

Sandfield Close Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120047
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	327187
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	404
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	Patsy Freer
Headteacher	Amanda Jane Dhillon
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sandfield Close Leicester LE4 7RE
Telephone number	01162 660333
Fax number	01162 680087

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Asian and Asian British with family roots in India, and come from homes where English is not the first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most of these relate to pupils' emotional or social needs or their language development. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is below average.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision is located in two Reception classes. Children enter these classes full time at the beginning of the school year of their fifth birthday. The school has gained a Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark for physical education and exercise, and the International Schools Award. It is also an accredited eco management audit scheme (EMAS) school for its work to develop pupils' awareness and promotion of sustainability. There is a privately run pre-school on the school site which was inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is well led and managed. The headteacher monitors and evaluates the work of the school and directs school improvement well. The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection and standards are rising. Staff work together effectively to ensure that pupils make good progress, achieve well, and that their personal development and well-being are good. The school regularly assesses and keeps a close eye on the progress of each pupil and extra support is given to those at risk of falling behind. Good teaching and effective academic monitoring are key reasons why rates of progress are improving, and the school has good capacity to continue to improve in the future.

Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. Their English language skills are particularly limited. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout the rest of the school is good, and the vast majority of pupils progress well to attain standards expected for their ages by the time they reach the older classes. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because they receive carefully tailored support from teachers and teaching assistants. The school sets demanding targets for the proportion of pupils who should attain nationally expected levels in mathematics and English. Targets for the proportion of pupils who should exceed expected levels for their ages are less demanding. Also, opportunities are occasionally missed to provide additional challenge or guidance for more able pupils. Consequently, fewer pupils than could be expected reach the higher levels in their writing and mathematics.

The school works closely with other agencies, such as the speech and language service. The curriculum and quality of teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and pupils are required to concentrate well and work hard. The school gives strong emphasis to the development of pupils' spoken English, and pupils make excellent progress in their speaking and listening skills. Teachers often ask pupils to talk to one another and to hold short discussions in pairs before answering their questions.

There are effective arrangements to ensure that pupils attend regularly, behave well, and develop positive attitudes to learning. All staff manage pupils consistently well. Consequently, pupils are friendly and polite, concentrate well in lessons and enjoy their time in this happy school. Parents are largely positive and pupils are enthusiastic in their praise of the school. One parent reflected others' views when she wrote, 'It is a happy, friendly school and children's efforts are recognised.' Inspection findings support parents' views and the views of one pupil who said, 'The staff provide lots of opportunities to learn and they make lessons fun.'

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion and keeps this part of its work under review. Staff ensure that pupils develop a clear understanding and first-hand experience of the life and beliefs of others in modern Britain and Europe. Work towards the International Schools Award helps pupils to learn about the wider world and, through the eco management audit scheme (EMAS), pupils are helped to develop a clear understanding of world issues such as ecology and global warming.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching and other aspects of provision are good. Effective ways of enabling children to develop independence

and confidence help them settle into and enjoy coming to school. Children make very good progress in their communication skills due to the strong emphasis placed on developing spoken English. By the end of Reception, children achieve well to attain only a little below the nationally expected standards in all areas of learning. On starting school, they are more capable in their number work than in other areas of learning. Although they make satisfactory progress in their ability to calculate, practical mathematical activities are sometimes insufficiently challenging and limit their progress a little. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and staff have a clear understanding of where improvements are needed. For example, the leader is aware that the outdoors area is not yet fully exploited in all areas of learning in all weather conditions and improvements are underway. Regular assessments help staff know the particular needs of each child well. The well-planned curriculum is carefully tailored to meet each individual's needs. Provision supports both children's learning and their personal, social and emotional development well. Children's welfare is also carefully promoted so that they feel safe and happy. There is a good mix of activities that children can choose themselves and those that adults direct. There are many ways, such as self-registration, that help children develop independence well.

What the school should do to improve further

- In order to increase the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels, especially in mathematics and writing, set more demanding targets and provide greater challenge, guidance and support for more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well so that by the end of Year 6, standards are average overall and above average in reading and science. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and standards by the end of Year 2 are a little above average. In Years 3 to 6, progress is satisfactory overall, but school records and pupils' work indicate that rates of progress are accelerating and standards are rising. Although a higher than average proportion of pupils attain expected standards in writing and mathematics, standards in these subjects remain average overall by Year 6, because a smaller than average proportion of pupils attain higher levels. Pupils' achievement and progress in spoken English is excellent throughout the school. Strong emphasis is given to developing their oral skills and pupils are given frequent opportunities to hold short discussions with a partner or in a small group in many lessons. The school has been successful in helping parents support their children's learning at home and many parents, especially of younger children, provide useful support to their children's good progress in reading. Due to some useful work to improve pupils' investigative skills, pupils make very good progress in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and form strong relationships with each other and adults. Pupils cooperate well in group work and sustain concentration in lessons. They value the wide range of opportunities they are offered and enjoy and benefit from the regular 'activate' exercise sessions. Pupils show a clear understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in keeping fit and healthy. They feel very safe in school and show respect for the safety of others. They show a particularly clear understanding of how to use the internet safely. Although the pupils in some

