

# Sandlings Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124685
<b>Local Authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	359743
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Preston

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

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<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>	125
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Brockett
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Fox
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Easton Road Woodbridge IP12 3TD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01394 420444
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed five teachers in nine lessons. Meetings were held with governors, groups of pupils and staff. Different aspects of the school's work were observed and documentation scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, as well as 66 returned questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The extent to which school data and other evidence, including assessment on entry, indicate that pupils make sufficient progress.
- How far the changes in teaching staff have affected the consistency in the quality of teaching.
- The effectiveness of the school in maintaining good care and support for pupils and their families and links with the local community, given its distinctive role and location.
- The extent to which the staff and the governing body have coped with recent absences and changes in key staff.

## Information about the school

Sandlings is a smaller than average primary school located on a Ministry of Defence base near Woodbridge, in Suffolk. Around two thirds of its pupils come from the base with the remainder drawn from the surrounding rural area. Almost all of its pupils are of White British heritage and none speak English as an additional language. It has a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a high level of pupil mobility with many service families moving from base to base. At the time of the inspection, most of those families had a parent serving in Afghanistan. The long serving headteacher has recently returned from a prolonged absence and there have been several changes in the teaching staff, including senior leaders. The school has gained the Activemark and Healthy School status.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Sandlings is a satisfactory school. It also has some key strengths. It has a history of being a well led school, very much appreciated by parents, that provides effectively for both the special circumstances of service families and the needs of the local civilian community.

The strong care and guidance systems support pupils well during the often large fluctuations in intake. However, standards of attainment and the rate of pupils' progress fell recently and the school is in the process of improving these.

Over many years the school has provided successfully for children from service families. By addressing any gaps in pupils' learning that may have arisen from numerous school moves, the school has ensured that all pupils make enough progress to reach average and on occasion, above average, standards. Two years ago standards in English and mathematics fell sharply and a considerable number of pupils made less than expected progress. Since then, the school has helped pupils improve their literacy, particularly in writing, though progress in mathematics is still below expectations. More positively, pupils from service or civilian families who have had all or most of their education in the school make at least satisfactory and, in some cases, good progress.

All parents say that their children are secure in school and pupils readily talk about feeling safe and well supported. Pupils are positive about school and attend regularly. Overall, they behave well in lessons and around the school and reflect well the strong school emphasis on helping and supporting each other.

Teaching is at least satisfactory and good on occasion. In good lessons, pupils of different ages and abilities are sufficiently challenged and supported so they know how to improve their work. Other lessons lack these strengths. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting individuals and groups who have special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those who join the school at different points in the year. Teachers mark work regularly but do not consistently show pupils how they can improve, particularly against the National Curriculum levels used in the school's effective systems for tracking progress.

The curriculum engages pupils' well, although the opportunities for pupils to actively participate in their learning are not as well developed as they could be. Opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of the diversity of British society are at an early stage of development. A great strength of the school is its ability to provide a caring and inclusive environment for all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. This is evident in the work done in the nurture group and in the 'Afghan Club' where pupils, particularly those from service families, gain an understanding of events and activities in that country.

Staff and the governing body have worked hard with some success to ensure the school functioned effectively during the prolonged absence of the headteacher and the

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retirement of the deputy headteacher. Circumstances provided an opportunity for existing staff to blossom in new leadership roles and for the governing body to be more active than they had previously been in supporting and developing the school. The headteacher, who is highly regarded by pupils, parents and the community, returned to lead the school in May and has been working closely with colleagues and the governing body to ensure a smooth transition to the appointment of a new headteacher in the new year. A considerable amount has been done to establish rigorous tracking, improve pupils' progress and develop the new senior leaders and governors in their school improvement roles. The impact of these efforts is seen in improved pupil writing and a continuing focus on staff development, including the use of local literacy and numeracy consultants. The school therefore has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring:
  - lessons consistently provide challenging and varied learning opportunities, shared with pupils, that meet their different abilities and needs
  - marking routinely informs pupils how they can improve their work and links with school procedures for tracking pupil progress.
- Develop the curriculum in order to:
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and be active learners
  - improve pupils' understanding and appreciation of wider British society.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring all members of the governing body are more closely involved in monitoring and evaluating school improvement
  - providing appropriate training and development for the new senior leaders.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

