

# Sandling Primary School

## Inspection report

---

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 118511           |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Kent             |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 379631           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 14–15 March 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Wendy Simmons    |

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

---

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 418  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Steven Sherman   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Lynda Downes   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 15–16 May 2007   |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Ashburnham Road<br>Penenden Heath<br>Maidstone<br>Kent<br>ME14 2JG           |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01622 763297   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01622 200015   |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:office@sandling.kent.sch.uk">office@sandling.kent.sch.uk</a> |

---

|                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4–11             |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 14–15 March 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 379631           |



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012



## Introduction

Inspection team

Wendy Simmons

Additional inspector

Christine Dickens

Additional inspector

Jameel Hassan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, including some that were part lessons. Fifteen teachers were observed. Discussions were held with staff, a representative of the governing body and the senior management team. The inspectors held three meetings with different groups of pupils and listened to pupils read. Samples of pupils' work were seen. The inspection took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), observed the school's work and evaluated the responses to the questionnaires from pupils, staff and 90 parents and carers. In addition, the inspector received an email with comments from one parent. A range of documentation was scrutinised, especially that linked to the school's development plans, assessment data, and information linked to behaviour and anti-bullying. The lead inspector conducted some joint lesson observations with the headteacher.

## Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Early Years Foundation Stage children work in two adjoining Reception classes. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds, although a few pupils are from Asian, European or Black African heritages. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, although increasing, is much lower than average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has several awards, including effective financial management and the Healthy Schools award.

**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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>2</b> |

## Key findings

- Sandling Primary is a good school. Leaders, including the governing body, have high aspirations for the pupils. The school has maintained levels of attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6 that are significantly above average. Parents and carers have considerable confidence in the work of the school, with almost all indicating that they would recommend it to others. The quality of teaching and achievement, although good, remain the key priorities for improvement in the drive to make the school outstanding in the future.
- Children are helped to make a strong start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and from this point they make good overall progress as they move through the school. Achievement overall is good, although sometimes a little uneven within a few of the year groups. In addition, leaders are working to ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make as consistently good progress in all areas of learning as their peers, particularly in reading.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils enjoy learning, work hard and achieve well. The school is correctly focused on making more teaching outstanding. Although teaching of basic skills is good, with some interesting links with different subjects of the curriculum, there remain improvement areas linked to reading, writing and mathematics in order to ensure that all pupils achieve exceptionally well.
- Pupils enjoy school and show positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour in class and around school is often exemplary. However, overall behaviour and being safe are good. This is because parents, carers and pupils noted that although pupils are safe at school, there have been some instances of bullying. Inspectors confirm that bullying is taken seriously by school leaders.
- The effective leadership team are fully focused on improving further the teaching and pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics and are aware of what requires improving. Leaders' perceptive self-evaluation, together

**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

with good monitoring of teachers' performance, successfully underpins the school's on-going improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that all year groups make equally impressive progress
  - ensuring that the additional support in reading for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is as effective as possible
  - making reading activities as inspiring as possible within guided reading, including making more effective use of book corner/library resources
  - ensuring that the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) in Year 1 is as challenging and developmental as possible and that whole-school spelling improves
  - ensuring that in mathematics, all pupils fully understand their targets and know exactly how to improve their skills
  - improving displays, so that they are of higher quality and are used to very best effect to enrich learning and celebrate pupils' achievements.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are confident that their children make good progress, and inspectors endorse this view. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They were observed enjoying selecting activities for themselves and being helped to learn more formal skills through good discussion and cooperative work. For example, children counted the legs of the three spiders that they had found in the garden and this led to them doing a sum of  $8+8+8=24$ . In the school as a whole, pupils' progress is good, and better in certain years. However, in Years 1 and 3 it tends to be more uneven and this is why progress is not yet outstanding.

Lessons and work in books confirm that the most-able pupils and those who speak English as an additional language often do very well at this school. The proportion gaining the higher Level 5 or even Level 6 is showing a continuous trend of improvement. Pupils work diligently on activities, showing particularly good focus and perseverance, with plenty of opportunities for independent investigation and research. For example, Year 2 explained which kind of shoe/boot/trainer they can run fastest in and why this may be so. Year 6 explored friction when evaluating the effectiveness of different running surfaces. In all science work, pupils are helped to make very strong links with mathematics.

The school has been working to help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make faster progress, and this is becoming increasingly

**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

effective in writing and mathematics. However, some support for reading is not as effective as it could be. All groups of pupils are being given more motivating tasks to write about because teachers have modified the curriculum to ensure that pupils write for interesting and meaningful purposes. As a result, this is helping pupils to enjoy writing while also enriching their vocabulary well. This was evident when Year 6 worked on 'flashback' writing and used such words as 'reminisce' and 'retrospective'. Descriptive vocabulary was also used well in the Year 4 play scripts and when Year 2 wrote about the characters in *Tortoise's Dream*. Opportunities are, however, being missed to help pupils to use editing skills as early as possible when pupils are ready for this in Year 2; this hampers pupils from making outstanding progress.

Reading skills are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils do well because a high proportion of time is allocated to reading and pupils often read regularly at home. The school places a good focus on the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) in Reception and in Year 2. But learning is not accelerated fast enough in Year 1 because activities are not organised well enough into ability group tasks or reinforced enough across the curriculum. Overall, pupils confidently blend letters together to read, but they are not as skilled at segmenting letter sounds to help them with their spelling. Leaders are focused on improving spelling and this is starting to make a positive difference.

