

Morecambe and Heysham Sandylands Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119138
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379734
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Frank Norris HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kirstie Bank-Lyon
Headteacher	Allison Hickson
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Frank Norris
Elisabeth Fenwick
John Ellwood

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. A total of 34 full or part-lessons was observed and all teachers were seen teaching. Inspectors met with the pupils' parliament, representatives from the governing body, key members of staff and many parents and carers who attended the parents' and carers' evening that took place during the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work including how well pupils play and move around the buildings, and scrutinised school documentation. In addition, a detailed analysis of the responses to the parental, carers', pupils' and staff questionnaires was undertaken.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average size primary school situated on two sites approximately 400 metres apart. The main building is for pupils from Years 1 to Year 6 while the smaller site houses a children's centre, a private nursery and the Nursery and Reception Year groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The majority of pupils is of White British heritage although a growing proportion of pupils from Eastern Europe who speak English as an additional language has joined in recent years. The school was heavily over-subscribed in 2010 and 2011. It has regularly met the current floor standard for academic achievement. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The school's pupil parliament was identified for a national award in 2010. The children's centre and the private nursery were not inspected as part of this inspection. Their latest reports are available on Ofsted's website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Sandylands is a good school and has improved well since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress overall from low starting points and reach close to, and occasionally above, the national average in Year 6. Pupils benefit greatly from an interesting curriculum that is used well to meet their changing needs and interests. The school is not yet outstanding because some teaching does not fully meet the needs of all pupils and the improvement in attainment of pupils has not yet filtered through all year groups in the school.
- Teaching is good overall and is frequently outstanding in the Nursery class and in the classes for older pupils. The teaching of mathematics is strong. The most effective teaching is often delivered in a dramatic way that keeps pupils on their toes and maintains interest throughout. Teaching assistants play a crucial role throughout the school. When teaching is less effective it is often over-optimistic as to what pupils can do and insufficient attention is given to planning for specific groups of pupils.
- The support for pupils that are at risk of not making progress is impressive. Effective intervention and support programmes, such as 'Best Start' and booster classes ensure that all receive the best chance to succeed. The special attention given to pupils that are not heard to read at home is making a significant difference in helping them to achieve.
- Parents and carers are very well supported in helping their children to learn. They appreciate the efforts of all staff and the way they ensure good behaviour and safety in the school.
- The senior management team is fully focused on pupils' academic and social development. It effectively drives up standards in the quality of teaching through very regular monitoring and good professional development. It does not always undertake the careful evaluation of projects to determine what works and why.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, where it is not yet good, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have appropriate expectations of all pupils
 - plan more carefully for all ability groups in their class.
- Evaluate carefully all planned projects so that senior managers and the governing body are clear about what has worked and what has not.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The majority of children enters the school with starting points that are below those typical for their age. A sizeable minority regularly enters with starting points lower than this. All make stunning progress in the Nursery class and develop well as they progress through the Reception Year. Children are quickly identified if they require specific support and receive regular and effective intervention from the staff. This ensures that many children achieve the expected age-related attainment levels by the time they complete the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their progress in communication, language and literacy is particularly good, especially for the lower-attaining children.

The attainment of pupils is improving over time in Key Stage 1 and they currently make steady progress. Increasingly, pupils are meeting the national standards by the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics. Higher-attaining pupils achieve well overall but do not realise their full potential until they move into Key Stage 2. Any lower-attaining pupil at risk of not achieving in reading and writing receives regular and effective additional support. They have regular phonic (matching letters to sounds) lessons and adults hear them read daily. The speed and quality of these interventions is on the whole impressive and ensures that pupils do not lose ground. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit greatly from these approaches and achieve very well.

The previous inspection report indicated that standards by the end of Year 6 were below national averages. Now they are meeting the national average and for some pupils exceeding them, particularly in mathematics. A very high proportion of pupils makes at least the expected rate of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils begin to make rapid progress in Year 4 and this is fully realised in Years 5 and 6 where it is outstanding at times. A notable achievement is the quality of handwriting from the current group of oldest pupils and their interest and excitement in mathematics.

The school's firm commitment to equality of opportunity ensures that expectations are high for all pupils. This is particularly beneficial for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement. The progress of these pupils is very similar to that of all other pupils in the school.

Virtually all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire and all that spoke directly with inspectors reported that their children make strong progress and believe that their needs are being met fully. On many occasions parents and carers whose children had attended many schools indicated that this was 'far and away the best of the lot'.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good and has become more consistent since the previous inspection. Parents, carers, and the governing body unanimously confirm this. When children enter the Nursery class, staff give close attention to their individual needs and create exciting and interesting activities that particularly promote their personal development and language skills. A good example of this was seen in the introduction of an outdoor water tap which was used by staff to create a system of pipes to support the 'Incy Wincy Spider' rhyme. The children could not understand why the copious amount of water they were adding would not emerge from the pipes. That was until a teaching assistant skilfully encouraged them to change the height of the pipes and explained to them why the water was now emerging. The range of learning opportunities is carefully selected and children are encouraged to undertake specific tasks. These are not always the ones they want to choose, but this is handled with skill by the staff. This excellent start is developed well in the Reception Year. Teaching is effective here with greater use of teaching to larger groups of children. This shift in approach ensures that children are ready for the move to more traditional classroom settings in the main school building.

