

Sandy Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111904
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325489
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Grahame Sherfield HMI

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)	305
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	39
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tristan H Scott
Headteacher	Andrew Fielder
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sandy Hill St Austell PL25 3AT
Telephone number	01726 75858

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2009
Inspection number	325489

Fax number

01726 75199

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	8-9 July 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Sandy Hill is a large primary school and serves part of this Cornish town. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportions with a statement of special educational needs and with learning difficulties and/or difficulties are broadly average, with those with speech, language and communication difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social needs being the largest groups. Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. There is a Nursery unit in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in the Reception Year are taught in a separate class or in a class with some Year 1 pupils. The governors manage before- and after-school provision as well as childcare and holiday activities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sandy Hill is an outstanding school where there have been significant improvements since its last inspection. Pupils' personal development is excellent and they flourish within the exceptionally warm and caring environment created by the headteacher and his staff. Parents are very strongly supportive of the school. One praised 'a fabulous community spirit' while another noted how children are 'encouraged to be good citizens and to work hard to be the best that they can be'. Inspection evidence fully supports these views.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with an excellent start to their time at Sandy Hill where they make good and accelerating progress. All pupils achieve well throughout the school, making good progress from their starting points and reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The pace of progress is accelerating as a result of good and improving teaching, in conjunction with more rigorous checking of the progress of individual pupils, so that appropriate action is taken where there is a risk of any pupil underachieving. Lessons are well planned so that sequences of activities build carefully on one another to develop pupils' understanding effectively. Teachers have high expectations and lessons proceed at a good pace, with work matched well to pupils' needs.

The richness of the curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' wider personal development and enjoyment of school and meets their needs very well. Pupils are really proud of the school and the wide range of opportunities it has to offer within its calm, orderly atmosphere and their attendance is above average. One Year 6 commented that 'the worst thing about this school is having to leave'. Pupils' behaviour is excellent, both in classrooms and around the school, and their attitudes to learning are outstanding. They show a high degree of independence, feel highly valued and have a strong belief that they can achieve. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and of life in other, distant communities, for example through work in religious education and geography. However, their understanding of the multi-ethnic nature of life in many other parts of Britain is underdeveloped.

The school benefits from a very strong partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher, whose roles complement each other very well. They are supported by a very effective senior leadership team and governors who support and challenge the school very well. There have been significant improvements in pupils' personal development, the curriculum and care, guidance and support as well as leadership and management since the previous inspection and these are now all outstanding. There has been a strong emphasis on raising standards and on monitoring pupils' progress towards challenging targets very carefully. This has borne fruit in accelerated progress throughout the school. Consequently, the capacity to improve further is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join the Nursery with skills below those levels expected. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved rapidly and is now outstanding. As a result, children make good and accelerating progress in the Nursery and in the Reception classes, and reach broadly expected levels by the end of the Reception Year. They are very well cared for and their personal, social and emotional development is excellent. Children's behaviour and the way they consider the needs and feelings of others are outstanding.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are excellent. The staff work very well together as a strong team and share a firm commitment to continuous improvement. Children enjoy an exceptionally well-designed and maintained learning environment. Outdoor facilities are a particular strength. All areas of learning are addressed, with a very good mix of high-quality activities led by adults and those initiated by the children. Children's progress is very carefully assessed and recorded in their learning diaries, although checking the progress of whole-year groups is a more recent development.

An excellent partnership exists with parents who rightly have a very high regard for the quality of the provision and the care provided. Arrangements to smooth important transitions for children are of high quality. For example, a well-received event for parents of children soon to move from the Nursery to Reception took place during the inspection. Family learning events are well attended and contribute to the real partnership that is firmly established with parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the opportunities provided for pupils to develop a broader understanding of Britain as a diverse and multicultural society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The progress made by pupils in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 has improved significantly over the last three years. They make good progress and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is above the national figures. Fewer have reached the higher Level 5 so that standards overall are in line with national averages. The school has worked with some success to improve the numbers reaching this higher level, particularly in mathematics. Close monitoring of the progress of individual pupils by the deputy headteacher, the national strategies coordinator and class teachers is accelerating progress across the school.