In mathematics, learning is practical and carried out in fun ways. Pupils have a good grasp of basic number skills and confidently use their tables. Sometimes opportunities are missed to jot down each step of their calculations as they go, which then hampers them in explaining and assessing their own progress within lessons. Some targets are not easy for pupils to understand and this leads to unevenness in how well pupils know what they have to do to improve their skills.

**Quality of teaching**

Typically, the quality of teaching is good overall, so that pupils are helped to develop their basic skills in a wide range of subjects, and parents and carers agree that this is the case. There are carefully planned and suitable opportunities to build up skills step by step in almost all year groups. Where this is not quite as strong, it is largely due to inexperienced teaching, which is already being carefully monitored and the teachers concerned given support. Teachers are skilled at asking probing questions that help pupils to talk about their ideas and give an insight into how well they understand new things. This form of assessment is used well to help adults to reshape, revisit and extend learning. Teachers make sure that lessons are organised for pupils' differing needs and abilities. However, this is more effective within writing, mathematical and science activities than in group reading activities. For example, in guided reading sessions some of the learning tasks do not enthuse the pupils, relying too heavily on silent reading or uninspiring comprehension tasks. Teachers are not making consistently good use of displays and book corners to help pupils to learn to the best effect.

**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

The use of information and communication technology by teachers and pupils is very well developed, so that pupils are helped to work independently on their own research work. For example, pupils in Year 4 were observed in deep concentration finding about the athletes who will be taking part in the 2012 Olympics. This kind of project work contributes much to the effective provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Discussions with pupils confirmed that they almost always behave well, are polite and respectful. There has been improvement in rates of attendance as a result of the effective work of the family liaison officer, so that they are securely above average. Parents and carers confirm that their children are safe, and pupils agree. In lessons, pupils' behaviour is often very impressive. The playground is very small and this can lead to some minor arguments over the space. There have been no recent exclusions.

Meetings with pupils confirmed that they understand about internet bullying and about the importance of being respectful to people with differing religious, cultural or sexual orientation, as well as those with disabilities. Incidences of bullying are rare overall and have mostly been linked to name calling. A few parents and carers raised concerns that the bullying policy is not actioned by some staff in a consistent enough way. Inspectors scrutinised the records and these show that any incident of recorded bullying is taken seriously. A new discussion forum is now in place to strengthen the partnership with parents and carers, should they have any concerns. Plans are underway to provide more training for staff, including the lunchtime meals supervisors, so all understand best practice in promoting at least good behaviour.

### **Leadership and management**

Parents and carers believe the school is well led and managed, a view that is confirmed by this inspection. The headteacher and her senior management team share a range of complementary skills that enable them to evaluate the work of the school well and make effective development plans. This is evident in their monitoring of lessons and evaluations of pupils' views, which have led to training and increased opportunities for pupils to write at length within many subjects. Initiatives have resulted in improving achievement in writing. In mathematics, there has been a concerted effort to check and extend links between different subjects, and this has been successful.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum promotes pupils' basic skills well and provides opportunities to enrich their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of ways. For example, Year 3 thoroughly enjoyed learning about Greek life and the pupils were observed acting out their own play called *What's Up, Icarus?* with great enthusiasm. Leaders are ambitious to make teaching and learning outstanding in the future. They recognise, for example, that in order to ensure completely equal opportunities in practice then additional support is required in

**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

reading for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Work has begun by purchasing new books that make reading more fun for older boys who find reading difficult or uninspiring. Discrimination of any form is not tolerated, as evidenced by the fact that the school has been successful in ensuring that pupils who are eligible for free school meals do equally as well as other groups.

The school was judged to be good at the last inspection. Leaders are building on these outcomes well, maintaining effectively the good-quality teaching in a range of subjects, including an increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. As such, the school demonstrates a capacity to improve further. The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school, both supporting and challenging it to do better. Leaders ensure that effective safeguarding procedures are in place.



## 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](http://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.  |
| Attendance                 | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| 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.**



17 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Sandling Primary School, Maidstone ME14 2JG**

I am writing to thank you for taking so much time to talk with us and for completing the questionnaires. You go to a good school, where you work hard and are well taught. As you explained, you enjoy school and it is evident that this was so in almost all of the lessons seen. You are well prepared for secondary school because your standards of work are higher than we usually find in primary schools. We especially like your science work and the way that you do mathematics and writing in so many different subjects. You read a lot, which is good, but we think that you do not have nice enough book areas and some reading activities could be more fun. You agree that you feel safe at school and your behaviour is usually good. You explained that there are a few incidences of bullying. We looked into this and found that the school has become much better at dealing with these and remains focused on ensuring that teachers and other staff are being better trained.

Your headteacher and other staff agree with me that the following things are important priorities to work on in order to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding.

- Those of you who find reading difficult should be given better support and reading activities should be made more interesting, especially when you do guided reading, including making more effective use of book areas.
- Children in Year 1 should do more work on letters and sounds (phonics), and everyone should work as hard as possible on their spellings.
- In mathematics, teachers should make sure that you fully understand your targets so that you know exactly how to improve.
- Teachers should improve displays so that they help you to learn as well as possible.

Please continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons  
Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**