

Sandilands Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 105469 |
| Local Authority | Manchester |
| Inspection number | 324226 |
| Inspection dates | 24–25 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Marie Cordey |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 380 |
| 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 | Mr Mark Lyons |
| Headteacher | Mrs Joan Grant |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 June 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Wendover Road Wythenshawe Manchester M23 9JX |
| Telephone number | 0161 9736887 |
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| Age group | 3–11 |
| Inspection dates | 24–25 March 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school draws pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds. It was formed in September 2005 from an amalgamation of an infant and a junior school. There has been significant change in staffing, particularly in senior leadership, since June 2007. During the previous year a new headteacher took up post and staffing is more stable. Most pupils are White British. There are a very small number of pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and there is specialised provision for a small number of pupils with severe learning difficulties. Early Years Foundation Stage provision includes two Reception classes and two Nursery classes. An after-school club is managed by a private provider.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and achievement, particularly in writing, information and communication technology (ICT) and the provision for more able pupils. The quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are inadequate and pupils do not understand sufficiently well how they are doing or how to improve.

After two years of underachievement there are substantive indications of improvement, but standards remain well below average. Improvement is most noticeable in raised standards in reading and mathematics in the current Year 6 class. Nevertheless, overall pupils' progress is not fast enough and a significant proportion of pupils do not attain the levels they should by the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave Year 6. This is particularly so in writing and ICT and for those pupils who learn quickly. Following a period of staffing difficulties, the headteacher has forged strong relationships with pupils, staff, governors and parents. There is absolute determination to raise standards and achievement. The headteacher has rigorously implemented appropriate strategies to bring about further improvement and there are signs that teaching is starting to improve.

Pupils' attainment is below expectations when they join Year 1 but standards fall to well below average by the end of Year 2. They stay well below average by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6. A parent, summing up the concern of others commented, 'Standards dropped and my child was let down, but things are improving now.' Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make slightly better progress but their achievement is still inadequate overall. However, well planned support and sensitive, focused teaching for the small number of pupils with severe learning difficulties in the specialised provision ensure that for these pupils, achievement is satisfactory. This is because these pupils are taught by specialist teachers who are very knowledgeable about their needs. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language receive satisfactory support to enable them to learn English but their achievement overall is also inadequate.

The school has taken clear strategic action to improve performance including a sound commitment to pupils' care and personal development which has not faltered despite previous difficulties. Pupils are respectful and tolerant of others and celebrate a society made up of people from differing backgrounds. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and look forward to the healthy, tasty meals provided by the skilled chef. They are careful to look after themselves and keen to inform each other and adults how to be safe, for example on the local roads. A parent commented, 'The staff are very supportive and caring for all children and their parents.' Attendance has improved to broadly average.

Challenge and support for teachers and improvements to the tracking of pupils' performance has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate because it is not consistently good enough to fill gaps in pupils' learning or to provide enough challenge for more able pupils. Marking is mostly regular and up to date, but it is not used well enough for pupils to be sure how they are doing in their work or exactly what they need to do in order to improve it. The curriculum is inadequate

because it does not match the needs and interests of pupils and planning does not take into account sufficiently what the pupils already know. There is an imbalance in the amount of time spent on teaching particular subjects which makes it difficult to plan for continuity and results in pupils knowing less about some subjects than others. Pupils and their parents appreciate the after-school club and the many educational visits arranged by the school.

The new headteacher, senior leaders and governors are committed to making a difference and reversing the decline in the school's performance. This is because there is a common vision to turn the school around. They appreciate that standards and achievement are too low and have been honest and realistic in seeking support from a wide range of sources to help improve pupils' opportunities for learning and personal development. As a consequence, teaching is beginning to improve and standards are slowly starting to rise. Parents are positive about the school and its place in the community. For these reasons the school has satisfactory capacity to improve its performance.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enjoy a wide range of different and exciting activities. Careful planning of the curriculum develops their curiosity and interest in the classrooms and outdoors. The new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is providing sound leadership and more continuity and security for children following a period of staffing instability. Staff are clear about what is expected from them. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are mostly below those typical for their age, in particular in language and communication. They make satisfactory progress in all the areas of learning but, by the time they leave Reception, most are still working at levels below those expected. Their satisfactory progress is a result of the improving teaching and support they receive, which is satisfactory and sometimes good. In these cases high expectations and careful planning provide activities that are closely matched to each individual child's interests and abilities. Care for children's welfare is satisfactory and they are looked after in a safe and attractive learning environment. The landscaped outdoor area is particularly well planned to encourage children to explore and learn through play. Children gradually become more confident and independent because there are opportunities for them to choose activities for themselves. New planning and assessment systems ensure that activities are better matched to individual children's needs. Nevertheless, an audit has shown the need for more tightly focused activities to develop children's reading and writing, for instance in the teaching of linking sounds and letters. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and provide sensitive, focused support to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement overall, particularly in writing, information and communication technology and for more able pupils
- Improve the curriculum so that it matches the interests and abilities of all pupils, builds on their knowledge and skills and provides a balance in subjects
- Ensure that lessons are sufficiently challenging and engaging to meet all pupils' needs
- Ensure that pupils understand how they are doing in their work and what they need to do, precisely, in order to improve it.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is uneven and is better in classes where teaching is stronger or pupils have not been adversely affected by staffing changes. For many pupils underachievement has not been addressed. Consequently, standards in writing and in science are well below average and pupils' achievement is inadequate. The school has correctly identified standards in writing and of the more able pupils as key areas for improvement. The headteacher and the senior leadership team are acting swiftly to remedy these through a range of initiatives to boost pupils' performance. In addition to the many interventions to boost pupils' performance, lessons are beginning to be more closely planned to match individual pupil's abilities. Similar approaches have resulted in improved standards in mathematics and reading which have risen to below average. The support of the local authority, school improvement partners and Greater Manchester Challenge has been instrumental in beginning to make up lost ground and improving pupils' achievement. A lack of resources has adversely affected standards in ICT which are lower than expected for pupils' ages. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language also make inadequate progress in line with their classmates. However, pupils in the specialised provision achieve satisfactorily from their very low starting points and this is much appreciated by parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. For example, pupils reflect upon their experiences through assemblies. They have a keen sense of right and wrong. The school council is actively involved in school life. Its members are proud of their contribution, especially to improved playground resources. Pupils' awareness of how to stay safe and healthy is good. Pupils enjoy school and this can be seen through their satisfactory attendance. Despite the school's best efforts, a small number of parents persist in taking their children on holidays in term time. Pupils contribute satisfactorily to the local and wider communities through fundraising efforts for charities and in litter picking and gardening in the local area. Enterprise activities, including managing money and running a tuck shop, encourage the pupils' preparation for the future, although this is impeded by their unsatisfactory achievement and well below average standards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

