

Sand Dunes Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104846
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324115
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.
The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	21
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to under 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Coates
Headteacher	Mrs D A Clark
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Caradoc Road Seaforth Liverpool Merseyside L21 4NB
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The inspector visited two sessions, and held meetings with the headteacher, governors, staff, and a representative from the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at range of evidence including the school development plan, the tracking of children's progress, minutes of governors' meetings, the work children were doing and the inspection questionnaires completed by 15 parents.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well children achieve from their starting points
- how effectively teaching is challenging all children and helping them to learn
- the accuracy of the school's judgements of its strengths and areas for development
- the capacity of the school to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

Sand Dunes Nursery School is situated in the borough of Sefton. The school relocated in July 2008 to refurbished premises adjacent to Seaforth Children's Centre. The area served by the school is socially and economically disadvantaged. Most of the children are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. A smaller than average proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When children enter the school many have skills which are well below what is typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. The school has gained several awards including Healthy Schools Status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Sure Start Excellence Mark and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

'My child loves coming to school. Even at weekends she asks if she can go.' This sentiment expressed by one parent, and echoed overwhelmingly by others, is just one of the reasons why Sand Dunes Nursery is an outstanding school. Children's achievements are excellent. They make exceptionally good progress in their personal and social development and are happy and enthusiastic learners. This is because of exceptionally high standards of care and support for each individual and the dedication and commitment of staff to every child.

One of the most striking things about the school is the quality of relationships and the strength of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, children's behaviour is exemplary; they have positive attitudes to their learning and get on extremely well with each other. They know right from wrong and take very seriously the responsibilities and praise they are given such as acting as 'helping hands' for the day or becoming 'stars of the session'.

Given their very low starting points children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress in their work from the moment they enter the school. This is because of outstanding provision. Teaching is consistently strong, every second counts and learning is fun. Teachers are skilled in creating a range of learning activities that match children's stages of development well and are enriched highly effectively by visits to places of interest and visitors from the local community. Central to the school's vibrant curriculum are creative, innovative, exciting opportunities, based securely on first-hand experiences that bring learning to life. This means that children acquire new skills in a variety of settings within a context that they can relate to. They revel in their achievement in lessons, and are keen to make decisions and show initiative.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Opportunities that encourage insights into religions and in promoting children's awareness of other cultures in their own community and further afield are sensitively delivered across the curriculum in ways that are meaningful through special themes and concerts, studies of religious festivals, Spanish lessons and links with other schools. The school is very well thought of in the community and there are outstanding partnerships with parents, other nurseries and local agencies.

The school is driven forward by outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher sets the tone. A regular cycle of effective self-review ensures that there

is an excellent understanding of where the school can improve further. For example, the school is well aware that the outdoor learning environment requires some fine-tuning to ensure that the limited space is used to its full potential, particularly for physical and creative activities.

Considering the advances made since its last inspection, along with its other strengths, and the effectiveness of its self-evaluation, the school has excellent capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outdoor learning environment by:
 - making better use of the limited space
 - identifying further opportunities for creative and physical development.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of children?

1

Children's current work, as well as the school's own data, shows that, while standards are broadly average, the progress children make in relation to their capabilities is outstanding. Children enter the Nursery with skills well below what is typical for their age, particularly in their personal, social and language development. By the time they transfer to Reception classes, most children have reached the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning and some have exceeded them. This represents outstanding achievement, given their starting points. The small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make excellent progress.

Children settle very quickly into school routines, have excellent attitudes to learning and develop high levels of confidence and independence. As keen and motivated learners they demonstrate great enjoyment of their work, play extremely well together and show a real desire to discover and find out about new things. Their behaviour and their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, is exemplary. This is because of exceptionally strong relationships, high expectations and consistent praise and encouragement from staff. As a result, children clearly love their school as demonstrated by their excellent attendance and by their enthusiasm for the wide range of opportunities that the school provides.

Children gain an impressive understanding of how to keep fit and healthy by eating healthy snacks and by taking part in sport and physical activities on a regular basis. They show a keen sense of keeping safe and free from harm, for example as they run and climb in the outdoor areas.

Children participate in a rich variety of community and cultural projects, including fundraising. Children are encouraged to take responsibility, such as tidying up; take turns; make decisions and show initiative. These are just some of the ways in which children become valued members of the school community. In addition, children were able to have their say in the type of new equipment recently purchased for the outside play area.

