

Sandlings Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124685
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315017
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert McKeown HMI

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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Harris
Headteacher	Mr David Fox
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003
School address	Easton Road Sutton Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 3TD
Telephone number	01394 420444
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Sandlings is an average size community primary school situated near Woodbridge, in Suffolk. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who come into and leave the school during the year is much higher than for most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is typical for this type of school but varies from year to year. A small number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most children start school in the Foundation Stage with skills and aptitudes that are significantly below that expected for their age. The school has gained an Active Mark for physical education (PE) and the Investors in People Award. The headteacher has led the school for ten years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sandlings Primary School provides its pupils with a good quality education. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with what the school does for their children; several wrote positive comments in the returned questionnaires. Pupils especially enjoy coming to school and believe it is a friendly place. They are enthusiastic about the work they do in lessons and talk positively about the support they receive from their teachers. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is very good and everyone gets on well together. New pupils quickly settle in because the school community is very welcoming. This is especially important as many pupils join the school throughout the year. The school council is influential and gives pupils the chance to make decisions that contribute to improving the school. Older pupils are proud to take on a range of responsibilities, acting as excellent monitors and mentors for other pupils.

The time pupils spend at Sandlings can vary considerably. The annual turnover of pupils in any year group can be as much as 50%. Some pupils come into the school with gaps in their learning, having slipped behind in English and mathematics. Despite this, most pupils make good progress, although those who stay longer make more progress and achieve better results. The school does well to ensure pupils are assessed regularly and their progress tracked methodically to identify and tackle underachievement. Standards are broadly average in Year 6. The latest national assessments indicate that standards in writing by the end of Year 2 and in mathematics by the end of Year 6 were below average. The school is taking effective action to improve standards in mathematics in order to meet the challenging targets set for 2008.

Teaching and learning are good. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory and the majority were good or outstanding. Classes are managed effectively and pupils understand clearly what is expected of them. The contribution made by teaching assistants is excellent, particularly the support they give to groups and individual pupils to help them achieve as well as they can. This is helping pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who need to catch up, make at least good progress. The curriculum is good. It exceeds requirements and provides many opportunities for pupils to learn outside of the classroom.

The headteacher provides very good leadership. His systematic approach to management and his open leadership style are well respected by staff, parents and pupils. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher and other key staff. The school places significant emphasis on collecting and acting on pupils' and parents' views. The school development plan sets out clearly the priorities for improvement and shows how staff and governors intend to monitor the outcomes of their actions. An additional, detailed improvement plan has been drawn up for raising standards in mathematics. Effective school leadership and management receive good support from the governing body. Key governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and aspects that require improving. All staff and governors are involved in regular self-evaluation reviews. The school has improved well since the last inspection and it continues to have a good capacity for improvement. It offers good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children leaving the Reception class at the end of 2007 had skills and aptitudes that were below expected levels in personal and social development, literacy and mathematics. Outcomes were better in physical and creative development. The school's own progress records show that these

children made good progress in almost all aspects of their learning during the year. In the current Reception class, children are making good progress. This is because they receive good teaching across the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children have many opportunities to engage in practical learning and to develop their independence. Adult support is excellent and comprehensive up-to-date records are kept of children's progress. Children's welfare and personal hygiene are promoted effectively. The classroom environment is well organised, although opportunities for outdoor learning are restricted. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Staff work well together and there are good links with parents. The school has improved its contacts with the local childcare centre where most children start their Foundation Stage learning; as a result, more emphasis is placed on teaching phonics before children enter the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2, and in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress. Although standards in Year 2 in 2007 were below average, they show a continuing improving trend in reading and mathematics. Outcomes in writing were not as positive and have remained below average for some time. The school accepts that this is something that requires tackling. The Year 6 results in 2007 show that pupils did better in English than they did in mathematics. Results in English were close to the national average and have improved well in recent years; the targets set with the local authority were exceeded. In mathematics, although most pupils met their targets, results were below the national average. Pupils in Year 6 are on track to meet the challenging targets set with the local authority for 2008, indicating that further improvements in English and mathematics are likely. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are at expected levels and higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. This is because provision has improved considerably.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is promoted extremely well. The school's approach to ensuring new pupils quickly settle in and feel part of the community is outstanding. Even though some pupils' time at the school may be brief, they make very good progress in their personal development. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to adopt healthy lifestyles, and they make healthy choices when eating and taking exercise.

