

Siddal Primary School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130936
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	315665
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Bardon

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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr E Bowers
Headteacher	Ms Lynda Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Backhold Lane Siddal Halifax West Yorkshire HX3 9DL
Telephone number	01422 354976
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary serves a disadvantaged area on the outskirts of the town. Most pupils are from White British families and all speak English confidently. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is average. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority and one in six pupils has involvement with outside agencies. Since it was last inspected the school has moved into a new building and there have been a large number of staff changes, including a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school has achieved the Investors in People award. There is a school-managed Children's Centre on site providing day care and out-of-school care plus family and study support services. The Children's Centre was not part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Siddal is a satisfactory school which is showing clear improvement following a period of substantial change. The opportunities provided by the new building have been grasped enthusiastically and the mood in the school is upbeat. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average. Standards in both Year 2 and Year 6 were higher in 2007 than in the previous year and there is a determination, emanating from the headteacher and permeating all the way through school, to continue the improvement. The extensive development work taking place, in conjunction with the local authority, is helping to produce a consistency of provision and standards that has often been lacking in the past.

Pupils are happy at school and develop into mature and sensible young people with a strong sense of social responsibility. The school is a pleasant place to be and pupils report that they feel safe and secure in the care of the staff. While many pupils behave well, a minority have considerable difficulty maintaining their self-discipline and need considerable help with their behaviour both in and out of the classroom. The school has well structured strategies in place to provide this help and monitors pupils' personal development closely. Pupils enjoy physical activities and the many extra-curricular activities on offer are well attended. They welcome the changes that have been made to school lunches and recognise the importance of eating sensibly. Pupils readily take on responsibilities around school, including assisting other pupils and staff in a variety of ways. The skills pupils acquire provide satisfactory preparation for the future. Moreover, their ability to use computers is good.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many teachers have been at the school for a relatively short time and a number are quite new to the profession. Some aspects of their work are good, such as the careful planning of lessons, the positive way in which they manage pupils' behaviour and the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils do not learn as much in mathematics as they do in many other subjects because the teaching is less effective, particularly in promoting mental calculation skills.

A lively curriculum motivates pupils to learn. It is enhanced by a wide range of well planned and additional activities, including Spanish for older pupils. Pupils' learning of scientific facts is satisfactory, but they are not given enough opportunity to develop their science enquiry skills. Close attention is paid to pupils' welfare and well structured programmes are in place to ensure they are guided and supported in all aspects of their personal and academic development. Pupils told inspectors that one of the things they like most about school is that there is always someone to turn to for help.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have forged an effective partnership and provide the school with a strong sense of purpose and clear direction. Other staff make a positive contribution to school management, but are quite new to their posts and have not yet acquired a full range of management skills. Consequently, the school's understanding of how its many development initiatives are influencing pupils' learning and achievement lacks detail. Governors carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and are keen for the school to do well. As with staff, many are relatively new and while their capacity to evaluate the performance of the school for themselves is developing, it lacks sharpness. The school is beginning to play a pivotal role in the local community, providing key services for children and their families. The quality of education pupils receive represents satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and gives children an assured start to school. When they first join the Nursery many children lack the skills and knowledge typical for their age. They make good progress throughout their time in the Foundation Stage and by the end of Reception the attainment of the majority of children meets expectations in most of the areas of learning. Although they make clear gains in communication and language, children's skills in this area are below average going into Year 1, particularly in linking letters and sounds. They learn to work and play effectively alongside others and to follow the routines that help the classroom to run smoothly. A small number are prone to truculent outbursts and need support from staff with their behaviour. Teaching is good and children's progress is assessed thoroughly and discussed regularly. Staff plan carefully together using a balance of child-chosen and teacher-directed activities to cover all the areas of learning. First-hand experiences, such as investigating with toy spiders in containers of sticky paste, do much for children's enjoyment of learning and understanding of the world around them. Management of the Foundation Stage is good. Provision is organised well and Reception and Nursery work cohesively as a unit. Well considered plans to address the shortfalls in children's language and literacy are being implemented.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics and raise standards throughout the school.
- Develop pupils' ability to investigate in science.
- Increase the skills of teachers with management responsibilities and of governors in evaluating school development.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The majority of pupils enter Year 1 with attainment that is mostly as expected for their age. Teachers' assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2007 showed standards to be average, which was a considerable improvement on the previous year. The school has taken effective measures to raise standards in Years 1 and 2, and in writing, in particular, pupils are achieving far more than in the past. There was a similar improvement in the test results of Year 6 pupils in English and science. Standards rose to around the national average in 2007 after being below it in the previous two years. In contrast, standards in mathematics fell well below average with too few pupils attaining the expected level and higher levels. Overall, the achievement of this cohort of pupils during their time in school was satisfactory. Targets set for their attainment were exceeded in English, but missed in mathematics because too few pupils developed the necessary capability in mental calculation. Inspection evidence shows that the national assessments provided an accurate picture and that broadly average standards and a satisfactory rate of progress are being maintained. Most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities maintain a similar rate of satisfactory progress to other pupils. The comparative performance of boys

