

Sandridge School

Woodcock Hill, Sandridge, St Albans, AL4 9EB

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Many pupils are now making faster progress, but recent improvements have not been sustained over time in Key Stage 2. As a result, the standards pupils reach at the end of Year 6 are broadly average.
- Teaching has improved but it is not yet consistently good at Key Stage 2.
- In some lessons, activities are not organised well enough to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.
- Teachers' marking generally gives pupils good guidance on how to improve their work but pupils are not given enough time or opportunity in lessons to learn from their mistakes and correct them.
- Leaders do not rigorously check the impact of the use of small groups and teaching assistants on the achievement of less able pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn quickly and with great enthusiasm.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average at the end of Year 2.
- Much of the teaching is now good and some is outstanding.
- Pupils are friendly, confident and get on well with each other.
- Pupils work hard, behave well, feel safe and enjoy school.
- Leaders have eliminated inadequate teaching and inaccurate assessment and are rightly concentrating on further improving the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons of which seven were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at the work in pupils' books and heard pupils of different ages read.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils, representatives from the Governing Body, talked to a representative of the local authority and school staff.
- The inspector took account of 46 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as parents' views communicated orally and in writing.
- The inspector also took account of 16 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector examined documents including the school's data about the progress of pupils, planning and monitoring documents, reports from the local authority, behaviour and attendance records and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Nicola Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- Just under a third of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups. Some of these pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is a little below average.
- The proportion of the pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services, is a little below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- All the pupils are educated on site.
- Children begin in the Nursery at age 3 in the mornings only.
- Two new classrooms are currently being built to increase the size of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - teachers plan activities at the right level for pupils of all abilities in each class
 - pupils have regular opportunities in lessons to respond to teachers' marking and correct and improve their work
 - teachers have more opportunities to learn from the outstanding teaching already taking place in the school
- Raise standards across Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics by:
 - implementing all the improvements in teaching highlighted above
 - ensuring less able pupils receive better quality small group support so that they can improve their writing and number skills
- Improve the work of leaders and managers by ensuring they:
 - use the information gained through the school's tracking systems to quickly identify where achievement needs to improve in each subject
 - regularly check the effectiveness of the support for less able pupils provided by additional adults in small group activities

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress and most reach the early learning goals, with some exceeding them.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Year 2 test results show that pupils attain well in reading, writing and mathematics compared to other pupils nationally.
- Pupils do not make as much progress in Key Stage 2 as they should and reach only broadly average standards in English and mathematics. Standards are not higher because not all pupils make or exceed the expected gains between Year 2 and Year 6. This is partly due to some inadequate teaching in the past which school leaders have since eliminated but its impact remains and is holding some pupils back.
- In the past, unreliable assessments have hindered teachers' attempts to make sure that all pupils make good progress every year. The school now has a very thorough tracking system and makes sure that assessments are accurate and progress is reviewed regularly. Consequently, progress in Key Stage 2 is improving. For example, this year some older pupils have made twice the expected rate of progress since September.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are few in number but have a wide range of needs. The school provides extra specialist help for these pupils. As a result, they generally make progress in line with their classmates. However, some less able pupils, who do not receive work that fully meets their needs, continue to have difficulty in the core skills of calculation in mathematics and in the accurate use of spelling and punctuation in writing.
- Relatively few pupils are eligible for the pupil premium in each year group. Last year, the school spent the additional funding it received on extra tuition, training from a specialist teacher, software to support pupils' writing, individual counselling and a special group for younger pupils. Although eligible pupils made expected progress, they did not catch up with their classmates in reading and writing despite the extra support provided.
- This year the school is funding daily reading or mathematics support for individuals as well as ensuring they are included in after school clubs and individual activities. Class teachers have also been made aware of how they should promote these pupils' progress in class. As a result, most eligible pupils are now making faster progress and are now less than three terms behind their peers in English and mathematics.
- There are some differences between how well boys and girls achieve. Girls at the school tend to make better progress and achieve more highly in reading and writing than boys. However the topics chosen by teachers and the range of books available appeal equally to both boys and girls.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language generally make similar progress to their classmates. This is because they are provided with extra help if they are not familiar with English when they join the school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good enough for gains in pupils' achievement to be sustained over time. Although there is now much more good teaching, some learning time is wasted as activities planned for different pupils are not started quickly enough. On occasions, all pupils spend time listening to information they already know or alternatively take part in a shared activity which is too difficult for them.
 - Teachers do not always plan to spend enough time with different ability groups to make sure the tasks they set are at the right level. On occasions, pupils who find learning more difficult spend too much of their time working in small groups with additional adults, rather than with their class teachers.
 - Teachers do not always plan activities to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities in their classes effectively. Where teaching is consistently good or better, these activities are pitched at just the right level. For example, more able older pupils regularly work on more complex mathematics, such as understanding the difference between data which shows a connection between facts and data which does not. In some classes, however, the work is too difficult for some pupils and, here, progress slows.
 - Teachers mark pupils work regularly and thoughtfully, pointing out errors and things pupils need to do next. Sometimes they do not follow this up by giving pupils time to make improvements to their work or making sure that the errors are not repeated in the next piece of work that pupils do.
 - Teachers have good relationships with the pupils in their classes. They explain clearly what they expect pupils to learn in each lesson and expect pupils to do their best at all times. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and work hard during their lessons.
 - Teachers make good use of questions to probe pupils' understanding during lessons. They know the pupils in their small classes well. This means they are often able to ask particular pupils just the right question to help them to make quick progress or to clear up a misunderstanding.
 - Teachers use a range of techniques and resources to help pupils understand their lessons. Some teachers make very good use of the school's digital equipment to help learning come alive for their pupils. For example, adults in the Nursery class make extensive use of digital photographs and voice recorders to remind children of things they have discovered or to record what they have learnt about.
 - In the best lessons, teachers use a range of strategies which help pupils who are not fluent in English learn as well as their classmates. These include opportunities to talk formally before they have to write or providing a lot of practical experiences to introduce new topics. These strategies also help English speaking pupils who struggle with reading and writing.
 - Those who teach and support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well trained so that they understand the needs of the individual. As a result these pupils make progress in line with other pupils at the school.
 - Children have good opportunities to learn independently in their indoor classrooms in the Early Years Foundation Stage and can access their outdoor area in all weathers. However, they are not always given sufficient opportunities to work by themselves in the outdoor area by, for
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example, selecting their own equipment for a particular task.

- The teaching of early reading skills is improving. Last year fewer than half of the pupils in Year 1 could use their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to read unfamiliar words. A successful focus on phonics has meant that most pupils in the Reception class, Year 1 and 2 can now confidently blend sounds together to read unknown words and are beginning to apply this to their writing.
- Teachers are good at demonstrating how to blend sounds in small group sessions. They have also reorganised the school's reading books so that pupils can practise sounding out unknown words whilst enjoying the stories they have chosen. Struggling readers also have extra opportunities to read to adults.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in class and are keen to make sure they do their best. They respect their teachers and other adults and work happily with other pupils.
 - Pupils are friendly and develop good relationships with each other. This starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage where adults help the children to learn to work together well. For example, even the youngest children were observed offering to work together or to help each other with tricky tasks or activities.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers regularly introduce pupils to different moral values such as 'participation' and 'perseverance' which will help them do well at school and in life. These values are explained in assemblies and then teachers reinforce these well in their class activities over the week.
 - Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, including the use of language which makes others feel unwelcome. They learn to be tolerant of those different from themselves, including those who find mixing with others more difficult. They are aware that making fun of differences is wrong.
 - Pupils get along well with each other and feel safe. Pupils feel that behaviour is good and they are confident that any worries or concerns they have will be quickly sorted out. Some pupils said that a drama workshop at the school which showed them how to deal with bullying had been very helpful.
 - Attendance is broadly average. Most pupils are keen to come to school and arrive punctually. The school works hard with specialist agencies to improve the attendance of the few pupils whose attendance is not good enough.
 - The school works hard to develop positive relationships with parents. On-line questionnaires indicate that most parents who responded would recommend the school to other parents. A minority of parents feel that they are not kept well enough informed about their child's progress.
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The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher, teachers and governors are well aware of what the school needs to do to improve. Their plans for improvement set this out clearly with challenging targets to be met over this academic year. They have rightly made improving the quality of teaching a priority for the school.
 - Teachers are not yet using the school's tracking system as well as they should to quickly identify where achievement most needs to improve in the areas for which they are responsible. Similarly senior leaders have not extended their checks on teaching and progress to include the impact of additional small group activities.
 - Since her appointment in 2011, the headteacher has eliminated inadequate teaching. She has developed a very thorough system to check the quality of teaching and measure its impact on pupils' progress. This includes regular observations of lessons and meetings with teachers to discuss their pupils' learning and progress.
 - The proportion of good or better teaching has steadily improved this year because teachers have been given good quality guidance and support. The results of this drive can be seen in the faster progress most pupils have made this year.
 - Teachers responsible for different subjects and different key stages have also undertaken work to improve teaching and the progress pupils make. This has had a good impact in some areas. The teaching of early reading has improved and the indoor areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage have been reorganised to give children much greater independence.
 - The local authority has provided good support to the school. This has included help in improving the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as support in improving teaching and learning through observations and tracking the progress pupils make.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The Governing Body is effective and gives the school good support. Governors are intent on making sure that the school improves the rate of pupils' progress through improving the quality of teaching. They are well-trained and very well informed about how the school's performance compares with that of other schools. Consequently, they are well-placed to challenge leaders to demonstrate how they are accelerating progress for individual and different groups of pupils. They are fully aware of how effectively the quality of teaching is being linked to the management of performance and scrutinise this carefully to ensure value for money. They are also well informed about the impact of activities financed through additional pupil premium funding.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117148
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403306

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Pearcy
Headteacher	Cindy Impey
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2008
Telephone number	01727 850576
Fax number	01727 837333
Email address	head@sandridge.herts.sch.uk

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