Current pupils in Year 6 have reached broadly average standards and this represents satisfactory progress since the end of Year 2. The school has worked to address significant social, emotional and behavioural concerns within the year group and some excellent teaching has resulted in attitudes and behaviour that are now exemplary. However, these difficulties, together with some complexities in staffing when the pupils were in Year 5, have affected the progress made by this year group. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and have reached broadly average standards in recent years. Current Year 2 pupils are attaining below average standards but this represents good progress from their starting points which were lower than usual. Following some changes, stable staffing is now making a positive contribution to the improving progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from high-quality support appropriate to their needs and from careful checks on their progress by the inclusion officer. As a result, pupils make good progress, particularly in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils report that they feel very safe in school and are confident that, if an incident did take place, they could tell staff and it would be swiftly resolved. Pupils are very well aware of the importance of a healthy diet and value the adventure playground equipment and the many opportunities to exercise and keep fit. Pupils participate in sporting tournaments, where there

has been remarkable recent success in football, and take part in many local activities, for example at the Eden Project and in the Royal Cornwall Show. They raise funds for a variety of charities, locally, nationally and overseas. Pupils willingly take on a wide range of roles to contribute to the day-to-day running of the school, such as playground pals and peer mentors. The role of head boy and head girl, the school council and the eco committee provide more formal opportunities to participate and influence the development of the school. As one pupil commented, 'We are listened to.' Pupils are prepared well for their future economic well-being through their improving skills in literacy and numeracy, their excellent skills in using information and communication technology and their outstanding attitudes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have established excellent relationships in the classrooms so that pupils work very well together and are extremely keen to contribute. A particularly striking feature is the real disappointment pupils show when a lesson drawing to a close means that there is not enough time for all of them to contribute their ideas. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' progress.

All teaching observed was at least good and a small proportion was outstanding. The best teaching was characterised by really engaging activities, such as pupils 'thought tracking' others in role as people caught up in war, and pupils asking questions of some of their classmates acting as Victorian child workers. Where teaching was less effective, there were missed opportunities to press pupils to think and on occasion teachers talked for too long, slowing the pace of learning. Pupils value the opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of their classmates and are supported by good marking by their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A large number of enrichment activities, such as outdoor pursuits and team building in Years 5 and 6 and the Pyramid Club building self-esteem for some in Years 3 and 4, make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Very good attention is given to raising the aspirations of pupils, for example through work in Year 5 to consider the option of future study at university and through careers sessions for Year 6 provided in conjunction with the local further education college. Partnership with the health service has resulted in sessions to support pupils with anxieties or stress and there are very good opportunities to build an understanding of the importance of sustainability through the work of the eco committee. Before- and after-school activities make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

Provision for literacy and numeracy is very good and contributes to the accelerated progress pupils are making. The outstanding provision for information and communication technology is intended to be enhanced further through improvements to the infrastructure during the summer holiday. Creative links between different subjects have made the curriculum engaging for pupils and have resulted in good opportunities to develop skills in writing in many different contexts. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities with high levels of participation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff's commitment to the pupils' pastoral care and to inclusion is of the highest order. Strong links with numerous outside agencies ensure a very high level of support for pupils with learning difficulties, who thrive in this happy and harmonious school. Arrangements when pupils join or leave the school, and when they move on within the school, are a key strength. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

Pupils are guided very well in their work by the 'target card' system. What individual pupils need to do to improve their work in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology is set out clearly each term. These targets are reviewed regularly and shared with parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leaders and managers at all levels set very clear direction for the future development of the school. Well-planned self-evaluation processes involve all the staff and result in clear priorities. Challenging targets are used well to raise standards at the whole-school level as well as for individual pupils. The 'vision action plan' is a good tool for school improvement, involving all staff and governors, and allows progress with priorities to be checked easily. The tracking of pupils' progress has improved and is now very rigorous. Information and communication technology is used to help to monitor progress from year to year and it is wisely intended to extend this to check progress during the year as well.

The school is a highly effective community, with good links with the local area, and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There have been links with schools in contrasting city settings to promote pupils' understanding of Britain as a multicultural society in past years and more are planned, but currently the school's contribution is limited. There are excellent partnerships with external agencies and organisations to extend the opportunities for pupils both academically and in their personal development. Good examples include the local special school, a wide range of local authority services and the Pyramid Trust.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	2
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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

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

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandy Hill Community Primary School, St Austell, PL25 3AT

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection of your school, particularly for the friendly, polite and open way in which you talked to us in discussions and around the school.

You go to an outstanding school. You are rightly very proud of it and so are your parents. It has important strengths.

- Your personal development and well-being, including your behaviour and enjoyment of learning, are excellent.
- You benefit from an outstanding curriculum which makes a major contribution to your personal development and helps you to develop many valuable skills.
- You are very well cared for by the staff of the school.
- You make good progress in your work, supported by good teaching, and it is clear that your progress is accelerating.
- The provision for the children in the Nursery and in Reception is outstanding.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the governors and other staff are excellent.

We have asked the school to improve one aspect.

- Life in some other parts of Britain is very different from St Austell and we have asked the school to ensure that you have opportunities to develop your understanding of life in areas where there are several different cultures.

Thank you again for your involvement in the inspection and I wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Grahame Sherfield Her Majesty's Inspector