

Sandridge School

Woodcock Hill, Sandridge, St Albans, AL4 9EB

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Actions taken by leaders, including governors, have led to rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils now make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good. Staff expect pupils to do well and they make sure tasks are well matched to the range of ability in the class.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. Pupils value their small school community where they get on well together.
- Leaders use the information they gather on pupils' progress very well to identify those pupils in danger of falling behind.
- Leaders make sure that any extra help pupils receive is effective in raising achievement quickly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in reading are not as high as they are in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders do not promote a consistent approach to the teaching of reading or make sure pupils are inspired to read.
- Teachers do not make sure that pupils use their language skills in their reading.
- Not all subject leaders fully understand the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The school's aims are not always transmitted successfully to parents.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, of which five were observed jointly with the headteacher, and an assembly. In all, nine members of staff were seen teaching.
- The inspector looked at samples of work from all age groups and across a range of subjects, and spoke to pupils during lessons about their work.
- The inspector met a group of pupils, members of the governing body, school leaders and staff. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 42 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and analysed responses from 14 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at progress and attendance information, improvement plans, evidence of the monitoring of teaching, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery class, which children attend in the mornings, and a Reception class.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal times during the school year.
- The school has experienced staff and leadership changes since the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher left at the end of the Spring term 2013. A new appointment has not yet been made.
- The school provides a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading by making sure that:
 - staff adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of reading and promote the enjoyment of reading throughout the school
 - pupils of all ages and abilities use their learning about letters and sounds (phonics) and language skills to help them with their reading.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring all subject leaders fully understand the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects
 - establishing a wider range of ways to keep parents informed about the school's work so they fully understand the school's aims and the effect on their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery and the Reception class with abilities that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in acquiring basic skills and in their personal development. They are well prepared for their learning in Year 1. In 2013, an above-average proportion of children reached the levels expected for their age.
- The school's information on pupils' progress and work in books show that pupils in all classes are now making good progress. Pupils in Year 2 are on track to do better than in 2013 when standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were average. Not all of these pupils reached their full potential in 2013, especially in writing, due to a period of underachievement. The overall standards attained by the end of the key stage were affected by some pupils joining midway through Year 2, with insufficient time to catch up.
- Since the previous inspection, progress in Key Stage 2 has improved and is now good. Pupils in Year 6 reach above-average standards in English and mathematics. An above-average proportion of more-able pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. More-able pupils achieve well because work is well matched to their abilities and they are encouraged to aim high.
- Pupils write extensively. They take pride in their efforts and like the challenge of presenting work neatly. As pupils move through the school, writing becomes more complex and varied, often based upon a real-life situation or story. For example, pupils in Year 6 wrote interesting versions of the story *Treasure Island* to demonstrate their understanding of character, setting and figurative language.
- In mathematics, pupils use their skills well in meaningful activities. They understand number concepts well. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 4 worked out how many tents would accommodate varying numbers of Roman soldiers. Pupils worked out their answers in various ways. They recognised if answers were incorrect and worked together to reach a solution.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they receive help that is precisely matched to their needs. They make small steps towards their individual targets and are proud of their achievements.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to support individual pupils. As a result, pupils are making accelerated progress and previous gaps in performance are closing strongly. Because of the small numbers involved, it is not possible to comment on these pupils' relative attainment in 2013 without identifying individual pupils.
- Pupils do well in acquiring a range of skills. In science, they collect and classify information, record and analyse results and develop scientific language. They use globes and maps in local and international studies and a range of ways to identify key people and events in history. Pupils excel at playing instruments and singing in the choir.
- The school's information shows that pupils are now making good progress in reading. This is an improvement from 2013 when not all pupils made enough progress. Pupils say they enjoy reading for various purposes. However, standards remain just below those in writing and mathematics. Although pupils learn about phonics, punctuation and grammar, they do not use the skills they have learnt sufficiently in their reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have united staff in a common sense of purpose. As a result, teaching has improved rapidly and is now good. Staff consistently create a strong climate for learning where pupils want to do well.
- Staff transmit high expectations of learning and behaviour very well to pupils. Tasks are well matched to the range of ability in the class and pupils work hard in lessons. Teachers push the most able pupils to reach their full potential by giving them work that has just the right level of challenge. Staff make sure pupils know how well they are doing and what they are working towards. They question well to check understanding and pay full attention to pupils' contributions. They give pupils time to discuss their ideas and use their skills.
- Good teaching in the Nursery and in the Reception class provides a range of interesting tasks that motivate children to learn and inspire their curiosity and independence. During the inspection, the theme of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' was used very well as a basis for reading, writing and mathematical activities. Staff focus strongly on helping children to identify what they are good at and what they will learn next.
- Teachers are adept at motivating the pupils to want to learn. They link subjects in topic work and use resources well to make tasks interesting. For example, during the inspection, good teaching in an English lesson in Year 3 involved the use of an animated film clip as a starting point for discussion and writing. As a result, pupils used words such as 'fearless', 'daring' and 'brave' to describe the main character. Staff equip pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 with the resources and skills they need to do well.
- Teaching assistants contribute strongly to learning. They work with pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They help those who find it difficult to behave well to improve and to take part in activities successfully. They are careful that pupils do not become over-reliant on support but enable them to develop confidence in their own abilities.
- Staff teach reading regularly and some really capture pupils' enthusiasm for stories and authors. However, the approach is not consistent and a zest for reading is not promoted sufficiently well throughout the school. Some pupils say that the choice of books in the library is not interesting enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they like the way they are taught and enjoy developing their skills. One pupil said, 'I like the teachers because they make you learn in a fun way.' From the time they start school, children's positive attitudes contribute to the good progress they make. Pupils value the extra help they get and participate happily in extra sessions to help them to improve.
- The behaviour of pupils is good and contributes strongly to the school's smooth running. Pupils are attentive and interested in others during assembly. They respond well to a range of staff in the breakfast club, during lessons and at playtimes. Pupils show tolerance towards those who find it difficult to behave well and recognise how the school helps these pupils to improve.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe because the school looks after them and they know who to speak to if they have a problem. They speak

