

Sandhurst School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110068
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	378047
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1056
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Edwards
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 March 2009
School address	Owlsmoor Road Owlsmoor Sandhurst GU47 0SD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 48 lessons, observed 41 teachers, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, leaders and managers, teaching staff, students and parents. They carried out a number of joint observations of lessons with the school's senior managers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan and departmental reviews, a range of school policies, local authority reviews, records of internal observations of teaching and learning, students' work, including their assessed work in English, science and mathematics, and questionnaires completed by 199 parents and carers, and those completed by students and staff.

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

- Whether the curriculum, teaching and assessment practice are sufficiently tailored to the needs of different ability groups, in particular the middle attaining students in Key Stage 4 and lower ability students in the sixth form.
- The quality of the learning, progress and behaviour of students in lessons.
- The consistency of outcomes for students across core subjects and key stages.
- The capacity of senior leaders and governors to accelerate students' progress and achievement, especially in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Sandhurst School is a large secondary school, with specialist status in science and the Inclusion Quality Mark. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Most of these students have moderate learning difficulties, or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The vast majority of all students are from White British backgrounds. The main minority ethnic group is Nepali. The proportion of students at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language is very low. Few students are known to be eligible for free school meals.

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

2

Main findings

Sandhurst School is a satisfactory school with a highly cohesive community and a strong ethos of good student behaviour. Since the last inspection, the school's senior managers have secured considerable improvements, particularly in relation to raising students' attendance, the Key Stage 4 curriculum which is leading to improvements in GCSE results, the leadership capacity of middle managers especially in English and mathematics, and the quality of the school's self-evaluation. These improvements indicate that the school has good capacity to improve.

The GCSE examination results, including mathematics and English, have improved steadily over recent years, with students in 2011 making broadly satisfactory progress and attaining results, which have not yet been validated, that are similar to the national averages. A very high proportion of students successfully gained five or more of the higher grades in the GCSE examinations as a result of partnered off-site provision, a responsive curriculum in science, personalised vocational and academic pathways in Key Stage 4 and good care and academic support. In the main, students in Years 9 and 11 receive good guidance on their course choices. However, a small minority of Year 11 students who transfer into Year 12 are placed on courses that are not suitable for their needs. As they are not given sufficiently personalised support to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge that they need to be successful, they subsequently drop out of school mid-year. The school is aware that the sixth form curriculum has gaps in its provision at levels 2 and 3 and does not fully meet the needs of all students, and is planning to review this.

The school is effectively addressing other key priorities arising from the last inspection, with the result that senior and subject leaders have a far better understanding of the features of good teaching and assessment. As yet these are not fully embedded across all subjects. In many lessons, teachers are not using the detailed and accurate information they have on their students' prior attainment and target grades to plan lesson activities and tasks in line with their needs. This is especially the case in English and mathematics. Questioning techniques do not always check and extend students' skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, there are considerable strengths in assessment across a few subjects, such as clear planning in line with students' needs, peer- and self-assessment techniques and sound feedback to students on how to improve. However, inspectors observed some inconsistency in teachers' detailed checking of students' learning and marking of their work. Therefore, in some cases, teachers and teaching assistants are not well informed on how to improve their students' progress beyond the expected levels.

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Tutoring is insufficiently structured across the school so that form tutors do not have a rigorous overview of each student's pastoral and academic progress. Nevertheless, improved tracking of students' progress by middle managers and subject teachers is coupled with effective support, where appropriate. Consequently, students feel valued and safe. They display courteous and respectful behaviour towards each other and towards adults, and are willing and keen learners. Attendance is high and punctuality good, as the majority of students are well motivated and enjoy school. Structured learning opportunities contribute to students' strong sense of moral and spiritual values as the students are prepared to consider others' points of view and reassess their own beliefs. The school's highly successful active citizenship course, including 'Reaching Rwanda', was profiled nationally as an example of good practice and has contributed to its outstanding community cohesion.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress and attainment across all subjects, and especially in English and mathematics, by August 2012, through:
 - greater checking and extending of all students' learning during lessons, with consistently detailed oral and written feedback on their work
 - more structured form tutoring, with careful monitoring of individual students' academic and pastoral progress
 - ensuring learning activities and tasks are consistently well suited to students and create challenge for them all, especially those of middle ability.
- Retain a greater proportion of sixth form students and accelerate their progress and attainment by August 2012, through:
 - more impartial information, advice and guidance in Key Stage 4 in line with student aspirations
 - a curriculum that better responds to the levels, needs and abilities of all students
 - personalised academic support for those students who do not have the required knowledge and skills to make a successful transition to A-level courses.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In the last three years, the pattern of attainment for Year 11 students has been broadly in line with the national averages and students have made the expected progress. A significantly high proportion of students successfully attained the higher grades in GCSE science in 2011.

