



St Andrew's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110828
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288789
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Patricia Cox

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sand Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Soham, Soham
Age range of pupils	3–11		Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01353 720345
Number on roll (school)	425	Fax number	01353 720345
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Katie Driver
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Liddington
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007	Inspection number 288789
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school, with 52 children part-time in the Nursery. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average, as is the proportion identified with learning difficulties or disabilities, or with statements of special educational needs. Most pupils are of White British ethnic heritage with a small group from other European countries. A lower than average proportion has a first language other than English, mainly Polish, Portuguese and Thai. An average proportion leaves or arrives during their school career. The children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is similar to that expected for their age. There has been a significant turnover in staff in the past two years. The school has recently gained the Health Promoting Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education overall and parents are positive about what it provides, although there has been some concern about the turnover of staff. The pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They make sound progress through the Foundation Stage and standards are similar to those expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. However, pupil's progress slows through Key Stage 1 and standards are below the national average by the end of Year 2. Their progress accelerates through Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 6 and standards are broadly average by the time they leave. Teaching is satisfactory overall and based on good relationships through the school. However, the pace of lessons is often slow and many pupils are passive in class, not volunteering to answer questions. The school has introduced a good range of assessment procedures in order to demonstrate their progress, and teachers are beginning to use this information to plan their lessons. Nevertheless, this process is at an early stage and these assessments are not used consistently to ensure that pupils learn as quickly as they could. The school has not established a reliable system to check children's standards when they start Nursery or their progress through the Foundation Stage. In addition, this shortcoming means that procedures to inform pupils of how well they are doing and to involve them in measuring their own progress are not yet sufficiently effective.

Pupils are mostly interested in their work and the recent initiatives to enliven the satisfactory curriculum are adding to their enjoyment. However, the way that class timetables are currently organised is not rigorous enough in ensuring that valuable teaching time is used to the full. There is some slippage of time during the day, so that lessons often do not start on time. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They behave well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although they are often passive in class. The school's recent emphasis on healthy lifestyles has ensured that they have a good understanding of the issues involved. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The pupils' physical and emotional needs are cared for well and all necessary checks are carried out on adults who work in the school. Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education and for their future lives.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Recent initiatives are progressively having a positive impact on the quality of the school's work. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall, but has accelerated significantly recently, due to the headteacher's good leadership and management. He has a precise understanding of what the school needs to do to improve and action has been rapid and effective. Self-assessment is largely accurate and there is satisfactory capacity to improve overall. Subject leaders are developing their understanding of their role well and are increasingly focused on raising standards. However, the senior management team is not yet sufficiently effective. Members are broadly supportive of the headteacher but do not take enough responsibility for ensuring that the school moves forward as well as it could. Governance is satisfactory and is developing its role well under the good leadership of the chair.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the members of the senior management team take full responsibility for promoting the rapid progress of the school.
- Build on the recent initiatives for assessing pupils' attainment from entry to the Nursery through the school, in order to track their progress rigorously, and involve them in setting targets and measuring their progress towards them.
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially the pace of lessons and the use of day-to-day assessment, to plan work at a suitable level for all pupils in order to raise standards, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- Review the way in which the curriculum is planned in order to use time as efficiently as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Children make a secure start in Nursery and Reception classes and enter Year 1 soundly prepared for the next stage. Progress is slower through Years 1 and 2 because teaching is not based as securely on a clear understanding of the pupils' attainment. The results of the Year 2 teachers' assessments in 2006 were average in mathematics but below in English, particularly in writing. Nevertheless, results have risen since 2004, when they were exceptionally low. Standards of the pupils presently in Year 2 are again below average; although they are now making adequate progress, it is not enough to eliminate their previous underachievement. End of Year 6 test results have been rising since 2003, when pupils had made unsatisfactory progress. Results in 2006 were average in English and mathematics. They were well above average in science, because the pupils had specialist teaching. The school's appropriate targets were exceeded because progress was good in Year 6 and overall satisfactory since the pupils were in Year 2. The pupils presently in Year 6 are making good progress and reaching average standards. Pupils who have learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English make similar progress to others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils show a good understanding of school rules and routines, behave in a safe manner and show respect to teachers and each other. Where lessons are challenging and conducted at a good pace, pupils' enjoyment is clear. In many lessons, not enough is done to encourage pupils to be more independent and show initiative. Through assemblies and regular contact with the local church they are taught to consider a range of social and moral issues within a Christian context. They have many opportunities to develop their understanding of other cultures. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities, for example to take part in the school council. Here, they develop their skills in making decisions, listen to each other and take more responsibility for leading their fellow pupils. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school and local