Teaching is good overall in Key Stages 1 and 2 with particularly effective teaching for older pupils. The best teaching, often found in English and mathematics lessons, is characterised by well-planned activities that build on current local and national events. The teaching style is often dramatic and engaging and utilises computer technology very well. A good example is the way two Year 5 classes undertook detective work in the school grounds to establish witness statements for a possible crime. The teachers jointly planned the lesson and played the role of senior detectives. Pupils were excited by this activity and made great strides in improving their communication skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is clear that not all teachers appreciate fully how well they are developing the full range of pupils' learning through this approach.

Occasionally when teaching is less effective it does not take into account sufficiently the range of pupil abilities and ensure that work set for them is pitched at the right level. This results in some tasks being over ambitious and leads to misunderstanding and confusion for the pupils. In addition, during these occasions some pupils become a nuisance and distract others.

The wide range of intervention programmes that are taught by school and outside staff for the benefit of those pupils who are potentially at risk of not achieving is outstanding. Much of this support is in addition to other duties and is undertaken on a voluntary basis.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' conduct around the school at break and lunch time is typically good. There is a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the school and pupils are keen to help one another. Despite the playground being cramped, pupils play well and respect each other's games. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally good and serious incidents are very rare. When these do occur, teaching assistants quickly intervene and counsel the pupil so that they return to their work. Teachers cleverly use a reward system to encourage better behaviour and rely on trust when pupils claim the number of rewards they have gained. It is rare for a pupil to try and claim more than they deserve.

Inspectors observed deterioration in the behaviour of pupils only when the teaching they received did not serve their particular needs well enough. The interesting and relevant curriculum is used well by teachers to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of different cultures, faiths and beliefs. This assists pupils in knowing how they should respond to each other's views and opinions. Incidences of bullying and racist behaviour have reduced significantly since the previous inspection. Parents and carers acknowledge that such incidents do go on but they are very pleased with the way the school responds. Pupils, parents and carers are confident that pupils are safe in school.

Leadership and management

Parents and carers, the governing body and pupils have a very high regard for the headteacher and her senior management team. There is an unrelenting focus on ensuring that any barriers to learning are removed as quickly as possible. This has enabled many pupils who have 'failed' at other schools to be integrated successfully and achieve well at Sandylands. Many parents and carers spoke directly with inspectors about the major difference the school had made to their children and their own lives. One parent felt that the staff were 'like us' and 'knew what it was like to live around here and wanted the best for all of the children'. The leadership skills that are modelled by senior members of staff are exhibited regularly by pupils who are members of the pupil parliament. Pupils holding the posts of minister for education and minister for looked-after children were clear about their ambition for the school and for pupils to achieve as well as they can. They explained that the pupil parliament understood and agreed with the view that the school must do all it can to support those who are less fortunate.

The governing body has improved since the previous inspection and now provides challenge and support in equal measure. Members have been instrumental in helping the headteacher realise her ambition for improvement in the building and facilities, including the development of small support rooms for discreetly helping individual pupils.

Senior leaders have been successful in improving teaching and learning through monitoring teachers in the classroom. They have carefully linked the rates of progress over time that pupils make to support their observations on the quality of teaching. This has enabled professional development to be targeted well to meet individual needs and has begun to see staff being appointed as senior leaders at other schools. Although plans for projects are produced by managers, they do not focus sufficiently on how the work is to be evaluated. This is important for senior managers and the governing body in helping them to determine what is successful and what is not.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are entirely in order and the school takes its responsibilities to promote equality and tackle discrimination very seriously.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morecambe and Heysham Sandylands Community Primary School, Morecambe LA3 1EJ

We really enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly. We were delighted to see you really enjoying being at school and doing well. Many of you told us that you had been at other schools and thought this one was the best. We agree with your comments and the views of your parents or carers that Sandylands is a good school.

We were impressed by the interesting lessons that the teachers plan for you and by the commitment of all staff at the school. They want you to do well and they work very hard to help in any way they can. You really appreciate this. We were pleased to see you working hard in the lessons and playing well in the rather cramped playgrounds.

We would like to give particular praise to the headteacher and the senior teachers. They are an important reason for the school's continuing improvement since the previous inspection.

We have two areas for improvement for the school. Firstly, we would like to see some teachers plan their lessons a bit more carefully so that you get work that is challenging enough. Secondly, we would like to see the senior teachers checking more carefully on projects they have led on.

It was a real pleasure to visit your school. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Norris
Her Majesty's Inspector

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