

# Sandy Upper School

Engayne Avenue, Sandy, SG19 1BL

**Inspection dates** 13–14 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Standards have been well below average for the past two years and students do not make enough progress.
- Students' achievement is inadequate because not enough teaching is good or better.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve, and do not always set work at the right level.
- Achievement in both English and mathematics is inadequate. Students who find reading difficult receive ineffective support.
- Some groups of disabled students and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress.
- Attendance has been below average for the past three years and remains so this year. Some groups of students have consistently low levels of attendance that show no sign of improvement.
- Leaders, managers and the governing body have not done enough to tackle serious underachievement in recent years.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Not enough students make good progress and too many leave during their first year.
- The interim headteacher and acting head of school have left and the remaining leaders and managers do not have the capacity to sustain improvements.

### The school has the following strengths

- There is some good teaching, which ensures that students in some classes learn well.
- Students overwhelmingly feel safe in school and they say that bullying is rare. Most students behave appropriately, and they are polite and courteous.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, of which 13 were jointly observed with the interim headteacher, the acting head of school and other senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of students from all year groups. Other meetings were held with members of the governing body, including its vice chair, school staff, a group of teachers who lead subjects and senior leaders. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed 78 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and 35 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the school improvement plan, data on students' progress and samples of students' work.
- Inspectors listened to some students reading.

## Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### Information about this school

- Sandy Upper is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is a little above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. About a tenth of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- A below-average proportion of students are supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A small number of students are partly educated on courses on other sites, including a Key Stage 4 'Angling 4 Success' practical course and some sixth-form courses in another local school.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- An interim headteacher and an acting head of school were in post from 4 September 2012 to 15 February 2013.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
  - always insist on high standards of work and behaviour
  - plan lessons at the right level for all students, particularly disabled students and those who have special educational needs
  - use a greater variety of learning activities to inspire and motivate students to achieve high standards
  - regularly check students' understanding in lessons and adjust the work if it is too hard or too easy
  - mark students' work consistently and set clear targets for further improvement that are always followed up
  - give students regular opportunities in all subjects to check their own and each other's work.
- Improve achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - teachers have detailed information on students' achievement in reading, writing and speaking and listening, so they can match teaching accurately to individual students' skills and abilities in each of these areas
  - effective support is given to students who find reading difficult
  - all students have secure skills in basic numeracy, and these skills are systematically and regularly developed
  - disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive consistently good

support from all teachers and teaching assistants, both in lessons and when working individually or in small groups

- attendance improves, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and students supported through the pupil premium.

■ Improve leadership and management by:

- checking teaching rigorously to ensure it is consistently good or better in all lessons
- making sure that all teachers are fully trained to teach reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills in all subjects
- setting demanding but achievable targets for students' progress in reading and checking regularly that they have been met
- regularly holding the leaders of subjects and year groups to account for students' attainment, progress and attendance in their areas
- developing the leadership of the sixth form in holding teachers to account for their students' performance and tackling any underachievement
- ensuring that the subjects taught in the main school and in the sixth form fully meet students' needs and interests.

■ Improve governance by ensuring the governing body:

- holds leaders at all levels to account more rigorously for students' performance and the quality of teaching
  - makes sure that financial resources, including pupil premium funding, are managed effectively and that the impact of this funding is evaluated
  - commissions an external review of governance.
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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- The standards that students reach by the end of Year 11 are too low and have been for the past two years in many subjects, including mathematics and English. Achievement is beginning to improve but this has happened relatively recently as a result of heavy reliance on external support.
- In mathematics there is too little focus on basic numeracy skills. In English, teachers do not fully take into account students' levels of attainment in the key areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students who find reading difficult do not get adequate support and so overall achievement for these students is severely limited.
- Students supported through the pupil premium make inadequate progress. Standards reached by students known to be eligible for free school meals have declined and the gap between the average point scores of these students and others in all subjects, including mathematics and English, has been widening. The school has recently used some of its additional funding to appoint additional mathematics teachers to make class sizes smaller, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress. This is because teachers do not have consistently high expectations for what all students can achieve and do not always set work for this group of students at the right level of difficulty.
- Students who speak English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds typically make slightly better progress than other students, although this is not consistent across subjects and year groups.
- In some subjects and year groups, students' progress is improving. However, these improvements are not happening fast enough or consistently across all subjects and year groups. The off-site 'Angling 4 Success' course has led to improved achievement and better attendance.
- Students in the sixth form typically make the progress that is expected of them. However, this is held back because teachers do not have consistently high expectations of their capabilities. The course that sixth-form students study at another school meets their needs and helps them to make better progress.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Too many lessons do not meet the needs of individual students. They are given work that is too easy for some, or too hard for others. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not always high enough and this leads to some students becoming too passive and doing little work.
- Lessons sometimes lack variety and many teachers do not judge the pace of learning accurately. This results in students losing focus and consequently not making the progress of which they are capable. Some students make limited progress because they find reading difficult. The teaching does not adequately tackle this.