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The school’s predictive data for its current Year 11 students are based on their GCSE assessed work to date, together with the impact of effective interventions for underachieving students. This indicates that there could be a considerable increase in the proportion of these students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2012. The sharper focus that school leaders now have on the attainment of middle ability students as a potentially underachieving group is showing signs of reducing the gap in attainment for this group, when compared with other groups in the school. Vulnerable students, including those with moderate learning difficulties and those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, receive good in-class support and make at least satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. The smaller numbers of Nepali students at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language are well supported in out-of-class sessions and make good progress. Students’ achievement overall is satisfactory.

In a large number of lessons observed by inspectors, students visibly enjoyed learning, were well motivated, responsive to well-structured tasks and took responsibility for their learning. When given the opportunities in some subjects, for instance in science, religious education, music and information and communication technology, they worked successfully as independent learners and made at least good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Extra-curricular and innovative learning opportunities contribute well to broadening students’ social, entrepreneurial and cultural horizons and to developing a strong sense of community. For instance, one student with excellent art skills, through commissioning her work in school, was enthusiastically raising funds for her trip to Rwanda to work with genocide victims.

Students participate well in a range of sports activities and they have a good awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle. Students’ literacy and computing skills are good and their numeracy skills are satisfactory. For instance, in English and French lessons, inspectors observed students with effective referencing skills, using a dictionary and thesaurus with ease. Lower ability students develop greater confidence through the Skills Challenge course. The quality of students’ work-related learning is good and students display the responsible attitudes and aptitudes they need to equip them for further education and employment.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

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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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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inconsistent assessment practice results in most students making broadly expected levels of progress, although there is considerable variation in quality between subjects. In a number of lessons, especially in science and active citizenship, learning activities and pace are planned carefully to take into account students' levels and abilities. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and good classroom management skills and use these to inspire learning highly effectively. Learning support assistants are deployed well, especially in mathematics, to support students with learning difficulties. In those lessons where teaching and assessment activities were well structured and challenged students in their learning, inspectors observed high levels of enjoyment and engagement, good and, sometimes excellent, progress, very often through collaborative activities and structured discussion. Nevertheless, in many lessons, especially in English and mathematics, teachers' planning of tasks, pace of learning and the setting of learning objectives do not take the full range of students' prior attainment into account. In some lesson activities, teachers do not check sufficiently the knowledge and skills students are acquiring before moving on to the next activity. There are good examples of assessment and marking but, across the curriculum, the quality of oral and written feedback on students' work, including marking, is too variable. Inconsistent use is made of learning objectives and success criteria to inform students how well they are learning.

Through the school's 14-19 partnerships with the local college and other providers, the school has extended its own range of good quality, popular courses for students in Years 10 and 11. These curriculum pathways enable students to successfully pursue health and social care, hair and beauty, leisure and tourism in school, whereas off-site, they can benefit from opportunities on engineering, business and administration courses. The school's specialist status in science has had a sound impact on raising achievement in GCSE examinations and in fostering links with local primary schools.

Sound transition arrangements from primary school, including a summer school for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensure Year 7 students make a good start to their education. Effective school-home liaison and contact with a range of services ensure timely and well-targeted support for students facing challenging circumstances and have resulted in the school raising students' attendance

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significantly. Parents are kept well informed through the school newsletters and receive regular reports on their children’s progress resulting from the six assessment points during the year.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 and his staff have worked purposefully on developing good capacity and greater stability in staffing and leadership capacity among core subject leaders. These developments are now beginning to transform the learning culture of the school. Delegated leadership and management and greater staff accountability are now firmly emerging. Greater emphasis is placed on the analysis of performance data by senior and middle managers to ensure support for underachieving students. However, the structures that exist for closer working between departments to share good and exemplary leadership practice are insufficiently formal. Self-evaluation at whole-school level is self-critical and departmental plans reflect the need to raise attainment. Nevertheless, the plans do not analyse sufficiently the learning and progress of individual students and groups of students as seen through internal lesson observations, work sampling or discussions with students.

The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by senior and middle leaders observed by inspectors was rigorous, although it is still developing. This has clearly contributed to raising the expectations of staff and a good start has been made in raising attainment in some subjects. However, the school’s internal lesson observations are not sufficiently focused on learning and whether all groups of students make the progress of which they are capable. Few formal strategies exist for the sharing of good teaching and assessment practice across subjects, which is an important explanation of the uneven quality of teaching across some subjects.

