

Sandford Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124030
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314785
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Holmes

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Denver Tolley
Headteacher	Janet Warner
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Clayfield Grove Sandford Hill Longton Stoke-on-Trent ST3 5AQ
Telephone number	01782 235511
Fax number	01782 235512

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sandford Hill is a larger-than-average primary school that serves an area of mixed housing. There is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities. Pupil mobility is higher than average. The school is an extended school with provision for evening classes and parental support that is well used by the community. It has close links with the local church. It has achieved Healthy School status and is working towards achieving awards in geography and the arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that has many strengths. It is exceptionally well led by the headteacher, who has created a strong team of staff. Well supported by a strong governing body, they have a shared vision and ethos which results in outstanding achievement by pupils and high standards of personal development and well-being. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve further because it is continually striving to improve its provision in order to enhance the already outstanding quality of education that pupils experience.

The rigorous self-evaluation procedures to track and check pupils' progress are used extremely well by teachers to inform pupils' learning. Outstanding teaching, in which high expectations of pupils actively engage them in their own learning, motivates and stimulates pupils to succeed, together with a vibrant curriculum that challenges pupils to achieve. These factors contribute to pupils' outstanding achievement and to the good standards that they attain. The school has recognised that to maintain its high standards and high levels of achievement, the good opportunities pupils have to apply their basic skills in other subjects need to be strengthened further. From attainment on entry to the Nursery, which has been well below what is expected nationally for the last three years, children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage because of the excellent provision. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children reach the goals expected of them. In Years 1 to 6, very good progress continues so that in both Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' standards of attainment are securely above the national average in English, mathematics and science.

Parents and pupils all have extremely positive views of the school and are supportive of its work. As a parent commented, 'The school gives our children a great sense of belonging and a very well balanced education.' Pupils are extremely proud of their school and talk about it with great enthusiasm. They appreciate all the opportunities they are given to succeed and all the activities on offer to them. Through a strong ethos of care the school promotes its motto, 'thoughtfulness and respect', and enables pupils to become responsible and mature young citizens. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and lead active, healthy lives, as seen in their excellent understanding of eating healthily and taking exercise. Their enjoyment of learning is clear in lessons and they make an extremely positive contribution to the life of the school through the school council, for example, deciding to have healthy snacks at break time. Through their excellent progress and high standards of achievement and the very good opportunities they have to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school, they are extremely well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Very good provision in both Nursery and Reception classes enables the children to achieve very well. Most reach the goals expected of them before moving into Year 1, although few exceed them in communication, language and literacy. Highly skilled teaching, excellent relationships and a stimulating curriculum develop children's independence and challenges them to learn through role play and child-initiated activities. Very effective teaching of letter sounds enables children to make a good start in reading and writing. Assessment is used extremely well to record children's progress and plan the next steps in their learning. As a result, children enjoy a smooth transition into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain high standards of achievement by strengthening the opportunities pupils have to apply their basic skills in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding progress and achievement across the school results from high quality teaching that engages pupils' interest and motivates them to do well. Pupils achieve extremely well and make very good progress in all areas of the school. In Years 1 and 2, standards are above average, with an increased proportion of pupils on track to reach higher levels in writing and in mathematics. This is a direct result of the action the school has taken to improve its provision from the previous year, when few pupils reached higher levels in writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement in science is consistently high and the current Year 6 are on track to achieve the challenging targets they have been set. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those eligible for free school meals, make very good progress and achieve well above average for these pupils because of the very good teaching and support they receive from all the adults who work with them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as shown by their excellent behaviour. They demonstrate a great pride in their school and a liking for learning. They enjoy the responsibilities they are given, and undertake them with a great sense of diligence. Older pupils act as peer mentors for younger pupils when they are worried about things that happen in the playground. Their attendance is satisfactory and improving. They thrive in school because of the excellent ethos, which underpins all the activities they undertake. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They already show that they are developing into polite and responsible citizens. Pupils have a strong voice in school decision making through the school council and appreciate that their ideas are valued. They contribute to the wider community through their involvement in fundraising for charities and for an orphanage in Kenya. Pupils readily offer opinions and views in the full understanding that staff will respect and respond to what they have to say.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Excellent teaching helps pupils to achieve very well. As a parent commented, 'Teachers are very involved in ensuring that children get the very most from their time at the school'. Lessons are purposeful and calm and teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. Pupils are engaged in their own learning and work exceptionally well with other pupils, for example, in a lesson about developing balanced arguments for and against a point of view. Pupils are eager to learn, responding positively and enthusiastically to the challenging tasks their teachers set them. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, identifying 'next steps' in learning through questions and comments. Pupils are involved in checking their own work, and of other pupils in the older classes. They do this honestly and sensitively, helping each other to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides well for the development of pupils' basic skills, and the strong focus on phonics has been extended through the school into the Year 3 classes where it is raising standards in literacy. Teachers make links across subjects to provide pupils with opportunities to use their developing skills to support their learning, particularly in writing. The school recognises that to maintain high standards and level of achievement, the opportunities pupils have to apply their basic skills in other subjects need to be strengthened. The curriculum is very effective in supporting pupils' personal development and enjoyment of learning. There is good enrichment of learning with the introduction of French and a wide range of sporting and academic clubs which extend the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding level of care shown by all adults in the school enables pupils to feel safe and secure. It contributes significantly to the confident approach pupils have towards their learning. A parent commented that 'staff care about all the pupils; this is obvious by their commitment'. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils and to ensure their health and welfare are secure and rigorous, including the systems in place to monitor and improve pupils' attendance. Excellent relationships with adults help pupils to know that they can trust, and approach them with any problems they might have. The systems to support and guide pupils in their academic progress are very effective and underpin pupils' progress. Pupils know the targets they are set and clearly understand how they help them to improve their work and to achieve very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

There is an ethos of high achievement in the school. This helps pupils both in their academic work and in their personal development and well-being. The vision of high achievement is shared by all staff and is supported strongly by the governing body, which supports and challenges the school with great effect. Governors said that the fact that 'children come first is shown by the high standards they achieve'. The leadership team has established rigorous self-evaluation processes and pupils are set challenging targets to raise their standards still further. There are very effective systems for checking and tracking pupils' progress and intervention is used extremely well where pupils are identified as in need of additional support. Subject leaders track pupils' achievement very effectively so they know that all groups are doing equally well, for example, pupils who are eligible for free school meals. All pupils are equally valued and have full access to the opportunities that the school has to offer. They said that all the adults in school help them to do as well as they can.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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	3
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1
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	1
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandford Hill Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 5AQ

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We thought you were extremely polite and enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say. We know that you are extremely proud of your school and enjoy going there. We think that Sandford Hill is an outstanding school with many strengths. These are the main things we found out about your school.

- You make excellent progress in your work and achieve extremely well.
- You behave extremely well, like coming to school and really enjoy your learning.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- You make a very good contribution to running the school and to activities in the local community.
- You are provided with a lot of interesting activities and clubs.
- You are looked after extremely well by the adults in school.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well and all the adults are working hard to help her.

In order to make the school even better we have asked it to:

- help you maintain your high standards by providing you with more opportunities to use your reading, writing, number and ICT skills in other subjects.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and doing the best you can.

Best Wishes

Brian Holmes Lead inspector



25 January 2008

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Brian Holmes
Lead inspector