

Sandford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113107
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311109
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Ridgewell
Headteacher	Wilson Forster
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2005
School address	Sandford Crediton EX17 4NE
Telephone number	01363 772256
Fax number	01363 777817

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the strategies used to improve pupils' achievement in writing and in mathematics; the support provided for pupils with specific difficulties; and how information from assessment is being used.

Evidence was gathered from observations in lessons and around the school and scrutiny of assessment data and other documentation. Parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school serving a widespread area in rural Devon. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. A significant number have statements of special educational need. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school has gained the Activemark award and Healthy School status. It is a member of the Crediton Learning Community that forms links across several local schools.

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. The large majority of parents are delighted with all aspects of its work. Comments such as 'We are proud that our son attends this school and confident that he is receiving the best education possible' and 'He has progressed in leaps and bounds' demonstrate their confidence in what the school offers. Pupils' personal development is outstanding as a result of the high level of care provided for individuals and the breadth of opportunities that extends their experiences and awareness of the wider world.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year, making good progress in all areas of learning. This is successfully built on in subsequent year groups so that standards by the end of Year 6 are well above average. While standards are high in English, reading is a stronger area than writing. This has been a priority for improvement over the past year, with a range of initiatives implemented to improve pupils' skills in this area. These have begun to have a positive impact, resulting in an improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in national tests. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support and make exceptionally good progress against their individual targets. More able pupils also achieve well. There have been improvements in the proportion reaching higher levels in mathematics at the end of Year 6. This is the result of well-focused work, to ensure that pupils with the potential to make fast progress in their learning attain the standards that they should.

Key to the school's success is purposeful leadership from the headteacher and senior staff, with strong support from governors. Middle managers are becoming increasingly involved in taking on responsibilities such as analysing data from a range of tests and checking on the quality of provision in the areas for which they are responsible. Staff are embracing the opportunity to enhance their leadership roles and to plan further areas for development.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and all that it offers. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. They work well independently and in small groups. They develop a very good range of key skills and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and for later life. Many show a high level of motivation and the ability to use their initiative. However, opportunities are missed for them to become actively engaged in lessons and to make decisions about their learning, such as how to organise a task or present their findings.

The level of care provided for individual pupils is exemplary. Pupils with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sensitively supported and well integrated in lessons. Their peers show a high level of awareness of their needs and include them in their play and activities wherever possible. Pupils in the early stages of learning English also benefit from additional support and quickly acquire a good understanding of the language. For pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, a 'chat club' offers individual support and the opportunity to develop social skills and learn about strategies to cope with troubling situations. Parents of children who have had extra help are very appreciative of the school's approach. As one parent explained, 'the confidential, quiet support we have received has been excellent'. Links with a wide range of agencies effectively enhance provision and extend staff expertise in meeting a diversity of needs.

Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum underpin pupils' good achievement. Adjustments have been made this year to provision for mathematics and writing to boost standards in these

area. Opportunities have been extended for pupils to write for a range of purposes in subjects across the curriculum. This has resulted, for example, in high quality written work about life in the Victorian period and in developing precision in recording work in science. As part of the curriculum revisions that are underway, there are similar plans to extend the use of numeracy skills in other subjects. Good use is made of a range of information about pupils' progress to check whether they are on track or need some extra support to boost their skills in a particular area. Targets are set for individual pupils, but this is done in different ways across the school and pupils themselves are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.

The school works extremely hard to extend the experiences of pupils beyond the classroom. A range of clubs, visits and visitors enables them to learn new skills and to develop confidence in a variety of situations. Residential visits for Year 5 and 6 pupils develop their sense of independence and teamwork. The school draws on expertise within the community so that pupils have opportunities to work with a local author and musicians and artists. Links with other local schools enable pupils to participate in a range of sporting and musical events. Children are active fundraisers, making decisions through the school council about which charities to support and what activities to organise. Links with a school in Kenya extend their awareness of a contrasting lifestyle and make them appreciate, as one said, 'how lucky we are'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills and knowledge broadly in line with expectations. They benefit from a secure and stimulating environment and teaching that is very attuned to the learning needs of young children. Parents are pleased with the start that their children get, making comments such as 'My son is flourishing'. Progress is good in all areas. Children do particularly well in reading and in developing knowledge of number. Last year the school identified that writing was a weaker area and introduced a new approach to teaching early literacy skills. This has resulted in good improvement in progress this year as children use their developing knowledge of sounds to write independently for a variety of purposes.

There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities so that children have a rich variety of experiences. Children develop confidence in organising activities independently and in working and playing together. In role play in the 'travel agents', for example, a small group enjoyed helping 'clients' plan their holidays to different parts of the world. This sort of activity develops children's knowledge of the world and their creativity. However, resources for these aspects of learning are limited or becoming rather worn and this reduces the quality of experiences that children might have.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in lessons and to make decisions about how to tackle tasks or record their work.
- Develop a consistent approach to setting targets so that pupils have a clear view of what they need to do to improve.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	1

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	2
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	1

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

11 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Sandford School, Crediton EX17 4NE

You may remember that I visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all those of you who explained what you were doing in lessons and what was happening around the school. Particular thanks to the Year 6 pupils who gave me so much helpful information when we met. I thought you would be interested in what I am saying in my report. Yours is a good school. You told me how much you enjoy everything that goes on there and I can see why!

You are taught well and your learning moves on at a good rate. Staff take very good care of you and make sure that you get extra help if you need it. The people in charge of the school are always looking for ways to make it better. They make sure you get many exciting experiences, like working with artists and musicians and going on trips. Some of you told me you enjoy trying different sports such as badminton and cricket.

One of the best things about the school is you yourselves! You work well together and think carefully about how to help each other. You know how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise to stay fit and healthy. Those of you in Year 6 are mature, responsible and well prepared for life at secondary school and beyond.

I have suggested two things that the school needs to work on. The first is to get you more involved in suggesting ideas and thinking about how to tackle your work in lessons. The second is to sort out the way that targets are set so that you have a clear idea of what you need to do next to improve. I know you will work hard at those targets because you are so keen to do well.

I hope you enjoy all the end of term activities and the long summer holiday ahead.

Best wishes

Shirley Billington Lead inspector