Support provided by the governors is satisfactory. As a result of recent appointments, the governing body is making good progress towards developing its full capacity. Governors are very committed to raising achievement in the school and have responded well to the recommendations of an external review. These identified greater involvement and links with subject departments and a more robust in-depth approach to self-evaluation. Safeguarding procedures are good with detailed recording and follow-through of procedures. These have resulted in well-developed quality assurance systems and risk assessments that take into account the views of parents, carers and students. The school’s detailed equalities plans demonstrate

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concerted actions that have successfully tackled poor attendance of specific groups and clear strategies for tackling underachievement through personalised interventions and curriculum. Community cohesion is outstanding as students demonstrate an exceptional understanding and awareness of their local and national communities within the global context.

Parents and carers can access the 'virtual learning platform' known as the Sandhurst School Digital Campus (SDC2) and gain information on their children's progress. Those interviewed by inspectors valued the school's communication with them and the positive responses made to their suggestions and concerns. The school has a strong track record of engaging its Nepali parents in the learning of their children and successfully gained the Inclusion Quality Mark as the school most successful at supporting students who have been excluded from other schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Outcomes for sixth form students in 2011 indicate that the majority of students make broadly satisfactory progress relative to their low starting points. Their attainment in AS examinations has been below the national averages for the last three years but in the last two years, has improved to within national averages at A level. Inspectors observed that the majority of students enjoy their lessons in a number of subjects, for example in psychology, history, travel and tourism and geography, and many develop their subject knowledge and skills well. In some subjects, they also benefit from the small group sizes and during lessons, value the greater personal attention from their teachers.

A small minority of students who choose to follow advanced courses do not have the

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necessary skills and knowledge for work at this level. The school, in keeping with its inclusive policy, is committed to retaining those students with low attainment in GCSE examinations. However, it is not providing them with sufficiently good information, advice and guidance on all the choices available. In addition, the school has failed to prioritise a curriculum that will meet their abilities and levels or to provide on-course support, where it is needed. Consequently, these students leave mid-year, or at the end of Year 12, as they are unable to cope with the demands of the A-level curriculum. However, the school’s data for current Year 12 students, along with discussions with groups of students, initiated by the new head of sixth form, show that planned induction prior to entry is improving students’ understanding of the demands of the course.

Pastoral support is strong in the sixth form and students report that they are well supported by their subject teachers, who review their personal learning targets and progress with them. Nevertheless, this process is mostly reliant on students seeking out support. The role of the form tutor in relation to academic and pastoral guidance is not used productively to identify those students who are at risk of underachieving and leaving. Progression to higher education, training or employment for those students who remain on A-level courses is satisfactory.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Of the one fifth of the school’s parents and carers who responded, the overwhelming majority are happy with the education received by their children. A few voiced concerns that their child was not making sufficient progress and that the school was not helping their child to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspection evidence shows that some groups of students are not making enough progress, but that this is being addressed by the school. Other than through the questionnaires, however, inspectors did not find further evidence to support parents’ and carers’ concerns regarding healthy lifestyles.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandhurst 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 inspector received 199 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1056 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	42	110	55	4	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	97	49	95	48	6	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	82	41	101	51	11	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	30	118	59	15	8	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	57	29	131	66	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	67	34	116	58	8	4	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	22	139	70	13	7	2	1
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)	78	39	101	51	5	3	2	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	69	35	113	57	11	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	34	111	56	6	3	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	61	31	114	57	7	4	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	77	39	103	52	10	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	91	46	97	49	4	2	2	1

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.

5 October 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Sandhurst School, Sandhurst GU47 0SD

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and were impressed by how polite and courteous you were, your good attitudes towards your learning and excellent attendance. We judged that your school, including the sixth form, is satisfactory.

Most of you enjoy your lessons, make satisfactory progress in your learning and attain broadly average standards in GCSE examinations that include English and mathematics. In some lessons, we observed well-planned tasks and activities that extended your learning, but in many lessons, planning was not sufficiently clear to help you to make good progress. However, if you are not making the progress you should, the school is providing you with good subject support and guidance outside lessons. A broad variety of vocational courses contribute to your good outcomes. Stimulating extra-curricular opportunities and an outstanding active citizenship course help you develop as responsible and caring citizens. The school provides you with good advice and guidance in Year 9 and for the majority of you in Year 11. This prepares you very well for the next stages in your learning and life. However, a minority of you in the sixth form do not always continue your studies into Year 13, as you are not given the most appropriate advice and guidance in line with your needs. Additionally, the school has not fully developed the right curriculum and support that will help you succeed in your aspirations and meet your needs.

To help the school improve further, we have asked senior leaders to do the following:

- improve your progress and attainment in GCSE examinations, through better checking of your learning in lessons and giving you more detailed feedback on your work; using your form tutor time more productively to help you reflect on your learning and ensuring that teachers always plan appropriate and challenging activities and tasks so that all of you fully achieve your potential
- ensure that there is a curriculum and support that meets the needs of students in the sixth form and that in Year 11 you receive the best guidance and advice to help you choose the most appropriate course to help you succeed.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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