**3**

Pupils start school with knowledge and skills that are largely in line with the expectations for their age. In a school in which considerable numbers join and leave each year, the attainment of pupils in most years is in line with the national average for English and mathematics. In 2009 attainment fell significantly and was below average at a time when a large number of pupils joined the school in Years 5 and 6. A number of these pupils made less than expected progress. However, in that year, school data shows that many of those pupils from civilian and service families who spent most or all of their primary education in the school made good progress by the end of Year 6. Since then an increased focus on teaching literacy and numeracy and carefully targeted support for those making insufficient progress has improved attainment in English, especially writing. These efforts failed to improve pupils' progress in mathematics or increase the proportion of pupils gaining higher standards in English and mathematics. However, improvement is continuing

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and lesson observations and data indicate that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are demonstrating satisfactory, and often good, progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In a well taught Year 6 English lesson for example, the teacher was providing two levels of challenge that were helping pupils understand and use words with similar spelling, while the teaching assistant provided writing opportunities for the more-able pupils to enable them to achieve a higher level. Every class has additional learning support and this enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to reach and in many cases exceed their expected levels.

Pupils' attendance is consistently above the national average and behaviour is good. Pupils relate well to each other and say there are no incidents of bullying. The school council actively supports healthy eating and pupils enthusiastically participate in the physical exercise sessions that teachers often use at the start of lessons. Many are involved in the gym club and other extra curricular sports activities. Participation in other school and outside activities is less evident. In part this is because of the recent headteacher absence and other staff changes restricting the opportunities to be so involved. Spiritual, moral and social development are all strong and well reflected in the assemblies seen. The outstanding assembly led by the headteacher celebrated the good progress made by children in the Reception class and in a moving charity appeal pupils showed a readiness to reflect and be concerned for the plight of others. However, the school curriculum and local rural environment limits opportunities for more diverse cultural development.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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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## How effective is the provision?

Teachers are adept in integrating new pupils into their classes and with the shrinking school roll, are increasingly teaching combined age groups. Teachers and support staff are good at establishing positive learning environments and encouraging pupils to work well together. Consequently, most lessons are orderly and quietly purposeful if, at times, a little slow paced. Much of the lesson planning is clear, with a single learning purpose rather than more varied learning targets for different pupils. This is not a problem for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others getting targeted help because of the good teaching support. However, in some lessons, a lack of challenge limits opportunities for some to reach the higher levels in mathematics and English. Marking is regular and positive but does not always provide pupils with guidance on how to improve.

The curriculum is sound and makes appropriate use of published resource material, but in practice provides limited opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively, to actively research, make decisions and present their work confidently. The school is aware that it has not sustained the previously good range of extra-curricular activities and is working to improve this.

The school's care, guidance and support for pupils are greatly valued by many parents. Frequent reference is made to the excellent way the school successfully absorbs many different pupils at different times and with varying needs. For example, one parent referred to the headteacher and staff as 'an extended family for the children who go there'. Another wrote about the 'wonderful and inclusive learning environment for all pupils'. The regular contact with staff at the start and finish of each day and the visible school commitment to each child's welfare results in a readiness by parents to get their children to school. In addition to its own strong induction procedures the school works closely with the local secondary school to ensure pupils are well prepared for their future move.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Despite the recent fall in standards, parents are very supportive of the school, with many taking the time to praise its work and the efforts of the headteacher in particular. The headteacher recognises that there has been some earlier loss of focus in driving school improvement. However, the committed staff, working with the acting headteacher, sustained most of the strengths of what is a caring and cohesive school. The returning

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headteacher, working with the new deputy head and the Early Years/ Key Stage 1 leader, has focused on improving teaching and standards.

The governing body has been thorough in ensuring all its statutory and other responsibilities are met and the governors have contributed actively. However, in general, the governing body has until recently not been closely involved in strategic school leadership and experienced a steep learning curve during the absence of the headteacher. Some aspects such as school evaluation and development were neglected for a period and while the governing body audited community cohesion and developed a strategy to promote it, this is only just in the process of implementation.