classes know their targets and the next stage of learning, their involvement in their own learning is underdeveloped in other classes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. They are knowledgeable about, and tolerant of, the ways of life and beliefs of others and are sensitive to the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils willingly accept many responsibilities in school and take these very seriously. They participate in some local community activities and national charities. Their well-developed command of spoken English and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, together with their confidence in relating to others, prepares them well for their next school and the world of work beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff know how to present knowledge, skills and ideas clearly and in an interesting and informative way, often enhanced by expert use of interactive whiteboards. Lessons are well organised and carefully planned, and result in pupils making good progress. Very effective management of lessons and pupils results in consistently good behaviour and very good relationships. Pupils sustain concentration and enjoy the creatively presented activities, tasks and resources they are given. Teachers' confident subject knowledge enables them to provide interesting work that helps pupils develop real enthusiasm for mathematics. Some teachers are beginning to use checklists when teaching writing which clarify exactly what is expected. However, pupils are too rarely asked to assess their own work in relation to clear criteria provided by teachers and this occasionally slows their progress. Support for the pupils' learning is good, but at times, teaching assistants are too passive when the teacher is taking the whole class. On these occasions, those capable of harder work miss out on extra support and challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Teachers give appropriate emphasis to teaching the basic skills, especially reading, speaking and listening, and ICT. The curriculum is suitably modified to meet the learning needs of those who find learning difficult, but more able pupils are too rarely provided with additional challenge or required to work independently. Chances are also missed to develop particular aspects of writing in subjects other than English. The school has improved its science curriculum by placing greater emphasis on developing investigation skills and this is helping improve pupils' achievement in science. A regular programme of visits to places such as the Life Education Centre, residential visits and a strong programme of out-of-school clubs and visitors, as well as modern foreign language lessons, provide good enrichment to the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for child protection and safeguarding, including those for internet safety, fully meet current requirements. Pastoral care is strong and pupils trust staff and know whom to turn to if they have any concerns. Senior leaders and teachers use their comprehensive knowledge of the learning of each pupil to direct additional support where it is needed. The school has recently introduced improvements in the way that pupils are made aware of where they need to concentrate to improve their work. In some classes, especially in writing in older

classes, pupils show a clear understanding of which particular aspect of their work requires improvement and this is accelerating their writing progress. The school is aware that this practice is not fully consistent throughout the school and further work is required to improve this aspect of academic guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have ensured that all staff are fully committed to raising standards. The headteacher encourages and enables other staff to develop their leadership roles. The recently reformed senior leadership team and the subject leaders make an effective contribution to improving the quality of provision and raising standards. Parents are consulted widely and kept well informed about events at school, and how they might help their children at home, through regular newsletters and special meetings such as those held during Mathematics Week on how this subject is taught in school. Governors know the school well, hold high expectations and provide appropriate challenge and support. Effective staff training and regular follow-up checks ensure that key aspects of teaching and learning, such as how writing is taught, are continually improving throughout the school. The targets the school sets for pupils' attainment in mathematics and English are sufficiently demanding for most pupils. However, the targets for how many pupils should exceed standards expected of their ages are insufficiently ambitious.

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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	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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**

25 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandfield Close Primary School, Leicester, LE4 7RE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We send special thanks to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to talk with us. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn.

Sandfield Close Primary is a good school. It is well run, giving you a good education and a good preparation for life in your next school and in the wider community. Adults provide good teaching so that you make good progress. I am pleased yours is such a happy school and that you and your parents are pleased with it.

You thoroughly enjoy school and you attend regularly. You all clearly have a clear understanding of how to act safely. You understand what is right and what is wrong. You also show consideration for others and are friendly to each other. You should be proud of your good behaviour and manners. Those of you who find learning difficult make good progress because the school helps you learn just the right things. Those of you who speak other languages at home make great strides in learning to speak, read and write English, and this is really important for your future lives.

There are many things that your headteacher, the staff and the governors want to improve because they want your school to get even better. We agree with them that there is one important thing to be done first:

- help those who find learning easier to do even better in your writing and mathematics.

You can help by checking your own work and telling your teachers when you have found your work to be too easy or too difficult.

I send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Sadler

Lead inspector