

Sandbach Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111037
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	325279
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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)	145
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Carol Davies
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Treadway
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Crewe Road Sandbach Cheshire CW11 4NS

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2008
Inspection number	325279

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Age group 3–11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school draws its pupils from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, including some areas of disadvantage. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision and offers extended provision to pupils and their families. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. More pupils than is typical enter or leave the school at other than the usual times. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Inclusion Mark, the Cheshire Healthy School award and the Eco School award. The school has had considerable changes in leadership over the last three years, including the appointment of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards pupils attain and the achievement they make and the quality of teaching and learning.

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate because too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The majority of pupils enter Year 1 with the levels of skills expected for their age, although a substantial proportion has difficulties with literacy that persist throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are well below the national average with exceptionally low levels in writing. The need to raise standards in writing and mathematics was identified at the last inspection and standards are still not high enough. Although there has been some recent improvement in standards at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils' performance is not yet improving at a fast enough rate. Consequently, their achievement is inadequate in relation to their standards when they join Year 1.

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall and this is the main reason why so many pupils underachieve. In particular, teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning when planning lessons and tasks do not meet their needs well enough. This limits the progress of which many are capable. The leadership team has taken important steps to improve teaching and learning by ensuring teachers provide appropriate challenge in all lessons for all pupils: good practice is now emerging although much remains to be achieved.

The school is a bright, happy place in which pupils say they feel safe and well cared for because of the good relationships evident throughout. Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They have a good awareness of the needs of others and take on responsibility willingly. They have a very good understanding of the local community and a satisfactory appreciation of the wider national and global communities. Behaviour is good. The great majority of pupils get on well and work together cooperatively.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. All adults in the school contribute much in providing good care to support pupils' well-being but there are inconsistencies in the clarity of academic guidance given to pupils. Consequently, they are not always sufficiently clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's leaders have secured the support of the great majority of parents. Letters to inspectors contain many positive comments on improvements in standards of behaviour, pupils' personal development and the quality of the school's care for pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher and the leadership team have a clear understanding of what needs to be improved. Monitoring, evaluation and school improvement planning are satisfactory but the impact of this work is not sufficiently effective in securing higher standards, although pupils are making better rates of progress than in the past. There have been recent improvements in other important areas of the school's work since the last inspection, importantly in making the curriculum more relevant to the pupils' needs, indicating a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Performance management has not yet had enough impact on raising standards and achievement but recent actions to improve the management structure have begun to tackle this.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the school with skills broadly in line with expectations for their age, though some have significant language and communication difficulties. Learning in Nursery is exciting and well planned so that children learn well. By the time children enter Year 1, they reach levels expected for their age, although their communication and language skills remain below those usually found. The newly appointed EYFS coordinator provides satisfactory leadership. Well planned activities within the Nursery include a good balance between those led by adults and those chosen by the children. Good use is made of the well organised outside area. A mini-beast area encourages boys, in particular, to use and extend their language skills. Children approach their activities confidently and enthusiastically. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is strongest in the Nursery because of high quality care and good teaching that engages children's interest to promote good progress. However, teaching in the Reception/Year1 class, whilst satisfactory overall, does not consistently build on opportunities to reinforce learning and help pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and ensure that pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Improve the rigour and focus of monitoring, evaluation and planning at all levels of management to ensure that effective steps are taken to secure improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

In 2007, the overall progress made by pupils between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2 put the school in the lowest 20% of schools nationally. Better progress was made in English than in mathematics and science, but the school's challenging targets were not met, despite a rising trend in national test results. Inspection evidence shows that current standards, although improving, are below average in English and significantly below average in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence and unvalidated national test results for 2008 show an improving picture although overall targets were not met. Numbers are small so test results need to be treated with some caution because each pupil can have a disproportionate effect on results. Results are also affected by the larger than average number of pupils who join the school during the year, many of whom have had difficulties in their education elsewhere. The school's records show that although a few of these pupils achieve well in their time in the school, for most difficulties persist. Nevertheless, even when discounting the performance of these pupils, too many are not doing well enough in relation to their starting points. There are no other significant differences in the performance of different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and make very positive comments about staff and the way they help them and care for them. The great majority of pupils behave and play together well. They show that they have a good understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices and of how to stay

