

Sandhurst Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118282
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	379583
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Watkins
Headteacher	Peter Edgesmith
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons taught by 8 staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including safeguarding, and pupils' workbooks; they held discussions with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors, and senior staff. Questionnaires from 54 parents and carers, 8 staff and 60 from pupils were analysed to help inform the inspection process.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve, particularly in their communication, language and number abilities.
- How well pupils make progress, especially in their mathematical understanding.
- How systematically pupils' develop science and ICT skills .
- How well senior leaders identify and set effective priorities for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized school. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in one Reception class. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The school has reduced the number of classes this term from seven to six, with three mixed-age classes in Years 3 to 6. There is a breakfast club, which runs each morning, and an on-site nursery managed privately and which was, therefore, not part of this inspection. The school has achieved a number of awards reflecting its commitment in promoting pupils' healthy living, environmental awareness and their artistic appreciation.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Sandhurst is a good school. Its strengths lie in the way it promotes pupils' good behaviour, healthy lifestyles and understanding of their local community. There have been improvements since the school's previous inspection, notably in the quality of teaching.

Children have a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where their personal, social and basic skills develop in a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils enjoy attending school and generally they achieve well through the school because teaching is consistently good. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment, although English results have outpaced those in mathematics recently. Pupils write with flair and are confident speakers. Overall, they make good progress, although there is some variation between classes. That is often linked to the length of time they have been in the school and some weaknesses in their understanding of how to apply their mathematical skills to 'real life' problem-solving situations. The school's information on the current Year 6 pupils indicates the pupils are on track to reach higher levels in their tests next year. Although teaching is good, making effective use of a stimulating curriculum to plan some exciting lessons and theme days, there are small variations which cause the pace of learning to slow for some pupils. Pupils' skills in science and information and communication technology (ICT) reach expected levels. The pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, in line with their peers.

The school's good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral and social education means the pupils behave well, respect each other and value differences. Pupils say they feel very safe, but recognise that there are occasional times when the behaviour of a very small number of fellow pupils could be better. Nonetheless, pupils cite their 'fantastic friends' as one of their favourite aspects of school life. While pupils' understanding of their own culture and those of others in different countries is good, their knowledge of those from backgrounds or beliefs represented in this country is not developed to the same extent. Playtimes are active occasions and pupils make good use of the school's extensive grounds. The vast majority say they try to eat healthily whenever possible. The school's breakfast club operates well and is valued by those who attend.

Underpinning the school's recent improvement is the strong leadership of the headteacher, supported by a well-motivated staff who enjoy being part of the school and are keen to make further improvements. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate

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and takes into account the views of parents and carers, which has helped identify weaknesses and make improvements. For example, actions to remedy past variations in performance in national tests have been largely effective, particularly in raising pupils' attainment, narrowing the gap between the performance of girls and boys and accelerating their overall rate of progress. Although the governing body gives appropriate support, it has undergone some recent changes to its membership and responsibilities. As a result, it is at the early stages of reviewing its routines and assessing the impact of changes, such as class re-organisation. Nonetheless, given the school's track record of improving the quality of teaching and curriculum while promoting pupils' good levels of personal development, this means that the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply their number skills in investigative activities that relate to 'real life' examples and by reducing the length of teachers' explanations at the start of lessons
 - ensuring pupils are clear about the relevance of the activities they do.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:
 - ensuring its revised roles and routines are established in the coming term, in order to monitor the effectiveness of class re-organisations
 - implementing the priority to review the school's promotion of community cohesion to identify areas for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils of all abilities achieve well, including the few from minority ethnic groups, given their often below-average starting points when they enter the school. Pupils' attainment in English is a particular strength. Generally, pupils are articulate speakers, write with some creativity and use punctuation accurately. Well-planned work in a Years 5/6 lesson enabled pupils to learn the skills of editing text, developing alternative vocabulary and in choosing 'top tips' to entice the reader to look at recipes. Although pupils' number skills develop systematically and accurately, pupils do not always have the opportunity to apply these skills in simple 'real life' situations. Pupils work on an extended range of skills in their topic work. In a Years 3/4 lesson about the Second World War, their writing, drawing, researching and thinking skills help build their 'learning power'. Occasionally, pupils say they are not always clear about how their learning is relevant to them. Pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. Activities based within the class and in adjacent 'learning zones' provide pupils with effective help and support.