Other aspects of leadership and management are positive. Good engagement with parents is clearly evident in their responses during the inspection, which included praise for the accessibility of the headteacher and staff at the start and end of each day and the various ways in which the school endeavours to keep all parents informed. The school works closely with the Ministry of Defence and social agencies so enabling it to ensure pupils' well-being. It also works with the local schools network and the high school to support learning. All safeguarding requirements are rigorous and every one of the parents' and pupils' questionnaires confirm that pupils are safe, reflecting a key strength of the school. The inclusive school ethos reflects a commitment to equality of opportunity evident in its detailed school policy. Numerous parents commented on the considerable effort the school makes to identify and meet the needs of all pupils and this is reflected in the school's use of reading and other tests of each child on entry, and its careful tracking of their subsequent progress.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Reception class with skills and experiences broadly in line with those expected for their age. Those who start in the autumn have the benefit of more learning time and make at least satisfactory progress to reach expected levels at the end of the year. Those children starting later in the year reach lower levels for example, in writing. All children progress well in terms of their personal and social development reflecting the strengths in learning support. Attainment seen in lessons indicates that children's skills in speaking, writing and number development are at an early stage. Children behave well and help each other, particularly the older children in the mixed reception and Year 1 class. Children play well together and many show imagination and creativity, for example in setting up a puppet show. Many are at an early stage of developing independence.

All areas of learning are covered, including an early introduction to writing. Adult-led activities engage children's interest but at times they spend too much time listening rather than learning through first hand experiences. There are appropriate opportunities for play activities including a well-resourced outside area. Teachers and assistants are positive and supportive, although the use of adult questioning to develop children's thinking and personal curiosity was less evident in the lessons seen.

The Key Stage 1 leader recently assumed responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage and already has a clear view of areas for development, including training staff and parent helpers and developing assessment. Good progress is already being made in the development of 'learning journeys' which use photographs and notes to record children's learning and track their development. All resources are well deployed. Children's learning and welfare needs are identified and supported, and child protection and safeguarding requirements are fully addressed.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

Over two thirds of parents completed the questionnaire, a significantly higher than average response, with many writing additional comments in support of the school. Parents are very positive about the school with very few concerns about any aspect. This reflects the school's success in meeting the needs of the different children who come to the school including those from the military base. One parent's view, typical of many expressed by parents, reflected this in her praise for the school's 'tremendous understanding of military families' and for the help given to her child in his transition from

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another school. Inspectors agree with the parents' comments about the effective way it supports both its service and civilian children

A few parents disagreed that the school keeps them informed about their child's progress. This was explored during the inspection and it was found that the school provides a good range of helpful information to parents and formal and informal opportunities for discussion about their child's progress.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandlings 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	59	27	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	65	23	35	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	59	21	32	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	67	16	24	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	62	22	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	53	27	41	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	59	27	41	0	0	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)	33	50	25	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	50	27	41	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	45	32	48	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	52	27	41	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	68	19	29	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	70	19	29	0	0	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Sandlings Primary School, Woodbridge, IP12 3TD**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Your school gives you a satisfactory and improving education, and ensures that most of you achieve as well as you should by the time you leave. What we found most impressive was the way the school successfully helped all of you coming from other areas, to quickly settle into the school. The school is a very safe place to be and in the questionnaires both you and your parents strongly agreed. We were pleased to see how well behaved you were and how you worked well together in lessons. It was good to see that many of you are committed to healthy eating and enjoyed the 'Activate' exercises at the start of some lessons. We also liked very much the Afghan Club that helps you keep informed about what is happening in Afghanistan, especially as many of your parents are serving there.

Many of your parents told us how much you like school, and this is reflected in your above average attendance. You get on with your teachers and we could see that they plan different activities that make your learning interesting. We also recognised that many of you were getting valuable extra help from your teaching assistants. However, we think some of you could do even better if teachers tailored classwork more closely to your individual needs to make sure you are all fully challenged. Your teachers mark your work regularly and often tell you how you can improve it. This is very important and we have asked them to do more of this and to explain more carefully how you can improve on your National Curriculum levels. From lessons and assemblies it was clear that the school is keen for you to know more about the wider world. To help in this we have asked them to develop links with other schools in Britain and possibly abroad.

The headteacher, the governing body and all the staff are working hard to further improve your school. You can all help by maintaining your good attendance and taking a more active part in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead inspector

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