

Sandy Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133619
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	316169
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Reading
Headteacher	Mrs Elisabeth Norris
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Sandy Lane Bracknell RG12 2JG
Telephone number	01344 423896
Fax number	01344 861273

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area experiencing rapid change. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has grown significantly in recent years to a fifth of the school roll. There are pupils from 23 different countries, many having recently arrived in the UK. About 12% of pupils have English as an additional language, a few of whom are at a very early stage of acquiring English. As they start school, children's understanding and skills are below those typical of the age group, especially in early literacy and numeracy skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average.

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. Pupils talk about their school very positively. They enjoy it, knowing they are safe and well cared for. Parents too give the school their wholehearted support; as one said, 'I am 100 per cent sure that I could not have chosen a more child and parent friendly school'. Many parents also commented on the role played by the headteacher in moving the school forward, describing her leadership as excellent. The headteacher does indeed provide inspirational leadership and is extremely well supported by senior staff.

The school's focus on pupils' all-round development has a very positive impact on their learning. From a rather low start, pupils achieve well through the school. The rate of achievement has risen dramatically over the recent years. Standards, previously below average, have risen to average levels by the end of Year 6. This reflects the strength of the school's leadership in raising attainment through improving teaching and learning. Lessons stimulate pupils' interest and teachers motivate pupils by setting challenging targets. Using a wealth of assessment information, teachers set work that closely matches pupils' abilities. Following a dip in standards in mathematics last year, the school's analysis of test results revealed that the range of strategies pupils use when tackling mental calculations is too limited and this was noted during the inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties receive outstanding support and the school's excellent provision for pupils at an early stage of acquiring English has received national recognition.

A rich and varied curriculum of good quality encompasses a wide range of subjects through a themed approach. For example, Year 3 pupils have been inspired to produce good work in history, geography, science, literacy and mathematics in response to their study of the Celts and Romans. Pupils' personal development is enhanced effectively inside and outside the classroom. The school wholeheartedly embraces the 'Rights and Responsibilities' charter and this is evident from the strong sense of fairness pupils show. They behave very well, gain clear ideas about how to keep safe and stay healthy, and make an extremely valuable contribution to school life.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Pastoral care is very strong. This is seen in pupils' confidence and good relationships with the adults with whom they come into contact. It is also reflected in the way that pupils of all ages take care of one another and play together well. Academic guidance is excellent. Teachers ensure that pupils know precisely what they need to do to improve. They provide excellent feedback through marking, and pupils increasingly review their own work against specific criteria.

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding and is reflected in rising standards. The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school should grow as a community in which all pupils achieve their potential both academically and personally. There is a shared determination among all staff to move the school forward. The individual performance of pupils is monitored rigorously. Governors are active, extremely well informed and very supportive. The school has a good capacity to promote further improvement and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children progress well in the Nursery and Reception classes due to the consistently effective teaching. The standards reached by the end of Reception vary from year-to-year but the most recent year group reached broadly average standards across all areas of learning. Working closely together, teachers and support staff create an exciting environment for young children. The warm and stimulating atmosphere means children bounce into school eagerly. A good balance is struck between adult led activities and those chosen by children. Staff use central guidelines about linking letters to sounds very well, providing a good base for subsequent work in reading and writing. The children who enter the school with no English soon settle. Adults successfully use gesture, facial expression and visual prompts to develop their early communication skills. Children respond well to the wide range of practical activities on offer, although opportunities for them to develop their language and social skills through play are somewhat constrained because role play areas in the classrooms are rather sparse. Although Nursery children can freely use the well-equipped outdoor learning area, the location of the Reception class prohibits such informal access to it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the range of strategies pupils use when solving mental calculations, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards reached by Year 2 pupils fluctuate because of wide variations in their ability and are generally below average. However, the school's meticulous tracking shows that most pupils make good progress from their starting points. The rate of progress between Years 3 to 6 has improved significantly over the last three years to the extent that, in 2006, pupils' overall achievement was in the top 25 per cent nationally. Pupils do particularly well in improving their writing skills and are now achieving above average results. Attainment in science has also improved to average levels. In contrast, although most pupils build reasonably well on their starting points when in Year 3, standards reached by Year 6 pupils in mathematics have been below average recently. Although current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach at least average standards and Year 5 pupils are doing particularly well, the school is aware that pupils lack confidence in applying what they already know when solving mental problems. For example, that, when multiplying 30 by 4, they can draw on their knowledge of the 3 or 4 times tables.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They gain an appreciation of cultural diversity through music, religious education, French and collective worship. The Rights and Responsibilities charter is embedded in school life, and instils strong social and moral values. Pupil's contribution to the school is excellent and is evident in their participation in re-cycling, school council activities and running the school shop. Older pupils take very seriously their responsibilities as monitors and peer mediators. They act as hosts for the weekly senior citizens lunch club. Preparation for future economic well being is satisfactory. The school has identified the need to develop pupils'