Pupils really enjoy growing vegetables in their garden plots and having them on the menu at lunchtime. Lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings and concerns. Behaviour is very good and everyone gets on well together. As a result, pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they can turn to adults for help. Attendance is good and pupils are punctual. The enthusiastic school council meets regularly and produces informative newsletters about their activities. Pupils acquire suitable basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They know about the importance of teamwork and regularly make positive contributions towards the welfare of others. For example, older pupils run a school shop and everyone has helped the local regiment with their support for families in Kenya.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teachers plan thoroughly, know their subjects well and devise activities that are appropriate for the needs of the pupils in their classes. They ensure that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn and what they are expected to achieve. Teachers make good use of a range of resources to support pupils' learning. The use of interactive whiteboards helps to enhance lessons and pupils respond well to these. Teaching assistants provide carefully planned support for groups and individual pupils, within and outside lessons. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress in reading, writing and spelling. Since the beginning of the year, a more formal system of assessing progress in mathematics has been introduced to enable teachers to keep a tighter check on achievement. Marking varies in quality but is mostly good and helps pupils to know how well they are doing. In the most effective lessons, teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their learning. In one outstanding lesson observed, the teacher linked learning well in a number of subjects. Pupils were able to use a range of skills to enrich their learning. Pupils benefit from having lessons taught by subject specialists, for example in French.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school strongly promotes pupils' personal development through the curriculum. For example, learning about how to be healthy and stay safe in PSHE, science and PE. Themed weeks and days bring the curriculum to life and pupils have recently enjoyed taking part in an African week. Links with the local regiment are good and pupils have learnt about the work it is doing in Kenya. Pupils enjoy being involved in a wide range of additional learning activities outside of school, such as the Year 6 visit to the Hilltop Residential Activity Centre. All pupils have the chance to take part in a performance or production, which are shared with audiences of parents. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils enabling them to pursue their sporting and creative interests. The lunchtime computer club is very popular and managed very effectively by one of the teaching assistant team. School teams take part in local sports competitions with some success. Specialist teaching in music, including instrumental music tuition, further enhances provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for, supported and guided very well. The school environment is safe and appropriate health and safety procedures are in place. Suitable safeguarding arrangements are followed and meet requirements.

The school is particularly good at ensuring that children who experience a lot of change in their lives are given special consideration. There are good procedures in place to guide pupils' behaviour and encourage and reward good attendance. Assemblies are used very well to celebrate pupils' achievements, reinforce expectations and demonstrate the value of being part of this school's community. The school works well with parents and other local authority services to enable pupils to make good progress. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are improving and detailed individual education plans are written for pupils with additional needs. Regular 'gym trail' sessions are organised for a small number of pupils to aid their concentration and

coordination. Older pupils have the chance to take part in transition activities to prepare them for transfer to secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Staff work very well together and there is a collective commitment to raising standards and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. Management responsibilities are distributed well. The deputy headteacher efficiently manages the deployment and training of teaching assistants and the support programmes for pupils with additional needs. Senior staff play their part in coordinating the work of their colleagues. Subject leaders regularly review their subjects but some are not as influential in securing improvement because their reports focus too little on action that needs to be taken to raise standards. The school has made good use of local authority support to help improve standards in mathematics and has positive links with other local schools. There are well-established systems of performance management and good support is given to new members of staff. Resources are used effectively to boost pupils' achievement, for example in appointing and training extra teaching assistants. Regular working group meetings enable governors to keep a check on how well the school is doing. Governors recognise that they could undertake more visits to see the school in action.

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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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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?	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

18 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Sandlings Primary School, Sutton, Woodbridge, IP12 3TD

Thank you for helping us with our inspection work when we visited your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their views of the school. We were pleased to see that they think the school is doing well.

It is our opinion that Sandlings is a good school. Everyone we met was friendly and polite and you told us how easy it is to settle into the school when you are new. We were impressed with your behaviour and the way older children help out as monitors. The school council is well organised and makes sure your views are represented. We like the idea of having class vegetable plots for growing healthy food and were pleased to see you support children in other countries. Your teachers are working hard to help you succeed and the other adults that work with you do a great job giving you support when it is needed. There are many interesting learning activities for you to enjoy in lessons, at lunchtime and after school.

Your headteacher, your teachers and the governors keep a close check on how well the school is doing and they work well together to try to make your school even better. Although we think that most of you make good progress, we asked Mr Fox and your teachers to help you do better in your writing and in mathematics.

You have a lot to look forward to in the rest of the year; I hope you do your best and enjoy it.

With best wishes

Rob McKeown

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools