

Sandhurst Primary School

Rye Road, Sandhurst, Cranbrook, Kent TN18 5JE

Inspection dates

19–20 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Through a turbulent period, the overall effectiveness of this school declined.
- Leaders have not secured consistently good teaching or outcomes for current pupils across the school. Over time, leaders' monitoring of teaching has not been rigorous enough to have secured a more substantial improvement.
- School leaders, governors and the local authority have overestimated the extent of the improvements made in recent years.
- The current leadership of the school is by an interim arrangement. At the time of the inspection, it had been in place for less than seven weeks.
- In their drive to raise standards, leaders have focused heavily on English and mathematics at the expense of other subjects.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Teachers do not know and use pupils' starting points and existing capabilities well enough to challenge them to do better.
- Although there are encouraging signs that the new behaviour policy is working well, leaders recognise that they still have to spend too much time managing the behaviour of a few pupils.
- Progress for disadvantaged pupils and the most able is too variable. Very few disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their most-able peers.
- When writing freely, pupils make frequent grammar, punctuation and spelling errors and their handwriting is often untidy. Similarly, in mathematics, opportunities for pupils to problem-solve or develop their reasoning skills are inconsistent across classes.

The school has the following strengths

- This school is moving in the right direction. The quality of teaching and outcomes in English and mathematics are improving.
- The staff team is positive about the potential benefits of stronger links with an outstanding school and national leader of education.
- After a period of considerable change, the governing body is improving well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading.
- Strong leadership of the early years has ensured that this is a significant strength of the school.
- Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the difference the new behaviour policy is already making.
- Pupils feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good, by:
 - making sure that teachers use accurate information about what pupils already know and can do to promote strong progress, including for most-able pupils
 - raising expectations across all subjects, including for most-able pupils
 - making sure that teachers share and make effective use of precise information about pupils' capabilities when pupils change classes so that no time is wasted.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management, by:
 - securing sustainable leadership at different levels that makes the necessary improvements in a timely way
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding contributes well to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils that are also most-able, or potentially most-able, so that they do similarly well as their most-able peers nationally
 - increasing the rigour of the monitoring of teaching and learning to focus more sharply on the progress of different groups to identify more precisely where improvement is needed
 - reinforcing the capacity of the governing body to hold school leaders stringently to account and ensure that all leaders have an accurate and robust view of the school's effectiveness.
- Make sure that the curriculum is strong across a wide range of subjects and applied consistently well across classes, including:
 - ensuring that pupils' knowledge and skills in science build progressively
 - improving the quality of pupils' grammar, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation across all of their work
 - making sure that opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics skills to reason and solve problems are well developed and regular across all classes.
- Sustain recent actions to improve behaviour so that it is consistently good or better, reducing the time that leaders have to spend managing disruptive behaviour.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not secured consistently good outcomes for pupils across a wide range of subjects. The quality of teaching for current pupils is too variable.
- The curriculum is not consistently strong enough across different subjects. Teaching in science does not build systematically across the school and opportunities for learning across the full range of subjects are not consistently good enough.
- The current headship arrangements for the school are on an interim basis and very recent. The existing leadership team formed very recently, so has not had time to demonstrate substantial or sustained impact on improving pupils' outcomes.
- While the school is improving, leaders have an unrealistically positive picture of how far they have come. Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to have pinpointed weaknesses or secured the necessary improvement. It does not focus sharply enough on how well teaching promotes the learning of different groups of pupils, such as the most able.
- Over time, leaders have secured some important strengths and improvements. Strong leadership of the early years provision has ensured that children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. Attendance levels have improved well. There are early signs that more recent changes to the behaviour policy are having a positive impact. These changes have been received overwhelmingly positively by pupils and parents.
- Work in pupils' books from last year shows evidence of the improving teaching and curriculum in English and mathematics. For example, there are increasing opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills in mathematics or to write for extended periods for a range of purposes.
- Following a turbulent period with changes of teaching staff, the current team of teachers is committed and were all teaching at the school last year. Those new to the profession feel well supported and consequently are able to hone their skills.
- Teachers and leaders are positive about the potential benefits of working more closely with a national leader of education and others from an outstanding school, and have already very recently worked together to check teachers' assessments of pupils' work.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities including cookery, art, football, musical theatre and choir. This is a strength of the school's curriculum offer.
- Leaders have made sure that their use of additional sports funding can have a lasting impact. They have ensured that both pupils and teachers have benefited from the teaching, coaching and modelling of a physical education specialist. In a lesson taken by the class teacher under the watchful eye and guidance of the specialist, pupils were active and focused as they practised a variety of passing and shooting skills.
- The local authority has not provided enough challenge to school leaders to demonstrate that improvements are consistently strong enough right across the school. Consequently, they have fuelled the overly optimistic belief of leaders and governors that the school is now good. That said, they have rightly provided a greater level of

