in the future and they are always very interesting and teachers introduce topics in an exciting way'. Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is especially strong and this information is shared with parents and pupils so that both know exactly how well they are doing. Identification of pupils who are in danger of falling behind is rigorous and very effective intervention and support programmes are put in place to ensure that they catch up. Pupils particularly enjoy lessons where the interactive whiteboards are used to teach new knowledge, skills and understanding.

Excellent care, guidance and support make a significant contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils genuinely enjoy school and all that it offers and this is reflected in their good attendance. They have an excellent understanding of the need for healthy living and talk with great enthusiasm about the imminent arrival of the healthy tuck-shop. Relationships are excellent and the positive impact of the work of the peer mediators is a key factor in this. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported particularly well, especially by the learning support assistants. However, there are occasions in whole-class sessions where teachers do not make the most effective use of learning support assistants to help them, for example to ensure that all pupils engage in question and answer sessions. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are very sensitive and supportive of each other.

Following its reconstitution, many of the members of the governing body are new to the role. Whilst it is hardworking and supportive of the school, the governing body's roles in challenging the school and holding it to account for the standards it achieves are underdeveloped. Governors are active in seeking the views of parents and in widening the school's involvement in the local community. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. As one wrote, 'I am very happy with the progress my children are making. I never have a problem with them wanting to go to school. The teaching staff are always friendly and easy to talk to'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly and happily into the day-to-day life of the school. They make good progress in all areas of learning, with especially good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They benefit from good teaching and being in a class with Year 1 pupils. Effective planning usually means that within a mixed-age class, children receive their full entitlement to the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, on occasions, whole-class introductions do not fully meet their needs because the level of content is too difficult for them to access. Teaching of key skills is a strength, especially in linking sounds and letters. Learning support assistants provide good levels of support for children, although their deployment in whole-class lesson introductions is not always effective. Resources are good, including the provision for outdoor play. Assessment and tracking of their progress is as rigorous and detailed as for the rest of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- In mathematics, ensure that the more able pupils spend more time on problem-solving and investigations.
- Ensure that teachers deploy learning support assistants to maximum effect in whole-class lesson introductions.
- Develop the role of the governing body in challenging the school and in holding it to account for the standards it achieves.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and they reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. There is no significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls. In mathematics, especially in Years 3 to 6, more able pupils tend to spend too much time practising skills they find easy, rather than using these skills in problem-solving and investigations. As a result, some pupils do not achieve their maximum potential in the subject. There is good evidence that pupils use their key literacy and numeracy skills successfully in other subjects. Pupils say how much they enjoy cross-curricular work, especially in using information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their work in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress and go on to achieve well in national tests. They receive very good support from teachers and learning support assistants in reaching the targets set in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is infectious and genuinely reflects their positive attitudes to school. Of particular note is the great care and pride they take with all of their work. Pupils enjoy participating in the day-to-day life of the school. The way in which the whole school is divided each Wednesday into seven groups as the school council, means that each pupil, including children in Reception, has a voice. The recent refurbishment of the music room is a direct result of the council's efforts. Pupils play a full part in the local community and the school is quick to celebrate pupils' out-of-school achievements. Pupils' understanding of the importance

of keeping safe in school is excellent. Preparation, both social and academic, for their future economic well-being is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy their lessons because teachers make them interesting and fun. Teachers' planning is excellent and meets the differing learning needs of pupils most successfully. In each lesson, pupils know whether they are working on a 'must, should or could' target. Equally, teachers share the success criteria for the lesson, which means that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. As a result, they settle to work quickly and work very hard. Teachers' marking is good and tells pupils if they have reached their target and/or success criteria and, if not, why, and how they can improve to achieve it. Whilst learning support assistants provide very good support in group work, teachers do not maximise their use in whole-class lesson introductions.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and pupils really enjoy lessons where the interactive whiteboards are used to teach new skills and ideas. They equally enjoy the way new topics are introduced, especially if it is linked to a visit. On the day of the inspection, the Year 5/6 class visited the planetarium in Bristol and returned full of new knowledge about the stars and planets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The very good curriculum genuinely excites pupils and motivates them to learn, especially the topic-based approach. They understand and see the relevance of cross-curricular work as part of the skills they need in the future. The curriculum gives them many good opportunities to use and apply their key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. At present, in Years 3 to 6 in particular, the mathematics curriculum does not place sufficient emphasis on the problem-solving and investigation strand of the subject, particularly for more able pupils.

Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities and the take-up is high. They really enjoy the Spanish lessons which are provided for all pupils in the school, including Reception. Pupils enthuse about the range of visits they go on because 'They give us hands-on experiences which make learning so much fun'. Visitors, for example from a local Championship football team, enhance the curriculum, especially for boys.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school complies fully with all statutory requirements for child protection and safeguarding its pupils. The mentoring for pupils, especially those who are vulnerable at times, is very effective and has a major impact on pupils' exemplary behaviour. Pupils with learning difficulties receive excellent support from all staff in school and, when necessary, from outside agencies. Parental and pupil concerns about the lack of a 'lollipop person' were raised with the school. Evidence shows that the school is doing everything it possibly can to resolve the issue, which is linked to a lack of applicants for the job.

The quality of academic guidance and support is exceptional. From Day 1 in school, children are given both academic and learning targets which are shared with parents. Pupils know and understand these targets and explain confidently what they need to do in order to reach them and, once there, what the next set of targets will be. The use of targets and pupils' involvement in them is a real driving force in raising pupils' achievement and love of learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since her appointment, the headteacher has transformed the school from one that was 'causing concern' to the success story it is now. The key to the success was the recognition that until the provision for pupils was right, then achievement and standards would not improve. As a result, the headteacher has transformed teaching and learning, especially assessment, and revitalised the curriculum so that it meets pupils' needs and aspirations. In this success, the headteacher has received very good support from the senior leadership team and subject leaders. Together, they have created a school where the progress of each pupil is assessed and tracked rigorously, which impacts on good achievement. The school has actively sought the views of parents and pupils in its successful journey. Its 'Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment' is an excellent means for pupils and parents to access online information about the school and pupil performance.

The new governing body is hardworking and supportive of the school. It has worked hard to improve its systems and procedures, especially in ensuring that there is a regular and systematic review of all its policies. It has ensured that statutory responsibilities, which were only partly in place, are fully in place. Currently, it has not developed its role sufficiently in challenging the school and in holding it to account for the standards it achieves.

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Annex A

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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

217 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandford Primary School, Winscombe BS25 5PA

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. In particular, we would like to thank those of you in Year 5 who gave up part of your lunch break to talk to my colleague. We were both pleased that there was a short time after their school trip for us to meet some of you from Year 6. I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school with outstanding features and that you all play a very important part in your school's success. These are the things that are really good:

- you make good progress and by the time you leave the school, your standard of work is better than that of many children of your age
- your behaviour is excellent and it is very good to see how well you all get on together
- you really enjoy your lessons, especially when teachers use the interactive whiteboards
- you like the topics teachers give you and the chance to use your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
- the targets you are given really help you with learning and to make good progress in the subjects you study
- all of the adults who lead and manage your school are determined that you should do your very best work and, at the same time, really enjoy school.

There are a few things that we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do in order to make your school even better. These are:

- to make sure that in numeracy, you do not spend too much time practising work you can do easily and to give you more problems to solve and investigations to carry out
- to encourage teachers to make better use of learning support assistants at the start of lessons to help you with your learning
- to make sure that your school governors check up more thoroughly on how well you are doing with your work.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis Lead Inspector

Annex B

17 January 2008

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Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. In particular, we would like to thank those of you in Year 5 who gave up part of your lunch break to talk to my colleague. We were both pleased that there was a short time after their school trip for us to meet some of you from Year 6. I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school with outstanding features and that you all play a very important part in your school's success. These are the things that are really good:

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Yours sincerely

David Curtis
Lead Inspector