Pupils enjoy attending and enjoy a wide range of responsibilities such as buddies, mediators and in being members of the school council. They recall enthusiastically

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influencing staff in the choice of extra equipment for playtimes. Pupils’ knowledge of their own local culture develops well, as does their awareness of global issues. That is aided by their links with other schools in Europe, one of which they visit every two years. The pupils’ knowledge of others’ backgrounds and beliefs represented in this country, while secure, does not match their empathy for their European neighbours. Those that attend the school’s breakfast club say they enjoy this healthy and fun way to start their school day. Pupils, often, cultivate vegetables to use or to sell locally, a reflection of the school’s awareness of health and environmental issues. Given their good achievement, well-developed collaborative skills and positive attitudes, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is, typically, good throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the change to mixed-age classes in Years 3 to 6 is proving popular with many pupils, but not all, as the friendship groups for some have changed. Lessons are, usually, well planned, although occasionally teachers’ explanations are overly long, which means pupils do not always get down to work quickly enough. Occasionally, pupils are unclear why they are doing certain work and, as a result, their progress slows. Practical activities form a good part to lessons, whether it be writing, drawing, discussion, or in bringing a favourite keepsake for use when discussing the issue of loneliness for evacuees. Writing and number activities, sometimes aided by the use of interactive whiteboards, are taught systematically so that most pupils write confidently and calculate accurately. Nevertheless, pupils’ number skills are not

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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utilised sufficiently in problem solving or through meaningful investigative work.

Teachers make good use of the recently changed, but well–organised, curriculum to plan interesting topics, ranging from science days, musical activities, guitar tuition and teaching of modern foreign languages. Special theme days help give a ‘wow’ starting point to enliven pupils' learning. Well-considered tracking systems are in place to ensure pupils will not repeat work when they are in the same class for two years. Pupils appreciate the help they get in judging their own ‘learning power’. A good range of extra-curricular activities, ranging from ‘bug club’ to karate, helps to broaden pupils' horizons. Regular art workshops and eco work extend pupils’ skills and understanding further. Teachers’ marking is systematic and helpful in giving pupils guidance about how to improve their work. Teaching assistants support lessons and individual pupils well so those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as fellow pupils.

The good care, guidance and support promoted by the school mean pupils feel valued, cared for and are able to exert influence on their own learning and in identifying areas of concern. Unanimously, pupils say they feel very safe and say that any incidences of bad behaviour are usually managed effectively. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from accurate identification of their needs, support from a range of professionals beyond the school, and well-considered activities that enable them to achieve well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by well-motivated staff, has succeeded in enhancing the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching. There has been clear drive and ambition from senior leaders, subject coordinators and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage to secure higher attainment and accelerate pupils’ progress. That has been aided by effective partnerships with local professionals beyond school, such as local secondary schools, speech and language therapists and local businesses. Special initiatives have helped improve pupils’ reading and number skills. Regular and systematic monitoring of teaching identifies areas to improve, although occasionally observations concentrate on teachers' methods rather than pupils' learning. Priorities for improvement are relevant, guided by the regular collection of assessment information and feedback from parents and carers through questionnaires. The recent improvements to the outside area to the Reception class reflect the good links

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that exist with the local community and the vast majority of parents and carers. The governing body gives the school satisfactory support, but recent changes to roles and routines mean that some of their revised systems for monitoring, updating policies and overseeing the transition to mixed-aged classes are still taking shape. The governing body ensures that day-to-day safeguarding routines are in place. Procedures for the vetting of staff are of good quality, but the governing body recognises that some policies, including safeguarding and those relating to the school’s promotion of community cohesion, are in need of reviewing, updating or discarding. For example, there is scope for improving pupils’ awareness of those with differing backgrounds who reside in the United Kingdom. Senior leaders’ promotion of equal opportunities is good, given that pupils of all abilities achieve equally well. Any potentially vulnerable groups, such as those who join school midway through the year, are assessed quickly so that work can be set which will help them to settle into school with minimum fuss and achieve well. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and pupils say that the school is fair when dealing with concerns or in ensuring there is equal opportunity to attend extra-curricular clubs or participating in visits.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class as induction arrangements are good and several parents and carers commented in their questionnaires about their children’s happy early days in school. Children have settled in well to the routines and are confident learners. Their basic skills of communication, language and literacy develop well, with sessions dedicated to learning letter sounds and practising number skills being frequent and well taught. Overall, children start school with a range of skills that are below the levels normally seen in this age group and, as a result of