leadership support than would usually be the case, which has helped to get the school back on the right track.

- The early years adviser from the local authority has conducted regular supportive and constructive visits. Her advice and guidance has had a demonstrable and positive impact on the quality of provision and practice, especially in the outdoor learning environment.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has been through a number of significant changes since the previous inspection, including three changes to the chair of the full governing body in quick succession. Through this period, governors have not challenged leaders stringently enough to secure a good-quality education for pupils.
- The governing body focuses too much on pupils attaining typically expected levels. They have not robustly challenged leaders to secure consistently good progress from pupils' different starting points, including the most able.
- Current governors bring a broad range of skills, knowledge and experience. They are committed to the school and passionate about driving forward rapid and sustained school improvement. They believe, with good reason, that the mind-set is correct to strike the right balance between challenge and support, but are realistic about their relative lack of experience.
- Governors embrace training opportunities to develop their effectiveness. Minutes of meetings show that governors already ask appropriately challenging questions and pursue pertinent lines of enquiry. Governors recognise the importance of their strategic role, and are determined and committed to securing sustainable leadership for the school.
- Governors have stringently pursued actions necessary to significantly reduce the amount of school missed as a result of the absence of particular pupils.
- The governing body has mechanisms in place for checking the impact of pupil premium spending. They recognise that in the successful drive to ensure disadvantaged pupils reach age-related expectations, they have not previously focused sharply enough on improving outcomes for most-able disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All checks on adults' suitability are made and recorded on the single central register.
- Staff have a secure knowledge of the school's safeguarding policies and protocols. They use the effective systems for recording and sharing concerns and any action taken as a result. Adults are diligent in recording and acting on their concerns.
- Leaders seek advice from other professionals where necessary and act on this advice, sharing information appropriately in order to protect children.
- Governors ensure that they keep abreast of the latest safeguarding legislation and guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable between subjects and classes across key stages 1 and 2. Teachers' expectations are not high enough to ensure consistently good outcomes, especially for most-able pupils. For example, they do not insist that pupils use the grammar and punctuation that they learn in dedicated sessions when writing freely.
- Teachers do not use information well enough about what pupils already know and can do to secure better progress. The sharing of information about pupils' capabilities when they move up a class is not precise enough, so valuable time is lost.
- The quality and frequency of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics skills remain too variable from class to class. Consequently, most-able pupils in particular are not challenged to deepen their understanding. Evident improvements in this area over the last year are more advanced in the Years 5 and 6 class, where pupils now routinely use what they have learned to reason and problem-solve.
- Despite remaining weaknesses, the quality of teaching in English and mathematics is improving, showing the impact of leaders' focus in this area. Grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are explicitly taught and pupils successfully complete these tasks. Younger pupils were seen joining in enthusiastically with a lively lesson about commas, using actions to help them to remember where to place the punctuation.
- Mathematics teaching supports pupils well to develop their calculation skills and improve their rapid recall of times tables.
- Teachers' questioning is effective, for example prompting pupils to debate the different mental calculation strategies they could use, or to think about the similarities and difference between shapes.
- Teaching assistants are purposeful and well deployed. Their support enables pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make similar progress as their peers. The nature of the support varies according to pupils' particular needs. For example, teaching assistants were observed checking pupils' understanding and starting them off on a task before retreating to allow for independence. More focused support was also seen, sustaining the momentum of individuals' work in order for them to achieve more.
- The staff team has worked hard and successfully to create an attractive and stimulating environment that is positive and conducive to learning. Lessons are engaging and pupils mostly stay on task.
- Teaching is particularly strong in the early years. Teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1 is systematic, giving pupils a secure grounding with their phonics skills.
- Homework supports learning in school well and pupils take a pride in the work they complete with their families at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- There are weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development because the richness and variety of opportunities in subjects across the curriculum are too inconsistent.
- While most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning through their engagement in lessons, this is less evident in the pride they take in their work. Pupils' application of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling and the quality of their handwriting and presentation varies considerably.
- Pastorally, this is a nurturing and caring school. The overwhelming view from parents, with good reason, was that the school has a friendly, nurturing community feel.
- Pupils feel safe. The newly trained e-safety ambassadors are eager to begin teaching other pupils the finer points that they have learned about staying safe online.
- Pupils and parents report that bullying is rare. Pupils know who to go to if they have a problem and are confident that adults will listen and resolve any issues. A few parents expressed doubts about whether concerns they raise are dealt with properly. School records indicate that concerns are taken seriously, addressed and documented.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Where lessons are not sufficiently interesting, challenging or meeting pupils' needs well enough, a few switch off or stop working, which slows their progress. Pupils report that in some classes the behaviour of others still disrupts their lessons reasonably often.
- Fixed-term exclusions have been high in recent years. The interim executive headteacher is determined to keep pupils in school but not allow them to disrupt learning for others. However, while there have been no fixed-term exclusions so far this year, leaders frankly admit that they still have to spend too much time managing the challenging behaviour of a few.
- Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the new behaviour system, saying that it is already making a real difference. Pupils report that it is consistently applied and they and their parents feel genuinely proud when their positive conduct and behaviour is recognised. Leaders recognise that it is still early days and that this positive impact must be sustained and built on.
- Most pupils engage and behave well in lessons. They understand the difference between right and wrong and mostly work and play in harmony, reflecting their positive social and moral development. Pupils that can exhibit particularly challenging behaviour were seen successfully included in lessons, supported effectively to achieve as well as their peers.
- Pupils attend regularly. Improvements have brought overall figures in line with national averages. There have been significant reductions in the amount of school missed by

pupils that have previously been frequently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Current pupils do not make consistently strong progress across a wide range of subjects. Progress for current pupils is too variable, including in writing, mathematics and science. Pupils make grammar, punctuation and spelling errors too frequently in their writing across subjects. Progress is not consistently good in maths because opportunities to use and apply, problem-solve and reason are too inconsistent.
- Most-able and potentially most-able pupils are not sufficiently well challenged to achieve the best possible outcomes. Over time, very few disadvantaged pupils have reached the higher levels and currently very few are identified among the most able pupils.
- Pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of education, having typically met age-relative expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, they are not better prepared for their secondary experience because they are not given a sufficiently strong grounding in other subjects such as science or a foreign language.
- Pupils make good progress learning to read. Reading has a high profile in the school. Both boys and girls and both most-able and lower-ability pupils have positive attitudes to reading and realise its importance to their future lives. Provisional 2016 results show that progress was above average for recent Year 6 leavers.
- Pupils use their phonics skills well to tackle unfamiliar words when reading, but do not use them so successfully to spell when writing. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved well over time.
- Provisional results for 2016 and current work in books indicates that progress in mathematics has improved and is now broadly average overall. Both boys and girls engage well in mathematics lessons, answering questions in class with confidence and explaining their reasoning to their peers.
- Numbers of disadvantaged pupils are low overall and exceptionally low in particular cohorts. Like other pupils in school, currently their progress is inconsistent overall. However, in recent years, by the time they have left, pupils have often made similar or better progress than others nationally and differences in the proportion reaching the expected levels in reading and writing have diminished well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress as their peers overall, sometimes making accelerated progress to catch up through specific targeted interventions.

