

Sandhills Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123027
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327834
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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)	216
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	Dr Lisle Scott
Headteacher	Mrs Stephanie Lovett
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Terrett Avenue Sandhills Oxford OX3 8FN

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Inspection number	327834

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Age group 4–11

Inspection dates 30–31 March 2009

Inspection number 327834

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a one-form-entry primary school in Oxford, serving the local communities of Barton, Sandhills, Quarry and Risinghurst. Of the 216 pupils on roll, nearly two thirds of its pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is above average and many are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils who find learning difficult for an identified reason is well above average for a school of this size. Many of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided in the Reception class. Since September 2008 the school has had two Reception classes. The attainment on entry of children starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage is below that of children nationally, although it varies considerably from year to year. The school has the Activemark Award. The headteacher was appointed in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sandhills Community Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The strong leadership of the new headteacher has led to substantial improvement, and many features are now good. Parents are overwhelming in their support for the school, and this comment is typical of the parents' views: 'The new headteacher is very impressive; since she came there have been many positive changes, staff are energised, and as parents we feel that the school is more focused on all children achieving their best and being more responsible in their behaviour.'

Pupils' good personal development is a strength. Attendance has improved and is now above average. Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their welfare is supported effectively and this continues to be a strength throughout school. Children settle in quickly in Reception because of good links with parents. Child protection procedures are in place and the school works well with outside agencies to care for vulnerable pupils. Pupils' understanding of healthy living is good and they take full advantage of after-school opportunities to engage in sports and drama. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because of the positive and inclusive ethos. Pupils enjoy school and feel very safe there. They are eager to learn, and behaviour is good because pupils are clear about the rules and respect them.

Teaching is satisfactory as it has not yet resulted in pupils making good overall progress. This is because of the legacy of previous underachievement, and gaps in pupils' prior learning. The school recognises the need to challenge more pupils to reach higher levels and involve all pupils much more in their learning. Although the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good, the proportion of good teaching is rising due to a number of strategies that the school has put in place. The curriculum is good. The school is making good links between subjects so that learning is more relevant and meaningful.

Care, guidance and support are good. Good procedures are in place to measure and analyse most aspects of pupils' progress. Current data show that pupils' progress is improving in Years 2 and 6. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community through the school council, 'buddy' groups and charitable fund-raising activities; these and the good opportunities for pupils to join in extra-curricular activities make a very good contribution to community cohesion. The school successfully meets the needs of parents in supporting their children's learning, and pupils are involved in many local and other community activities.

Overall, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average, and achievement is satisfactory in both Key Stages 1 and 2. However, the standards and achievement, especially across Key Stage 2 and for more-able pupils across the school, are not consistently high enough. Satisfactory support is given to pupils who find learning difficult. They make the same satisfactory progress as their classmates.

Leadership and management are improving. The very good leadership of the headteacher in the past two terms has positively affected the pace of school improvement. She knows exactly what to do to move the school on, and has identified the right priorities for the leadership team to pursue. Subject leaders are starting to check regularly on how pupils are performing in English, mathematics and science, and these checks help them to identify what works well and what needs improving. Governors provided sound support to steer the school through its change of leadership. However, they are still in the early stages of holding the school to account in a rigorous manner. The clear vision and drive of the newly appointed headteacher, and of her

committed team of middle managers, have ensured that the school is improving. Her very effective and perceptive monitoring has ensured that the focus on raising achievement forms the bedrock of school development. Given the progress made and the teamwork ethic evident in the school, the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that the needs of the children are well catered for, providing them with a good start to their education. Well-planned activities and the good, imaginative use of the extensive indoor and compact outdoor spaces ensures that the children are provided with interesting opportunities to develop in all areas of learning. The quality of teaching and learning is good; all members of staff promote good relationships, and activities have a clear purpose. The session observed on sounds gave all children an excellent opportunity to develop reading and writing skills, and also helped them to develop the enjoyment of reading and personal skills, such as working in pairs. Most children make good progress, as they start below the standard expected for their age and achieve or exceed expected learning goals by the start of Year 1. They are valued and cared for well and benefit from well-established routines, which enable them to settle into and enjoy school quickly. Their enjoyment of learning is evident as they gasp in wonder at the growth of plants and the blossoming of flowers when entering the classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 2, and particularly for the more-able pupils across the school.
- Improve the consistency of teaching with regard to the challenge that pupils receive and the way in which they are helped to understand their next steps in learning.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards close to what is typical nationally for pupils by the end of Year 6. Standards dipped in 2007 in Key Stage 2 to below average, but recovered in 2008. Standards have been at least average over the last three years in Key Stage 1. The performance of higher-attaining pupils in both key stages is below national averages. The school recognises that pupils' progress could be better. However, data provided by the school and inspection evidence from lessons indicate that current standards are rising in both key stages. This is largely because more rigorous procedures are now established to enable the setting of realistic targets to raise attainment and to measure the progress of all pupils to help drive up standards. Assessment is now better used to identify potential underachievers, and effective extra help has been given to those who need it. As a result, the school can now demonstrate that the rate of progress in most year groups is improving. This was evident in the data that the school is now collecting assiduously.

Pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Appreciation of themes such as tolerance and respect show how well pupils are developing their personal qualities. Their eager undertaking of an expanding range of responsibilities from Reception class to Year 6 reflects their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a good appreciation of healthy lifestyles, participating in regular exercise and having achieved the Activemark for the school. They feel safe and secure in school, with few concerns over bullying and a good appreciation of safety, especially in relation to road safety, which is important given the proximity of a major road. Pupils enjoy school, as is shown in their good attendance levels, good behaviour and attention in lessons, the fun they have playing outside, and their keen participation in extra-curricular activities. Parents and children refer to improved behaviour and less low-level disruption in classes since the introduction of the 'behaviour for learning' strategy. Pupils' contributions towards the life of the school, 'one big family' as a member of the school council put it, are giving them a great appreciation of being good, responsible citizens. They have a heightened awareness of worldwide issues such as global warming, poverty and fair trade. Their involvement ranges from being school councillors, 'buddies', eco-warriors, junior citizens and team captains to being fund-raisers for 'Mission Nutrition' (poverty in Africa). Given their sound basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and good development in confidence, they are prepared adequately for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The headteacher has correctly identified key weaknesses in teaching including weaknesses in planning to meet individual needs and in accuracy of assessment. She is aware that current rates of progress, which result from weaknesses in teaching, need to accelerate if pupils are to reach higher standards. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, they are improving because of the leadership's relentless efforts, which include a focus on developing planning, more rigorous use of assessment data, and changes to the curriculum. Teachers are starting to encourage pupils to be more independent learners, as seen, for example, in the use of 'talking partners'. Pupils are increasingly involved in assessing and explaining their own achievement and steps towards improvement. However, these features are not applied consistently, consequently pupils are not always challenged in a way that will help them to understand clearly enough their next steps in learning. A few lessons are directed too much by teachers. This approach limits opportunities for more-able pupils to use their initiative and apply new skills. Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support pupils who experience difficulties in learning. As a result of these inconsistencies, progress is uneven, especially as pupils move through Key Stage 2 and in particular for the more-able pupils across the school. Classrooms are bright and attractive, and displays of pupils' work are now used more to optimise learning. These 'learning walls' in classrooms are helping to create a more interesting and colourful learning environment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The new curriculum provides pupils with a range of interesting and challenging activities aimed at providing wider access to learning. There is a good focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills, which increasingly allows pupils to apply their learning in realistic situations, although this is not yet fully effective. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is supported well through class and group discussion sessions. A strong emphasis on the creative arts and sporting opportunities enriches pupils' experiences and broadens their cultural understanding. The school participates in projects to promote singing, drama, ICT and modern foreign languages. There is a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' achievements very successfully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good pastoral and emotional support is provided, ensuring the security and good personal development of the pupils, including those more vulnerable. Child protection, safeguarding, health and safety and first aid arrangements are secure and understood by all. Behaviour, anti-bullying and anti-racist procedures are good, and their consistent application is appreciated by parents and children. Pupils know who to turn to for support if they have a problem. The promotion and monitoring of attendance are effective, leading to a significant improvement in the overall attendance level in the current year. Academic support and guidance is good for most pupils in relation to helpful advice in marking. Pupils' knowledge of their targets and what they must do to achieve them is relatively new, and the effects have yet to be seen in rising standards. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate, and is now focused on the individual needs of pupils. This has only been put in place recently, and is yet to have its full impact on learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has set a very clear vision for improvement, shared by staff and governors and based firmly on raising standards. She has swiftly diagnosed where the school's weaknesses lie and taken suitable action to secure improvements. These are clearly beginning to have an impact in the key area of pupils' progress. The headteacher's knowledge of the school is reflected in the school's accurate self-evaluation. Improvement planning focuses on the right priorities of raising standards and developing the role of key staff to give them a clearer view of teaching and learning, and of how these might be improved. Leadership responsibilities have been developed, and among subject leaders there is a feeling of empowerment. Under the skilful guidance of the headteacher, the work and performance of the school is improving. Under the new chair of governors, the governing body is learning how to hold the leaders and managers to account.

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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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

28 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandhills Community Primary School, Oxford, OX3 8FN

Thank you for the welcome you gave your inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed watching lessons, hearing you sing in assembly, having lunch with you, and talking to members of the school council. This is what we found out about your school.

- Your school is a satisfactory school with good features. You make satisfactory progress in your work.
- Teaching is satisfactory and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting.
- Your personal development is good because you are very happy at school and eager to learn, your behaviour is good, you have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy, and you take full advantage after-school clubs.
- Your headteacher and senior teachers have very good ideas about ways to improve the school and to make your learning enjoyable and interesting.
- Staff care for you well, and a good partnership is in place between the school, your parents and others.
- Older pupils take many responsibilities and contribute well to the running of the school through the school council and acting as playground buddies.

We have asked your school's leaders and managers to look at how they can make things even better. The most important requirements are:

- that you all do even better in English, mathematics, and science, particularly before you leave Year 6, and especially those of you who have the ability to reach a higher level
- that teaching in every lesson expects the best from all of you and tells you clearly about your next steps in learning.

You can help by trying hard in all your work and continuing to enjoy school.

Yours faithfully

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Lead Inspector