community, for example through running a range of fundraising activities to support a local hospice. Their care and concern for others is evident in the 'buddy' system they instigated to support younger pupils. They demonstrate good awareness of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle, with healthy eating habits and exercise. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children get a secure start in the Foundation Stage. There is a wide range of interesting activities in Nursery and Reception in all areas of learning, although these do not sufficiently encourage children to be independent learners or to have much of a say in how they plan their work. Learning is especially effective in Year 6 where teachers' planning is matched very well to pupils' needs. Elsewhere, most lessons cater soundly for the range of pupils. Teaching assistants give valuable support, particularly in helping pupils with learning difficulties, although they are sometimes under-occupied at the start and end of lessons when teachers are talking to the class as a whole. The quality of marking and the use of target-setting with pupils varies from very good to inadequate. Teachers have made a good start in adopting new procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in all year groups, but practice is not yet consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school enriches the basic curriculum with a good range of activities such as themed days, and 'special weeks' like African Week and Medieval Week. Weekly 'Golden Time' sessions give pupils opportunities to choose activities they particularly enjoy. However, these cross-curricular activities are not an integral part of the overall curriculum, so that pupils' enjoyment of other lessons is somewhat restricted. There has been good attention to the curriculum for personal, social and health education. Provision is sound for pupils with learning difficulties and for those who need help learning to speak English. A satisfactory range of visits and activities outside the school day provides pupils with a reasonable programme of additional enjoyable activities. The open-plan nature of much of the school building places constraints on how teachers can organise their work and even normal working noise from neighbouring classes has a negative impact on pupils' progress at times.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school provides a caring and supportive environment where the majority of children are happy and confident. There are clear school routines and systems to safeguard pupils. Child protection arrangements

are robust and meet requirements. Supervision around the school is good and all teachers have been given first aid training. Academic guidance is variable, so that not all pupils understand the progress they have made and are not always clear about how they can improve. Newly introduced systems to make better use of data to monitor, track and support pupil's progress are beginning to improve this aspect of care and guidance. There are signs that this is leading to more rapid progress. The school has good links with other agencies that support its work with vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and have someone they can talk to if they have worries or concerns.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and the school gives sound value for money. The headteacher has introduced many new initiatives since he was appointed two years ago. He has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Development planning is good and the school is developing meticulous methods for monitoring the progress being made. Evaluation is increasingly rigorous, although the staff involved in monitoring are not always given enough guidance on deadlines for their work. Action to improve has been urgent and appropriate, although there have been occasions, through an understandable desire to move on rapidly, when a few too many initiatives were attempted at once. Nevertheless, many of these actions are starting to bear fruit, particularly in the improvements evident in teaching and standards at Key Stage 2.

The new assessment systems are beginning to have an impact, particularly through their use in showing where progress is more evident. However, the lack of a reliable system for assessing attainment on entry is hampering this process. The enthusiastic subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are increasing their understanding of standards in their subjects and have basic plans to improve them. They are beginning to take the initiative in leading improvements; however the senior management team has not developed to the same extent. Governors are increasing their methods for holding the school to account, for example through well-focused visits to monitor progress in specific areas.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 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.

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	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 January 2007

Dear Children

St Andrew's CofE Primary School, Sand Street, Soham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5AA

Mrs Ranger, Mr McGregor and I very much enjoyed our visit to your school this week and want to thank you for looking after us so well and being so friendly. We thought you might like to know what we found out about your school.

We really liked meeting you and talking to you and we think that you behave well. The school council are very good at their job! We agree with you that your teachers help you when you have difficulties, but that the work could sometimes be more interesting. We think that you're learning the right things at school and that the oldest children are working at about the same level as most children in other schools. The infant children aren't doing quite as well, so maybe the ones in Years 1 and 2 could help by trying a bit harder with their work? And maybe all of you could try more to give your teachers answers when they ask questions.

We could see that your school is getting better because Mr Liddington and the staff have worked hard to improve it. But we think that some teachers could do better at finding out what needs to be done and getting it done. Teachers are finding out more about how well you're doing with your work and we want them to carry on doing that, so that they can tell you, and help you to get on faster. We've also asked them to make sure that time isn't wasted, so that you get to lessons faster. You told us that some lessons could be more interesting, and that sometimes the work is not hard enough and we agree.

Thank you again for helping to make our time in your school so interesting. Our best wishes for the future.

Mrs Pat Cox

Lead Inspector