Early years provision

Good

- Children settle extremely well in this safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Consequently, they quickly start to make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Their positive behaviour and engagement demonstrates that they feel safe and secure.

- The high expectations of the early years leader and her analytical and reflective approach are readily evident in the strong quality of the provision.
- Children have rapidly got used to the routines and already engage attentively in more formal teaching sessions. They enjoyed the challenge of working out what would be 'one more than' the number of giant pine cones (beyond 10) without having to count them all up again.
- When choosing their own activities, children are keen to explore the rich, vibrant and exciting outdoor area. Adults encourage children to try new things and most are keen to have a go. The teacher's effective questions prompt children to investigate and solve their own problems, for example making magic potions.
- The range of possible activities is broad and varied, including plentiful exciting ways to do literacy and mathematics. The role play 'animal rescue centre' included adoption forms for children to fill in. While in the outdoor area, number recognition and counting were reinforced through a numbered bucket shooting range, with water jets fired from plastic syringes. The teacher skilfully questioned and intervened with a number line to identify and tackle misconceptions.
- Children make a strong start learning their phonics. They confidently remember what they have already learned. There are good opportunities in taught sessions to use phonics to build words, with the most able challenged to change letters within the word to make a new word, for example, changing 'shop' to 'ship'.
- Children begin with a range of starting points, but the school's baseline assessment shows that most were operating at broadly age-appropriate levels this year when they started. Detailed planning takes good account of children's starting points. The teacher uses her strong knowledge of individual children to adjust the level of challenge in her questions and prompts, including to stretch the most able.
- Disadvantaged children begin the same conferencing system used further up the school. Rigorous assessment, for example in phonics, means that any differences in ability to learn and recall sounds are rapidly identified so that additional support can be provided without delay.
- Over time, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development, meaning they are ready for Year 1, has been in line with or above national figures. Disadvantaged children have done similarly well as others nationally.
- Early years staff seek advice from other professionals where necessary, including speech and language therapists, specialist teachers, and the educational psychologist. Recommendations are followed and monitored closely to check what difference they make.
- The team use a wide range of methods for fostering effective and constructive relationships with parents. This includes an 'open door policy' after school, use of the electronic class communication system, stay and play sessions, weekly updates and contact diaries.
- Typical of the early years leader's lack of complacency, she is rightly determined this year to ensure that even more most-able children exceed expectations at the end of the year, particularly in writing.

School details

Unique reference number	118282
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002788

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Fisher
Headteacher	Lindsay Roberts (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Telephone number	01580 850288
Website	www.sandhurst.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@sandhurst.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average. The numbers eligible in some year groups are exceptionally low.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are identified to receive additional support from the school for special educational needs. A slightly above-average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- The school is currently led by an interim executive headteacher for three days per week. She is a national leader of education and also currently the headteacher of a nearby outstanding school. On the remaining two days, the school is led by the assistant headteacher. This interim arrangement began at the start of the term, less than seven weeks before the inspection.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- The on-site nursery is registered separately and did not form part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector made 13 visits to lessons across all classes. The interim executive headteacher accompanied him for all of these observations.
- While in class, the inspector observed the teaching and learning that was taking place, spoke with pupils and heard some of them read and looked at the work in their books.
- The inspector carried out further scrutiny of the work in pupils' current books alongside the interim executive headteacher and assistant headteacher. He also sampled pupils' books from the previous academic year from the range provided by leaders.
- The inspector held meetings with teachers, leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. He also spoke informally with parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the day.
- The inspector analysed 23 responses to the online survey, Parent View, 15 electronic questionnaire responses from pupils and seven from staff. He took account of all of the written comments added to these, alongside other inspection evidence.
- The inspector observed the school's work throughout the day and checked a range of the school's documentation and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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