

Robert Sandilands Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109861
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	325045
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Bernice Magson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	234
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	26
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lisa Harris
Headteacher	Mr Richard Blofeld
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Digby Road Speen Newbury RG14 1TS
Telephone number	01635 403 18

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
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Fax number

01635 580 948

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Robert Sandilands is a school of average size situated on the outskirts of Newbury. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and a very few are from other minority ethnic groups. Children are admitted part-time in the Nursery class from three years of age, and move to full-time education in the Reception class in the school year in which they are five years of age. Significant variations exist between the number of boys and girls in some cohorts. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs relate mainly to physical difficulties, emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, severe and moderate learning difficulties, and autism. Above average numbers have a formal statement of special educational needs. Extended services are available on the same site, including family learning programmes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school seeks to develop the unique qualities of each pupil and, as a result, they achieve well. Pupils are happy to attend and feel safe and secure, because staff know them well and provide outstanding pastoral care and support. Parents and carers are pleased that their children attend this school and are glad to see them make good progress. One parent reflected the views of many when commenting, 'This school is exceptional in allowing and encouraging all children to grow and develop as individuals; you would have to look hard to find another school that knows its children so well, and pupils seem to thrive on this'.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils understand well how their actions impact on others, and take part enthusiastically in activities that improve their knowledge of global issues. A recent visit to a local power station has enhanced pupils' knowledge of energy sources and the impact on the environment, for example. The well-structured school council is effective in influencing school development. Members' recommendations have led to the development of a cookery area and cookery club. Pupils are keen to develop healthy lifestyles. Sporting activities are extremely popular, from the well-attended 'Wide Awake Club' before school to sporting tournaments for older boys and girls in Years 5 and 6.

Across the school, standards are improving because of the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and targeted support to overcome any identified weaknesses, and because of improvements in teaching. Currently, pupils attain above average standards by Year 2 and broadly average standards by Year 6. In national tests, results vary because different cohorts have different levels of ability on joining the school. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. Excellent relationships between all adults and pupils, plus good behaviour, strong work ethics and enjoyment in learning, are key features in achieving good progress. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including many sports and the arts. However, although problem solving activities are incorporated in some lessons, pupils have limited opportunities to practise their key skills in all subjects across the curriculum, especially in mathematics and science.

The headteacher leads by example in his commitment to the care and pastoral support of pupils. He is well respected by all the parents who responded to the questionnaire and well loved by the pupils. All staff and governors support him effectively and there is excellent teamwork. Self-evaluation is good. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance by the senior management team is effective, and planning for school improvement is well focused and appropriate. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and work hard but have few opportunities to monitor and evaluate their subjects in order to provide clearer direction in their development. Community cohesion is good. Pupils celebrate well each other's culture and backgrounds and join in local community events enthusiastically.

The good improvements in standards, teaching and pupils' tracking over the last two years, an excellent Foundation Stage and the self-critical approach of all who work in the school give it a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an excellent start to school and achieve extremely well. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, most are exceeding the early learning goals. Parents appreciate how well their children settle into school and the rapid progress they make. They commented that 'the school provides everything that we as parents ask of it - and more; a happy and relaxed atmosphere where structured learning is skilfully presented by an excellent staff team who make my child feel special and cared for'. In the classrooms and outdoors, adults work together extremely well to provide clear routines. Teaching and the curriculum are excellent. Children move easily between activities and are sensitively encouraged to try new experiences. There is an excellent mix between teacher-directed and child-initiated play. Children are assessed regularly in their learning, and tasks are well matched to their levels of ability. In mathematics, for example, children undertook a range of tasks of differing complexity to explore the concept of 'more and less than', successfully recognising and recording simple sums, some undertaking calculations with two-digit numbers. Play in the outdoors is often chosen by the children, providing greater interest and involvement, such as in exploring a jungle in the garden shed, or using magnifying glasses to search for pretend creatures. However, cover outdoors is limited and this restricts learning in some weathers. The manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage, ably supported by a good staff team, has an excellent understanding of the priority areas for development, and improvements are ongoing and excellent. Recent changes to admission arrangements have increased children's rates of progress as they now spend longer in the Early Years Foundation Stage, giving them more time for learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in problem solving and investigative learning.
- Extend the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating developments in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the 2008 National Curriculum assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6, standards fell to below average in English, mathematics and science. The group contained a relatively higher proportion of pupils with severe learning difficulties and some pupils in this year group underachieved, particularly in mathematics and science. The school addressed the underachievement with robust tracking and intensive support. Across the school, standards are now improving and pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are making good progress. The school's accurate data show that pupils are now achieving well in Years 1 to 5, and standards in these year groups are above average. In all years, there are examples of excellent pieces of pupils' work in art. Pupils enjoy music, where standards are high, and the school does well in the many sporting activities that take place.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic and readily contribute to lessons. They feel confident in the family atmosphere and feel that their views and opinions are valued and respected. Their enjoyment of school and all it offers is excellent. Behaviour is good and pupils are attentive in class and