- Most students know their individual targets in most subjects. However, teachers' marking does not consistently identify what students need to do next to improve their work. This means marking has little impact on students' progress. Where short-term goals are set they are often not followed up so that students can demonstrate improvement. In some classes and in some subjects, marking is not carried out frequently enough.
- Students do not get regular and consistent opportunities to develop or deepen their understanding through checking their own work and that of their classmates. Teachers do not always check students' understanding so they can adjust the level of difficulty as the lesson moves on and so maximise progress.
- Inspectors observed some good teaching. For example, in an English lesson students in Year 9 made good progress because expectations were clear, work was demanding and matched closely to different needs and the pace of learning was brisk.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are inadequate

- Attendance is below average overall and has not improved over the past few years. The attendance of students who receive help through the pupil premium, and of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus, has been low for the past two years and shows no sign of improvement.
- The interim headteacher and acting head of school, supported by the whole staff, have worked successfully to improve behaviour. The majority of students in the school are polite, respectful and courteous. Their behaviour around school is good and most cooperate well with each other, as they usually do in lessons.
- Students agree that behaviour has improved, but they also say it is not always good and that they feel their lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs felt their lessons were disrupted frequently.
- Since the introduction of the new behaviour policy the number of times that students have had to be removed from lessons due to disruptive behaviour has reduced. Students, however, say they do not get rewarded enough for good work or behaviour and inspectors agree.
- Students are fully aware of issues relating to bullying and know about the various forms bullying can take. They similarly show a secure understanding of safety issues, including e-safety. Students told inspectors that bullying was rare, but any that did arise was dealt with quickly and successfully by the staff.
- Students' attitudes to learning are directly linked with the quality of teaching. When teaching is good, students work hard and show high levels of motivation and a determination to succeed. When teaching is not good enough, students become passive and lack focus.

### **The leadership and management** are inadequate

- Achievement has been too low for two years and during this time leaders and managers, including the governing body, have been ineffective in tackling the key weaknesses in the school. They have brought about some improvements in behaviour, teaching and achievement in some subjects and year groups, but this has been patchy. The attendance and achievement of

some groups of students have not improved during this time and significant underachievement remains.

- The interim headteacher and acting head of school have a clear understanding of the school's weaknesses, based on accurate and robust self-evaluation, and have led early improvements in teaching resulting from more accurate assessments of students' attainment. However, they left immediately after this inspection. Leaders and managers who remain have not developed sufficiently the ability to maintain the current improvements or tackle other important issues at the pace required. The departure of the temporary leaders means that the school does not currently have the capacity to continue along its path of improvement.
- The school is not permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The setting of targets for teachers to improve their teaching has been ineffective, although recent changes made by the interim headteacher have begun to improve this. The school has not adequately linked teachers' pay rises to the quality of their teaching.
- The quality of subject and year group leadership is variable and this is seen in the wide differences in students' achievement across subjects. Additionally, some groups of students achieve far less than others across all subjects. Leaders, including in the sixth form, are not held to account effectively enough for the performance of teachers or students. The school's failure to tackle these issues means that students do not all have an equal opportunity to gain success from their time at the school.
- The teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills across all subjects has not been led well enough. Consequently, students do not consolidate or develop these skills as well as they should.
- Relevant leaders and managers have not addressed the underachievement of students who need extra help with their learning. They have not ensured that all teachers have the skills they need to plan activities that help these students make good progress.
- The subjects that students study are made more interesting by educational trips and visits, and a range of additional clubs and activities. However, the choice of subjects offered in Key Stage 4 does not meet the needs of many students and this is reflected in their underachievement. In the sixth form, a similar picture means that too many students choose to leave during or at the end of their first year.
- Leaders have failed to take effective action to tackle the low attendance of some groups of students.
- The school does not enter students early for examinations in Key Stage 4 and students are taught courses for the full amount of time in Years 10 and 11.
- The local authority has provided an appropriately high level of support for the school, but this has failed to ensure the necessary improvements have been made to achievement. Recent support for the governing body and the deployment of the two temporary leaders have brought about early signs of improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

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- The governing body is aware of the main strengths of the school and the key areas for improvement. However, this is a recent development and governors have not adequately held the school to account for students' achievement or the quality of teaching. The governing body does not ensure that financial resources are managed effectively, including the additional funding through the pupil premium. It has not ensured that spending of the pupil premium funding represents good value for money. Governors are now aware of how targets are set for teachers and how these relate to decisions about pay increases. However, this is also a recent development. The governing body makes sure that the school fulfils its responsibilities regarding safeguarding; all staff have been checked as required and are trained appropriately to keep students safe and free from harm.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109669
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401068

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	792
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	165
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Banks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Richardson (acting head of school)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 March 2010
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