Children are very well prepared for their later life. Their excellent achievement in basic skills, coupled with their rapidly developing confidence in speaking and listening, enabling firm foundations to be laid to secure their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
Children's attainment ¹	3
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do children achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do children feel safe?	1
How well do children behave?	1
To what extent do children adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do children contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Children's attendance	1
How well do children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

Children's love of learning begins from their first day at Sand Dunes. The school's outstanding provision ensures that all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, come on in leaps and bounds from the moment they enter the school. The warm and welcoming atmosphere creates a positive climate for learning. Teaching is purposeful, questions challenge children's thinking and practical activities are planned with care and precision. As a consequence, children become absorbed in learning through play. They have the confidence to initiate activities for themselves as well as follow clearly established day-to-day routines. For example, in one session children had fun developing their creative and manipulative skills by designing photo frames while others made cheese, and jam, sandwiches. Elsewhere, the atmosphere buzzed with excitement as children developed their vocabulary and used their imagination to spot the different animals they might meet on a walk through the jungle, with excellent interaction and prompting from the teaching assistant.

Staff are skilled in knowing how to intervene in children's activities and they use effective systems to observe, assess and record children's learning. As a result, teachers are acutely aware of what each child can do and what they need to learn next. Staff make the learning of basic skills fun; they consolidate children's learning

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

with a variety of tasks and link themes well across the curriculum. This makes children keen to learn and succeeds in capturing their imagination and arousing their curiosity.

No stone is left unturned to ensure that all children, including those that are most vulnerable, are very well supported and cared for. There are excellent procedures for introducing children to the Nursery and for ensuring their smooth transition to primary schools. The school takes exceptionally good care of every child. Parents agree and are fulsome in their praise. As one parent said. 'It's like leaving our children with family.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
High quality teaching and purposeful learning	1
Effective assessment	1
An appropriate curriculum which meets children's needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The success of the school is underpinned by outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher leads by example, has high expectations and works with energy and commitment to drive the school forward. She is passionate about developing children's learning and has generated a strong momentum for continuous improvement. She is very well supported by an equally committed team of staff and governors who share her vision and sense of purpose. The school's positive ethos owes much to the dedication of staff to the welfare and personal development of all children, whatever their circumstances. For example, every child is fully included in what is offered and is known as an individual. All required systems and checks are in place to safeguard children's health and well-being.

The school is not complacent, and has an accurate view of what it does well and where further improvements are required. This ensures that priorities to improve are relevant and that appropriate action is well thought out. For example, senior leaders are well aware that at present the school's outdoor play areas are not as stimulating as those indoors and would benefit from further resources for physical and creative play.

The governing body plays an effective role in shaping the school's direction and in holding it to account. Its members are very committed and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
Communicating ambition and driving improvement	1

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The inspector received 15 parental questionnaires and spoke to three parents at the start of the school day. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent's view was typical of many: 'I am delighted with the progress my daughter has made. The school has brought out her confidence dramatically.' Another commented, 'Since my child started at the school, I can see her progress improving all the time.'

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children's needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the children's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a Key Stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the children's success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Children might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



20 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Sand Dunes Nursery School, Liverpool, L21 4NB

Thank you for being so kind and welcoming to me when I came to your school recently. I really enjoyed my visit. I know how much you all like coming every day. Some of your mums and dads told me that you would even like to be there at the weekends and during holiday times. Having spent the day with you, I can understand why.

You go to an excellent nursery. Everyone takes really good care of you. It is such a very happy and safe place to be. I was very pleased to see how well you behave and how you help one another in class and around the school. I saw some things that were very good and I could see how much you have learned. I watched you make sandwiches, find things out on the computer and play at being doctors with a clip board and stethoscope. I saw how much you enjoyed listening to the story of Jack and the Beanstalk and how you pretended to be seeds that grow by reaching up high into the air.

Your teachers work very hard to make the school as good as it can be. To help them, I have asked if they can make your outside play area even better. I agree with Mrs. Clark that it would be really good if you had more things to do to help you climb, explore and use your imagination.

You are a credit to your mums and dads. I can see why your teachers love working with you every day. Keep trying hard. I wish you all the best for the future.

Best wishes

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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