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their good progress, by the end of the Reception Year, they attain levels that are broadly those expected for their age. Their personal and social development is particularly good, but there has been some unevenness in their attainment across different areas of learning, which the school is seeking to remedy. Activities cover all areas of learning effectively, both within the classroom and outside. Displays, despite being early in the term, reflect the children's interests and backgrounds. Recent improvements to the outside area have had a significant impact on promoting children's learning. When given the choice, children choose the outside environment readily in which to learn. That includes working in the school's gift shop, where there was a brisk trade in selling cards, handling play money and not forgetting, of course, giving out receipts! Other children enjoyed working together in the water tray making imaginary milkshakes. Occasionally, the children's enthusiasm to work outside means that the resources inside are not always used to best effect, such as the ICT facilities available or quieter role-play areas. Children's number skills are developed well by whole-class teaching and by simple activities such as counting the number of skittles they can knock down in their bowling alley. Teaching assistants support children conscientiously, although are not always as skilful in extending the learning when the children are engaged in activities in order to get the maximum benefit from them. There are good arrangements to assess children's progress and identify any weaker areas of their learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An average number of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. A small proportion that contained comments was divided between those offering praise and those voicing concerns. Common positive themes were the way children enjoyed attending, the enthusiasm of staff, the exciting class activities and the way that the new children have settled well into the Reception class. Some common concerns related to pupils' behaviour and the changes to class organisation brought about by a reduction in staffing and pupil numbers. Inspectors concluded that the school has taken reasonable steps to minimise any potentially negative impact of the move to mixed-age classes and to inform parents and carers about the changes. Senior staff and the governing body recognise it will take some time for the new arrangements to settle down fully and for pupils, staff, and the governing body to assess fully if any 'fine tuning' is needed to the curriculum or class organisation. While pupils themselves realised their behaviour was not perfect, they and inspectors judged that it was usually good in lessons and around the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandhurst Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 159 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	48	25	46	3	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	65	15	28	4	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	20	37	27	50	4	7	3	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	33	24	44	2	4	5	9
The teaching is good at this school	28	52	18	33	2	4	2	4
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	25	46	23	43	4	7	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	33	33	61	3	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	19	35	21	39	4	7	1	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	19	35	26	48	3	6	3	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	39	17	31	9	17	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	31	25	46	4	7	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	22	41	24	44	2	4	4	7
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	28	52	18	33	4	7	2	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



23 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandhurst Primary, Cranbrook TN18 5JE

I enjoyed meeting with you, looking around your school and seeing all of the things you do. I think that you go to a good school that really looks after you and makes you feel safe.

I enjoyed particularly looking at the new outside area for the Reception class children, your topic on the Second World War and your vegetable plots. I think the school is helping you to learn well, although some of you need some extra help in your number work so you can use your skills in everyday situations. You are good at explaining yourselves and some of your writing is exciting.

Your behaviour is good, although some of your parents and carers think it could be even better, so keep trying your best to be well behaved. In some lessons, your teachers need to let you get on more quickly with your work and make sure you really know why you are doing some activities. The headteacher and staff want to make the school even better and we think they have done a good job in helping you to get better at your reading and writing. I have asked members of the governing body to look more closely at some of the things that happen in school so they can help the staff make the school even better.

I thought you did a lot of running around at playtimes to keep fit and you told the inspectors that you try to eat healthily – so keep trying to eat the right things. I enjoyed watching some of you learning the guitar and playing instruments in the hall. It is nice that you all get on so well with each other, although I have asked the staff and governing body to help you have a bit more understanding of those who have different ideas, backgrounds or beliefs in this country. All of you can help the school improve still further by working hard at your number work as well as some of you making sure you keep up your good behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Lead inspector

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