proudly of their own ability to sort out any minor issues and say they feel they are reliable. Pupils understand different forms of bullying. They say it is not a problem in their school but if anything does happen it is quickly sorted out and they are helped to understand how to deal with any issues. The school's logs show that incidents are rare but any that do occur are thoroughly recorded and followed up.

- Pupils are happy to play their part in their small school community. They get on well together and value their friendships. They make decisions in the school council and enjoy helping younger pupils. Pupils strive to be 'Star Writers' and achieve awards for their efforts. They run the school radio station and help in the library.
- Attendance is average. It is on an upward trend because the school is successfully helping parents to understand how poor attendance affects their children's learning. Pupils enjoy gaining merit for good attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is clear about how well the school is doing and what she wants it to achieve. She has high expectations of staff and pupils. She heads a strong leadership team and dedicated staff, who work together well to meet the school's aims. Changes in staff have not hindered the school's drive to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- Key to the school's success is the training and support given to staff to help them to do their jobs well. A very positive response from the questionnaires completed by staff indicates that they feel valued and included in the school's aims. Their performance is checked regularly and clear targets are set to help them to improve.
- Good support from the local authority has helped to develop senior leadership skills and make sure the school is on track to make rapid improvement. While some subject leaders monitor their subjects effectively, not all have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Leaders make sure that activities engage pupils and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Trips, visitors and clubs enhance learning. The primary school sport funding is used to develop staff expertise and improve pupils' skills. The addition of boxing promotes physical activity and builds pupils' confidence. Partnerships with others provide facilities which the school alone cannot provide and help to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Thorough analysis of how well pupils are doing results in prompt extra help for pupils, including those for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding, to catch up. As a result, any gaps in performance are closing rapidly. Pupils who join the school mid-way through the year are tracked closely from the time they start. The school is committed to equality of opportunity, and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Good leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that staff check children's progress frequently and make sure all are doing well. Evidence of children's work is collected in attractive 'Learning Journals' which are shared with parents. There are good arrangements for children starting school.
- The well-run breakfast club provides pupils with a sociable start to the school day and is a valuable facility for parents. There are suitable lines of communication and daily links with

parents. However, the school is not always successful in transmitting its aims to all parents so they fully understand the work of the school and the positive effect it has on their children's learning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have seen the school through a period of changes in staff and governors successfully. They make sure that new governors and staff receive suitable training. They know how well the school is doing because they are fully involved in development planning. Governors' visits to the school link closely to identified priorities. Governors recognise how teaching and pupils' achievement have improved and that they are now good. They understand the link between good teaching and good achievement and how this relates to teachers' pay. They review the headteacher's performance. Governors check regularly the information on how well pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium, are doing and ask pertinent questions if pupils are not doing well enough. Governors make sure that finances are spent wisely and have a positive effect on pupils' learning. For example, recent spending on resources to improve boys' attainment in reading is raising standards and leading to greater enjoyment. The governing body carries out its duties effectively and ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	442097

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Bowron
Headteacher	Cindy Impey
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2013
Telephone number	01727 850576
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