

Sandylands Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119138
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	326952
Inspection date	5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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)	452
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	Mrs Kirsty Banks-Lyon
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Hickson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hampton Road Morecambe Lancashire LA3 1EJ
Telephone number	01524 410286

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	5 December 2008
Inspection number	326952

Fax number

01524 832682

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- the progress pupils make in their time in Key Stage 1
- the leadership and management of the school
- the personal development and well-being of pupils.

Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' work, examination of assessment information, school documents, responses by parents to the inspection questionnaire and holding discussions with the headteacher, teachers, pupils and the chair of the governing body. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as made in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average school that serves the west end area of Morecambe, an area with some social and economic disadvantages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is average, but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils of a minority ethnic heritage is well below average. The proportion of pupils from families who do not speak English at home is well below average, but rising. The large majority of these families are migrants from Eastern Europe. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual time is above average. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Artsmark Silver Awards. A new headteacher is in post since the last inspection. The school has EYFS provision on a separate site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sandylands Community Primary is a good school. Pupils make good overall progress between starting in the Nursery soon after their third birthdays, and leaving at the end of Year 6. This is because provision in the EYFS gets them off to flying start, and this is later confirmed by the rapid progress they make in Key Stage 2 where their learning is accelerated by good teaching. A key strength of the school is the excellent and passionate leadership of the headteacher who has effectively led the school in tackling relative weaknesses in Key Stage 1 that have limited pupils' achievement. Although pupils now make good progress throughout the school, inconsistencies in their standards remain as a result of past underachievement.

Achievement is good. When children join the Nursery their levels of development are often well below that normally found in children of their age. Standards when pupils leave the school are broadly average. Over time, standards by the end of Key Stage 1 have been below average. The 2008 Year 2 assessments indicate standards in reading and writing that were significantly below average. This was a particularly low ability group and their learning was impeded by staffing issues and a curriculum which was not well matched to meeting their needs. However, this has now changed; provision has improved and current pupils are making considerably better progress. Standards remain below average but are rising quickly because teaching is exciting and the curriculum encourages pupils to utilise and develop their skills across a range of subjects. At the end of Year 6 in 2008, the provisional results of national tests in English, mathematics and science were broadly average. For this group of pupils, this represents good progress from their starting points. No group of pupils underachieved. Those few pupils who did not speak English at home made good progress because of the good support they received in school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also supported effectively and achieve well.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. All lessons are securely founded on well informed planning, and on the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils based on mutual respect and understanding. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 speak with certainty about the targets they are set and the progress they are making. Teachers mark pupils' work consistently well, and in an informative way. Systems to support and guide pupils are strong. They are based on clear policies, robustly applied and effective, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The attainment of all pupils is now carefully and accurately tracked and checked so that any additional assistance is quickly provided, to ensure that good progress is maintained. Assessment information is being used more effectively by teachers to help plan work to meet the needs of all pupils. However, it is not yet used consistently across the school, and therefore does not ensure that the higher attaining pupils are challenged enough.

Personal development is good. Politeness, good manners, mutual respect and tolerance are hallmarks of pupils' excellent behaviour in this school. They are enthusiastic learners, have positive attitudes and thoroughly enjoy lessons because, they say, 'teachers make learning fun'. Relationships are excellent and pupils unanimously maintain that this is a friendly and harmonious place to be. They say that bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly and fairly. Attendance is broadly average. The school has a democratically elected school council, which children hold in high regard, because it gives pupils an active voice in school improvements. Council members provide good role models for younger pupils by regularly giving feedback to them on council meetings and decisions. Through their widespread and active participation,

pupils help the school to raise significant amounts of money for charitable causes. They are very proud of their school. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is important to the pupils. They are fully aware of the benefits of a well balanced diet and lots of exercise. Pupils explain that exercise helps the heart 'pump blood faster around your body'. By the time they leave Sandylands, pupils have mature attitudes to learning, they are self-assured and confident about their skills, and are eager to face new challenges.

The curriculum is good but in a state of change. It offers more than is normally required, including a modern foreign language, and is used effectively by teachers to secure pupils' interest, and excite them about learning. It helps pupils to make good overall progress in improving their knowledge and skills and in their personal development. A wide range of enrichment activities including visits out of school, visitors into school, booster classes, and a range of sporting, creative and cultural activities add depth to opportunities to extend learning.