speaking and listening skills further and to develop their confidence in taking the initiative and working independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall with some outstanding practice. Lessons begin with a crisp start and move with fast pace. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are to learn in each lesson and set challenging work for different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Teaching assistants effectively support pupils' learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well across the school to enliven lessons. Staff form very good relationships with pupils and create an atmosphere of mutual respect. This results in confident pupils who ask and answer questions, volunteer information and who are very positive about their learning. This was seen during an excellent history lesson, when the teacher adopted the role of a Victorian mayoress and generated a lively debate about the pros and cons of building a railway to 'Sandy Lane Town'. Within this positive picture, not enough emphasis is given in some lessons to mental calculations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is modified effectively so pupils have equal opportunities to learn, whatever their backgrounds or specific needs. Pupils' academic and personal development is enriched by lunchtime and after schools clubs and a good variety visits and visitors. The curriculum has been revised to include creative approaches to learning which raise pupils' enjoyment and engagement. Music features strongly. For example, all pupils in Year 4 learn a stringed instrument. The mathematics curriculum includes master classes for more able pupils but the school is aware that planning places too little emphasis on mental calculations. The school has achieved national recognition for its work in promoting healthy lifestyles and ecological awareness, and pupils have a very mature understanding of these issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school offers a full range of services or parents, pupils, senior citizens and childminders. Care is available from 8.00 am to 6.00pm and lunchtime study sessions help pupils who find it difficult to concentrate at home. Assessment was weak at the time of the last inspection but is now a major strength. The school's meticulous tracking of pupils' progress feeds into teachers' day-to-day planning which builds carefully on pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses. In consultation with their teachers, pupils review their progress each half term and new targets are negotiated and agreed. This gives pupils a strong sense of responsibility for their own learning and is a major factor in the acceleration of achievement through the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Under the highly effective direction of the headteacher, the deputy head and senior managers provide very good role models for colleagues, and have contributed significantly to improving standards and teaching. Subject leaders monitor pupils' work carefully to identify strengths and gaps in their learning. They then provide advice and further training for staff. The results of their efforts are seen in the rising levels of achievement across the school. The school's good capacity to improve is evident from the very good progress since the last inspection, especially in enhancing provision in ICT and refining assessment systems. An excellent school improvement plan points a clear way forward. Self-evaluation is extremely good, and based securely upon detailed tracking and data analysis.

Governance is outstanding and governors have a clear awareness of school strengths and areas for development. They have a high profile in school and have been key players in the many recent exciting and innovative initiatives. They fulfil their role as critical friends very well, in both supporting and challenging the leadership team. Administrative staff provide a warm welcome and a valuable conduit of information for parents. They play an important role in monitoring attendance and keeping track of the budget.

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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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

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?	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	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	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

29 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Sandy Lane Primary School, Bracknell, RG12 2JG

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspectors for the very friendly welcome we received on our recent visit to your school. I would also like to tell you what we found out. We think that your school has improved well and gives you a good education. We are confident that with your help, the headteacher and all the staff in the school will continue to make your school even better.

We were very impressed with your good attitudes to learning and how well you all get on together. We would like to thank so many pupils for sharing their views with us and were very pleased to see how the peer mediators help you at playtimes. We think the playground space is superb and were pleased to see you sharing this so well.

You work hard in your lessons and the teachers make most of these interesting, challenging and enjoyable. You are doing very well with your writing and we saw some lovely examples. We think that some of you could do better with your mental mathematics and have asked your teachers to give you more practice.

You tell us there is always someone to help you if you are concerned about anything. We know that your teachers and visitors to school teach you about healthy eating, keeping safe and the importance of taking regular exercise. You know a lot about ecology, growing plants and keeping worms! We think the school provides you with good opportunities to take part in out of school activities.

We really enjoyed our time in your school and we wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector