



Sandylands Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119138
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280471
Inspection dates 10 January 2006 to 11 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Clive Davies

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hampton Road
School category	Community		Morecambe
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Lancashire, LA3 1EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 410286
Number on roll	467	Fax number	01524 832682
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Keith Dyer
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Christine Ingram

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Sandylands is a primary school situated in Morecambe in Lancashire and serves a mixed community within an area of social disadvantage. The number of children entitled to free school meals is above the national average and almost a third of the children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are 467 children on roll aged 3 to 11, including 52 children attending the nursery. Most children start school with personal and academic skills that are at best below average for their age, with their communication, language and literacy skills very low compared with those expected nationally.

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, and this judgement agrees with the school's own evaluation of its work. It has many outstanding features, is exceptionally well led and provides good value for money. It has the capacity to improve still further because of the excellent systems it has in place to support staff development. It has made substantial improvements since it was last inspected.

All groups of children, irrespective of ability and age, achieve well, with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieving outstandingly. Parents understandably think very highly of the school and all children praised the staff and emphasised how happy they were at school. Standards have matched, or been above the national average for mathematics and science due to rigorous use of assessment and good teaching. Although standards remain below average in English, children's achievement is good, as they start school with poor vocabulary and weak speaking skills. The school has accurately identified children's spoken English as an area for continued development.

The teaching is good, with particular strengths noted in the way staff make use of assessment information to inform future learning. Every care is taken to ensure that children feel safe and participate in physical activities on a regular basis. The curriculum has recently been amended to take greater account of children's improving skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Good use is made of these skills in all areas of learning and this has helped the school to give additional emphasis to creativity.

The provision in the Foundation Stage is good, with particular strengths in the way children's needs are identified early and specialist support sought, if needed, to help individuals. Despite this, overall standards by the end of the Foundation Stage are below national expectations, particularly in the area of communication, language and literacy.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to maintain and build on this good position the staff need to:

- Continue to work at improving children's spoken English, aimed at improving their use of descriptive language in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All children, from different backgrounds and abilities, achieve well in all subjects, with children identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieving outstandingly. No group of children underachieve. This matches the school's view of children's achievement.

National test results in English remain stubbornly below the national average but when taking into account children's poor vocabulary and speaking skills when they first start school, good progress is being made. In mathematics and science, test results have either matched or been above the national average over the past three years. This is due to the very good progress being made in these subjects throughout the school. The reason why progress in English, although good, is not matching that of mathematics and science, is because children's spoken English is limited by the range of vocabulary used. Despite the school's attempts to improve children's oral language, a lack of confidence in using descriptive language is limiting their achievement in writing.

Although a number of children are bright, when they first start school the vast majority display personal and academic skills that are below the level expected for their age. Despite the good progress made in the Foundation Stage the attainment of children is below the level expected for their age by the end of reception, with particular weaknesses in communication, language and literacy. The good progress continues from Year 1 to Year 6, resulting in children attaining at the level expected for their age in all areas other than speaking and writing, and achieving to their full potential by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own judgement that provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good.

In the Foundation Stage, the staff quickly recognise individual personal needs and ensure that the children are well supported to help them settle into daily routines. All children enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their consistently good behaviour in lessons and enthusiasm for learning. Attendance is above the national average. Staff work hard to create a calm and safe environment where children can learn. The school has ensured that children know what to do should they encounter incidents of bullying or racism. Children know who to talk to if they are unhappy and firmly state that they believe their school to be a safe place. Because children are fully involved in the life of the school and in decision-making, they respect the school rules and property.

Children know the staff listen to them and act on their suggestions, for example, introducing healthy snacks at playtime. Some children have been appointed as playground buddies and are rightly proud of their role in helping other children at playtime. Children make a positive contribution to the school and local community through specific projects and work for charities.

Children know about healthy living and different ways to lead a healthy lifestyle. One child explained that she knew so much about keeping healthy she now eats far more healthily at home.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning are good. The strong staff team are fully committed to meeting different needs so children achieve well. Information from the outstanding assessment systems is used carefully to plan the next steps in their learning. Despite good steps already been taken to improve children's spoken English, the school recognises there is more to be done in this area. Lessons are lively and interesting. Children have many opportunities to learn in different ways. The strong emphasis on making learning enjoyable ensures that they are eager to learn, behave well and work hard. Increasingly challenging targets encourage children to aim high and become more independent, responsible learners. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because staff are particularly skilled in meeting their needs. Gifted and talented children are challenged with further activities; for example, using their ICT skills to produce the newsletter.

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. An effective range of well planned practical activities covers all areas of learning, with an appropriate emphasis on developing the children's social skills and spoken English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school that the curriculum is good. It meets all statutory requirements, is well planned, and enriched to meet children's different needs and interests through a good range of varied and practical learning activities. Basic skills are taught well and children use them across the curriculum, calculating science data using their knowledge of mathematics, for example. Children use computers competently as a learning tool in many subjects. Very effectively planned activities for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities contribute to their outstanding progress. Some outstanding opportunities enrich the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on arts and music. Children in Years 2, 5 and 6 are learning French or German in partnership with a local high school. Children enjoy many clubs, visits and a residential experience. The school regularly participates in local festivals and community events. All these activities make a strong contribution to children's good achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Although the school judged this area as good, inspectors found the school provides an outstanding level of care, support and guidance for all its pupils. Procedures for child protection and risk assessments are very good and are followed rigorously. Very good links with specialist staff and outside agencies ensure children's particular needs are met effectively. For example, a local special school trained a teaching assistant in occupational therapy techniques to develop children's motor skills. Staff know the

children and their families well. Parents feel confident about approaching the school, and are very happy with the care given to their children. Excellent relationships contribute very effectively to children's well-being and progress. Children feel safe and happy in school, and know they can trust staff to help with any problems, saying 'you can talk to the teachers privately if you want to'. The way the progress of all groups of children is tracked and monitored is outstanding. The information provided ensures all children aim high and achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has built a very successful senior team and shares a clear vision for raising achievement. Her vision of a successful school ensures that children of all abilities and backgrounds are fully included. The headteacher is well respected. This is shown by one child's comment that, 'it is like she is magic; she just knows what to do'. Clear guidance by the senior staff is a key factor in the school's continual improvement in standards.

The school's self-evaluation is of an excellent quality and has helped the school to make significant improvements since the last inspection. The work of the school is rigorously checked by staff and governors. In addition, the school listens to the views of parents and children and this ensures that the priorities in the school improvement plan are the right ones. One parent commented that, 'Sandylands is a fair school, where the children are put first'.

Governors have an extremely effective involvement in leadership of the school and offer challenge to the leadership team. The school uses funds very successfully to support improvements and raise the achievement of children. The outstanding leadership, together with the strong team of staff, governors and parental support, puts the school in a very good position to continue to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Mrs Christine Ingram

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12 January 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed watching you learn and talking to you. You told us that your school is a special place and all the inspectors agree. We were delighted to learn that so many of you enjoy coming to school and feel safe, secure and are able to have an important say about the way the school is run. During our visit we were watching to see how well you behaved. We are delighted to find that your behaviour was always good despite the fact that we visited on a very rainy and wet day when you were not able to go out to play.

These are some of the things that your school does well:

the excellent way your headteacher leads the school makes sure that you all have every opportunity to do well

you are helped to make good progress in all your learning

children who find learning difficult are exceptionally well supported and therefore they do very well

the adults who work with you know exactly what you need to learn because they are good at checking what you already know

your teachers try to make learning interesting for you by using exciting ideas which means that you learn in different ways

because your health and safety matters to your teachers you learn about the benefits of eating a healthy meal and why it is important that no one feels unhappy at your school.

The one thing we have asked the staff to do to help your school be even better is to continue to help you improve your spoken English. Your headteacher and teachers already know that your spoken English needs improving because it is limiting the quality of your writing. The

inspectors therefore are suggesting that the school continues to help you increase the number of words that you use in your writing.

Finally, we were very impressed by the amount of exercise you take and how you enjoy keeping healthy – keep it up!

Yours sincerely

Clive Davies

Inspector