Rigorous procedures are in place to make the school safe and accessible for all learners. Systems to safeguard children's welfare meet current requirements, and are well supported by close links with parents. Pupils' personal health and emotional development is very successfully promoted both in lessons and through good involvement of outside groups such as the police, fire service, community groups, and other professional agencies. Above all, the respect that all staff have for pupils makes this a caring and inclusive school.

The recently appointed headteacher is knowledgeable, experienced, and very effective. She has a calm and measured, but no nonsense approach which maintains an absolute focus on pupils' progress. Her attention to detail is a crucial factor in the success the school is having. She is well supported by a knowledgeable, committed and enthusiastic new leadership team. Although there are clear improvements resulting from new approaches, the full impact of this team on raising standards has yet to be seen. Although, as yet, not all managers have fully taken on their monitoring roles, their honesty and very self-critical perspective ensures that the school's self-evaluation is accurate. Staff morale is high, and is reflected in the confidence with which teachers and other adults approach the challenging targets for pupils, set by leaders. School development planning is detailed and aspirational, and sets very ambitious targets. The school has local strengths in building community cohesion but has yet to fully develop a national or international perspective. Governance is satisfactory. Many new members are actively involved in monitoring the work of the school. They give very good support to the school and are beginning to offer increasing challenge. The area identified for improvement at the last inspection has been successfully addressed. The causes of recent weakness in progress in Years 1 and 2 have been eradicated. Recent changes in staff deployment and in curriculum redesign have already begun to have a marked impact in accelerating the progress pupils make but this has not yet fed through to improved standards in national assessments and tests. The school is well set to move forward and has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. Children enter the Nursery with skills which are always below, and often well below what is typical for this age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, calculation and personal, social and emotional development. When children left Reception class in 2008, their levels of development were below average. All children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress because the curriculum is good. It gives children a wide range of experiences and many opportunities to learn and play together. Resources are good and used effectively. There are different role play areas where

the children can develop their imaginative play, independence and confidence. For example, a group of children acted out the Christmas story in the stable they had created, taking on the different character roles. Outdoor provision is good. The children are encouraged to learn outside as well as indoors through a range of stimulating activities which link areas of learning. For example, in response to recent snowfall, some children in the Nursery were enjoying drawing snowmen on the ground with chalk, whilst others were writing about the same events in large books.

Exciting and challenging teaching engages children well and makes them eager to learn. Careful tracking of children's progress is used to plan work which takes into account the wide abilities of the children. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others. They work and behave well, both independently and in small groups. At lunchtime, some of the children help to serve the lunches. The teaching of phonics is good overall but sessions are sometimes too long, and this slows down the pace of learning. Children are aware of how to keep themselves safe and make healthy choices, because staff work with full commitment to ensure the well-being of all the children. Links with parents are well developed, and deeply appreciated, as the school works diligently to keep parents well informed of their children's progress. Though recently appointed, the EYFS coordinator has moved quickly yet sensitively to maintain good practice and to further develop good links with the attached Children's Centre. This contributes strongly to the school's satisfactory but improving work on improving community cohesion.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement throughout the school in English, mathematics and science.
- Make more effective use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils, particularly the higher attainers, are challenged consistently in lessons.

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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?	2
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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/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	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	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	3

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	2
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	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	2
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?	No

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandylands Community Primary School, Lancashire, LA3 1EJ

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We were impressed with how well you behave around school, and in particular, how hard you work in classes.

We found that Sandylands is a good school, which helps you to make good overall progress from the time you join the Nursery, to the time when you leave at the end of Year 6.

The school has the following notable strengths.

- The adults in school all take very good care of you, and make sure you are safe. They pay close attention to your personal needs. I was pleased when you told me this yourselves.
- The Nursery and Reception classes help to get you off to a flying start in your school lives. This is because the children there have lots of different learning experiences provided for them by the very good teachers.
- The excellent leadership of your headteacher, as shown in the clear and swift changes she has already made in Years 1 and 2, and in the reorganisation of the school management.

However we found that the school has some areas which are not working as well as they could, so we have asked that leaders make the following improvements.

- Help you to reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teachers set challenging work for all pupils, especially those of you who find learning easier.

I know this means more work for you, but I saw for myself in lessons how much you enjoy being set practical and demanding tasks which make you think for yourselves. So the part you have to play in helping your school to get better is to keep being interested in learning, just like you are now.

Please continue coming to school, and being the happy and polite pupils you are now. Good luck to you all for the future.

Terry McDermott

Lead inspector