play, and learn well together. Pupils say that they feel safe and have good understanding of how to take care of themselves both in school and out. They are aware of the dangers on the internet and know of the dangers associated with drugs. Pupils develop good personal skills and qualities, including those of teamwork and cooperation. They take responsibilities as house and sports captains and librarians with great pride. The school council has a strong voice in the development of aspects of the school; for example, they use their budget wisely and raise additional money to provide additional playground and sports equipment. Pupils are not adept at problem-solving activities in mathematics and science. They find it difficult to suggest their own lines of enquiry and choose their own way of recording their results. This places some limitation on developing responsibility for their learning. Pupils are punctual and attendance rates are broadly average. They develop the qualities and skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In all year groups, teachers use interactive whiteboards successfully to support pupils' learning. They find lively and imaginative ways to engage the interest of the pupils. Paired discussion between pupils and good questioning make them think more deeply and give extended responses, developing their speaking and listening skills effectively. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to supporting the pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. In general, all teachers use the information from the good tracking system and end-of-unit assessments to plan work that meets pupils' needs effectively. Teachers and senior leaders recognise that in the small proportion of lessons where the learning is less successful, there is a need to provide a greater challenge in investigative learning. Teamwork is good and all teachers are keen to take their teaching to the next level. The teaching of English is consistently good and there is good teaching of basic skills in mathematics and science. However, there is scope to improve the knowledge of some teachers in how these skills can be applied to investigative learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is undergoing a review to improve accuracy, consistency, interest and progression. Currently, the curriculum is subject-based and links are not always planned between subjects so that pupils learn independently and in more depth. When cross-curricular topics are introduced, activities have a good variety, engaging all pupils and developing their talents. In an exciting topic in Year 5, pupils undertook drama, quizzes, and discussions about chocolate, and improved their knowledge about fair trade, diet, and packaging, involving work in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, history and geography. A good number of visits and visitors enhance learning experiences, as well as an extensive range of out-of-school clubs. Residential visits are popular and extend pupils' personal skills. Specialist expertise is employed to promote learning, particularly in sports and music. Personal, social and health education is well planned, with a strong focus on personal safety.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral support and guidance for pupils is excellent. All staff, following the outstanding lead of the headteacher, invest considerable time and energy in promoting pupils' emotional and social well-being and have a very clear understanding of their needs. Therefore, pupils feel valued, secure and their self-esteem develops effectively. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are good. Well-planned provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the most vulnerable, helps these pupils achieve well. As one parent commented, 'I could not be more pleased with the support my child has received; she is now a very happy sociable child who is achieving well'. The pastoral support manager establishes valuable links with the families of the vulnerable pupils. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory and improving because of accurate and comprehensive tracking of pupils' progress. Personal targets related to literacy and numeracy help pupils to see how well they are doing. However, targets tend to be too general. There is scope to sharpen these targets so that they are more specific to the needs of individual pupils. Marking is inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers' comments inform pupils how they might improve their work. This is not, however, a consistent feature in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership team meets regularly with the headteacher to review the school's performance and set challenging targets for improvement. The perceived needs of pupils are identified accurately and addressed well. Professional training takes place to address weaknesses, for example to address underachievement in the teaching of mathematics. Currently, subject coordinators give valuable support in the scrutiny of learning, although they have few opportunities to monitor teaching and support their colleagues in classrooms. A key aim of the school is to develop community cohesion. Activities are organised well to celebrate the rich heritage of the school community and more are developing to help pupils understand national and wider world issues. In the entrance hall, an interesting display includes many artefacts and photographs following a family visit by a pupil to Gambia, and includes good detail about life in a rural community in Africa. Governance is good. Governors are supportive of efforts to raise standards and are increasingly involved in self-evaluation. The daily administration of the school and finances are managed extremely well by an effective team of business manager and office staff.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	3
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Robert Sandilands Primary School and Nursery, Newbury, RG14 1TS

You may recall that two inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the interesting things you are doing. We were sorry not to meet the pupils in Year 6, but understand that you were having a wonderful time on your school journey to Derbyshire. We think that you have a good school.

Here are the best things about your school:

- you are very friendly and welcoming
- you enjoy school very much and work hard in lessons
- all the adults take very good care of you and make sure that school is a happy place
- you understand how it is important to eat healthily, and you enjoy lots of sporting activities
- you are making good contributions in support of others in school, the community and in Africa
- the school council is successful in considering your suggestions and introducing improvements, such as growing vegetables and fruits in the conservatory
- your parents and carers are very glad that you go to this school
- your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make your school even better.

To help your school to improve, we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do two things:

- in mathematics and science, we would like your teachers to provide more practical activities and some tasks for you to do on your own
- the teachers with special responsibilities for subjects could help more with improving your school.

We hope that you carry on enjoying the many interesting things provided for you at Robert Sandilands School.

Yours faithfully

Bernice Magson

Lead Inspector