More rigorous checks on pupils' progress along with more stable staffing and challenging support are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has been a priority and the school is now concentrating more specifically on teachers' planning to challenge more able pupils and to develop writing. A stronger emphasis on pupils' speaking skills and recalling their own experiences is beginning to improve writing but this is at an early stage. Teachers respect pupils and pupils have generally positive attitudes to their learning. There are some good lessons where pupils are excited by their learning and cannot wait to get involved. This is leading to better progress in these classes. However, overall, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent and inadequate. This is because it is not strong enough to enable pupils

to eliminate gaps in their knowledge and understanding. When support assistants share in lesson planning and assessment they provide effective support as they are more aware of pupils' needs. Sometimes, however, their input is limited, usually when the teacher is introducing the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

There are too few links made between subjects to make learning sufficiently relevant and exciting for pupils. This includes for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Planning is not rigorous enough to extend the opportunities to take into account the different abilities in the classes. There is insufficient breadth and balance. Some subjects, such as history, are hardly taught in some classes. In contrast, too much time is spent on some other subjects, such as religious education. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils in Years 1 to 6 to use their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT to support learning in different subjects. Resources for ICT are insufficient to develop pupils' skills in using the computer. Pupils enjoy the after-school activities, especially in sport and look forward to the many visitors who come into school to enrich their education. Visitors who came to celebrate Chinese New Year were particularly appreciated.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a secure environment. Pastorally, pupils are looked after and cared for well. Pupils say there is little bullying in the school and that they know who to turn to if they are worried. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. The new assessment system is showing early signs that pupils' achievement is improving. The system is used satisfactorily to outline the support necessary for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school works satisfactorily with other professionals to improve the pupils' education. Links with the local authority and the introduction of new systems are positive and beginning to improve how effectively work is planned for pupils. Even so, the level of challenge is still not enough for pupils to improve their work quickly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has faced some barriers to improvement because of significant staffing changes. The headteacher's clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses has led to a succinct action plan for improvement. The senior leadership team and other key staff are bringing about improvements. Good links with a local primary school have helped to forge a partnership which is beneficial to staff in understanding how to improve. There are signs that this is helping to raise standards and improve progress through improvements in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, close checks on how well the school is improving are not fully in place. This is evident in the pupils' work where there are examples of gaps in learning and insufficient information is given to pupils to help them improve. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and community cohesion. A significant number of new governors have strengthened the governing body. Governors are committed to improving the school and have become much more involved since the start of the school's closer work with the local authority. Governors are beginning to hold the school more to account for its performance and have considerably

reduced a significant deficit. Nevertheless, based on the outcomes for learners, the school does not currently provide satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 3 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 4 |

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

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 4 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 3 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| 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? | Yes |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Sandilands Primary School, Manchester, M23 9JX

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish to thank you for your help and for talking to us when we visited your school. You were very polite and welcoming. I would especially like to thank the members of the school council who took the time to talk to us.

We found some positive things about your school. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle down, learn happily together and make satisfactory progress. You are cared for and looked after so that you feel safe and confident. Well done for your improved attendance. You are community minded and do things to help others both in school and in the wider community. Like you, I really enjoyed the school food and thank you for recommending the cheese whirls.

We know that it has been difficult for you and your teachers because of lots of changes in staff over the past two years. However, many of you are not doing as well as you should in Years 1 to 6 and are not sure how to improve your work. I want you all to enjoy and take an active part in your lessons because I noticed that you learned much more when this happened.

The school's leaders are determined that you will do better in your work and all staff in your school are keen to help this to happen. I have judged that your school needs a 'notice to improve'. This means that an inspector will visit again to check that things are improving.

I have asked the school to make sure that there are more opportunities for you to improve your work with computers and in writing in particular, and for those of you who learn quickly to get much better in your work. I have also asked the school to improve the curriculum. Some of you spend more time on some subjects than others. This makes it difficult when you join a new class because a lot of you are at different places in your learning. I have also asked the school to make sure that all your lessons are of the best quality. You can help by asking your teacher about how you could improve your work.