safe. The great majority of pupils show good attitudes to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The very effective personal, social and health education on offer helps pupils to become increasingly aware of themselves, others, and the need for good relationships. Pupils learn to have a strong commitment to the local community and talk confidently about ways in which it has improved. Pupils welcome opportunities, such as through the school council, to have a voice in decisions that affect their life in school and the wider community. For example, they have introduced improvements to healthy lunchtime menus. The school has worked successfully to improve attendance which is broadly average. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage in their schooling because they have a positive attitude to learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teachers' planning does not always take sufficient account of pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers do not match the level of challenge in lessons well enough to what pupils already know, understand and can do, or what they need to do to make good progress. Consequently, while some pupils struggle to complete work, others find their work too easy. In too many lessons, opportunities are missed to use searching questions to stretch pupils' thinking. Opportunities are also missed to promote the development of literacy skills in subjects other than English. Not enough checks are made by teachers to ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them. Nevertheless, the school has good practice on which to build improvement with the leadership team setting clear expectations for all teachers. Consequently the variation in teaching quality is being eliminated and the overall quality of teaching is improving. For example, the best lessons have fast pace and varied activities that are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils that underpin good behaviour management. The great majority of pupils enjoy their education and are eager to learn but, too often, teachers do not build effectively on the opportunity that this presents. Marking is supportive and reflects the warmth of relationships. However, it does not consistently tell pupils how to improve their work. When suggestions are made, there is little evidence that teachers or pupils have followed up the advice given.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curricular provision for pupils' health and well-being is good and very effectively supports pupils' ability to make healthy lifestyle choices and to keep safe. Provision for personal and social education is a strong feature of the curriculum. It gives pupils opportunities to work together, to reflect on and to express their feelings. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has effective provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Much successful work has been done by the leadership team to make the curriculum more relevant to learners in line with the recommendations made at the last inspection. However, planning for the work of mixed-aged classes does not always take account of pupils' needs well enough. Extra-curricular provision is good. A wide variety of visits and visitors and the many clubs and activities enrich the curriculum well. These strengthen pupils' good understanding of the local community and help them develop their knowledge of the surrounding area. The very good residential visits boost pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem and contribute much to pupils' good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. This is because, although the quality of pastoral care is good, academic guidance, based on the tracking of pupils' progress and the use of assessment does not sufficiently help pupils to improve their work. Good relationships reflect the school's very caring approach towards all members of the school community. The work of the learning mentor is highly effective in supporting pupils with social and emotional difficulties, especially when using the Nurture Room. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Measures to support pupils who find it difficult to concentrate in class are implemented consistently by all staff who manage pupils' behaviour well. Attendance has improved since the last inspection because the school now rigorously checks on pupils' absence. Arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities both in and out of lessons are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Successful aspects of leadership are shown in; the way that many pupils are enabled to participate well in everything the school has to offer; the good personal development of pupils and the way in which parents and the wider community are involved in school life. The school's leadership team has shown it has the capacity to bring about improvement in a number of important ways, for example, the great improvement in behaviour noted by many parents and improvements to the curriculum. In addition, the school has an increasing body of good practice in teaching on which to build. This is due in part to the considerable effort the leadership team has put into improving the quality of teaching. Further action is being taken. The school's leadership team recognises that, while it has achieved some success in increasing pupils' progress, attention still needs to be more focused on improving achievement further. A recent initiative to help bring this about has been the reorganisation of subject management in order to make better use of available expertise and to increase accountability across the school for pupils' performance. It is, however, too early to see the full impact of these measures. Governors keep themselves informed through regular contacts with the school. They take responsibility in relation to improvement planning for checking the effectiveness of aspects of the school's work. Governors bring professional expertise to their work, which enables them to support the school effectively.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

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

Inspection of Sandbach Community Primary School, Sandbach, CW11 4NS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. We enjoyed being able to talk to so many of you and hearing that you enjoy coming to school and feel well cared for. The school is a bright, lively and happy place and you do a lot to make it so by your good behaviour and by getting on well together. There are a number of good things about your school, such as the way that you take responsibility and how you are listened to and given the opportunity to suggest changes. You told us how much you enjoy all the clubs and extra activities provided for you. The school council told us how much you learn about other countries and people. You showed how well you understand about living healthy lives and staying safe. You show care for other people in raising funds for children less fortunate than yourselves. However, despite all the good things, too many of you are not doing well enough in your learning because lessons do not always give you work that matches what you can do. Many of you not only need more advice about how to improve your work but also need to follow the advice you are given.

The school has been given a 'Notice to Improve' because some aspects of its work need improving. We have asked your teachers to do three things. First, improve your achievement and make sure that you reach higher standards. Second, make sure that all your lessons are as good as they should be. Finally, make sure that the checks that are made on all parts of the school's work are as thorough and accurate as they should be. You can help by making sure that you take notice of suggestions about how to make your work better.

Thank you again for helping us with our work. We wish you well for the future and hope that you will all continue to play your part in making your school as good as it can be.