and girls varies widely year to year and over time there is no significant difference between the two.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The many smiling faces and good levels of attendance bear testament to the pleasure pupils get from school. They cite the many interesting activities the school provides and the positive relationships they have with staff among the main reasons. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good. They are polite, sociable and try hard with their work. A small but significant minority of pupils need regular help with their behaviour. Despite the school's considerable efforts, at times there are no alternatives but to exclude such pupils for short periods so that the learning of the majority is not disadvantaged. Most pupils feel safe in school and report that any anti-social behaviour that does occur is quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their sense of self-worth and confidence in their own abilities develops progressively. Pupils enjoy the many physical activities the school provides. They recognise the importance of this, along with eating sensibly and avoiding dangerous substances, to their health and well-being. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and value the opportunity to contribute to school through the school council. They take pride in the amounts of money they raise for those less fortunate than themselves. Preparation for future learning and life is satisfactory and pupils enjoy taking part in enterprise schemes which give them an introduction to financial decision making.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good quality relationships and skilful behaviour management ensure that lessons are orderly, purposeful and ensure pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils enjoy their lessons, which teachers plan and prepare thoroughly. Learning objectives, which are a feature of all lessons, are displayed prominently and shared with pupils at the start. In some lessons they are not revisited often enough to help pupils retain their focus and assess for themselves the progress they are making. Marking is often linked to pupils' targets and includes constructive comments, which help pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work. While pupils are taught written strategies for mathematical calculation adequately, mental strategies, including rapid recall of number facts, are not taught well enough. The developing use of 'talking partners' helps pupils remain fully engaged in their lessons, assists their confidence, and gives them further enjoyable opportunities for speaking and listening. Good use is made of resources, particularly those related to ICT to assist teaching and aid learning. Learning support assistants play a full and effective part in lessons, often supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are fully involved and understand the work they have to do.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well and contributes substantially to their enjoyment of school. All the required subjects are taught, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop the full range of enquiry skills in science. Specialist teachers in Spanish, art and physical education provide expertise to help pupils further their knowledge and skills.

Adventurous weeks and occasional weeks devoted to one subject enable pupils to learn in ways that they find interesting and fun. Teachers have started to link subjects together to increase cohesion, but this is at an early stage of development. With the help of a range of outside providers, health and safety matters are covered comprehensively. An exciting range of visits, including a residential weekend, and visitors to the school extends pupils' learning and personal development. Extra-curricular sporting and creative activities promote pupils' fitness, health and enjoyment and are very popular. Consequently, pupils develop interests that they can continue to enjoy in later life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' welfare is a high priority for staff and safeguarding procedures, including child protection, meet requirements. Vulnerable pupils are very well looked after and the school works closely with a range of agencies to support them and their families. Although only recently established, the pastoral team is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' attendance and on the attitudes of those for whom good behaviour is a challenge. Pupils feel safe in school and this is in no small part due to the strong approach taken to unacceptable behaviour. As one pupil told inspectors with confidence, 'the school has banned bullying'. Overall, pupils are guided well in their learning and their progress is closely monitored. Teachers set well judged individual targets which give pupils a clear understanding of what they need to learn next, but on occasions, 'self-review' is not promoted well enough in lessons. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and given the support they need by the school or other agencies to learn alongside their peers. Transition arrangements to high school are good and the most vulnerable pupils are particularly well catered for to ensure that their move is positive. The summer school activities offered to all children in the local area are an example of the school's positive and effective efforts to promote community cohesion.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, with effective support from the deputy headteacher, has managed the many changes that have taken place recently, including the move to the new building, extremely well. Their work has provided continuity and had a positive effect on standards, which have started to rise. The improvement the school has made since it was last inspected and its capacity to improve in the future are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher check the performance of the school frequently using effective strategies which provide accurate information. This is used well to plan for improvement. Other members of staff are contributing to this process, but many are new to their roles and responsibilities and lack experience. Consequently, the school has yet to gain a complete picture of how the developments that are in place are affecting pupils' learning and achievements. Pupils with behaviour difficulties are managed well and the school is generally calm and orderly. The quality of teaching is examined regularly and senior staff have an accurate overview of its effectiveness. Governors work closely with the school and support its work. They have started to evaluate how well the school is performing for themselves, but this aspect of governance requires further development. The school establishes good links with other schools and outside agencies to support its work. Strong links with the community are being forged, helped by the close working partnership between the school and the Children's Centre.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. Lots of you smiled and chatted to us which made us feel comfortable and welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do, and a special thanks to those who talked with us about the school.

We were pleased to hear that you are happy at school and that most pupils get on well. The new building is lovely and you seemed to be making good use of everything it provides. Adults look after you very well and it was good to hear that you feel safe and that you can get help if you need it. Most of the behaviour we saw was good and you were clearly interested in what you were doing in lessons. A few pupils need to try harder to behave well at all times. We were impressed by the concern you show for others and of ways in which you raise money for various charities. These and other things told us that you are growing into sensible and responsible young people.

There were lots of things we liked about the school and could see you were making clear progress in your work. We felt that you could learn more in mathematics and have asked your teachers to look into this. You can help by trying to calculate more in your heads and by learning as many number facts as you can so that you can use them quickly. We were very envious of the many clubs and other activities you can participate in and pleased that many of you take regular exercise and eat sensibly. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to investigate and experiment so that you can learn more about the skills of being a scientist. The school is making many changes to make your education even better and we have asked staff and governors to look for ways to measure how well these are working.

Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and I wish you lots of luck in the future.