

Sandhills Community Primary School

Terrett Avenue, Sandhills, Oxford OX3 8FN

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Standards are too low. Too few pupils, including the disadvantaged, are working within the standards expected for their age in reading, writing or mathematics.
- In recent years, school leaders, including governors, have not done enough to check on the progress of pupils. As a result, standards have deteriorated and the school's effectiveness has waned.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are underachieving, particularly in writing.
- The skills and knowledge of middle leaders are underdeveloped. They do not have sufficient impact on improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils are not prepared sufficiently well for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching over time is inadequate. Too many pupils underachieve in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys achieve less well than girls in all subjects.
- Currently, the quality of teaching is highly variable and in some cases is lacklustre. Pupils' experience of, and engagement in, the wider curriculum is highly variable.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is too variable. Not all parents and carers are well informed about how well their children are learning.
- Attendance is too low and persistent absence is too high, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The local authority has not supported school leaders with sufficient rigour or urgency. As a result, leaders until very recently have worked in isolation.

The school has the following strengths

- The relatively new headteacher is identifying the right areas for improvement and has made a positive start at tackling the school's deficiencies.
- Consequently, safeguarding procedures are now effective.
- Positive relationships and higher expectations of pupils' behaviour are promoting pupils' personal development well.
- In 2017, standards rose at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. This year, children in the early years are also making better progress due to improvements in teaching.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management and governance by making sure that:
 - the roles of subject and phase leaders develop, including in the early years and those with responsibility for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that leaders have a greater influence on improving outcomes for pupils
 - the quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored, so staff are held more firmly to account
 - leaders make appropriate use of pupil premium funding to rapidly improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are better informed of how well their child is progressing
 - the school's finances are kept under watchful review and evaluated for value for money
 - pupils have access to and benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum
 - pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, attend school regularly
 - local authority support is targeted to where it is needed most.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, including in the early years, so that all pupils, including boys, the disadvantaged and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress in all aspects of learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving in reading, writing and mathematics
 - teaching deepens pupils' understanding, including for the most able pupils, so that they achieve and exceed the standards of which they are capable
 - teachers' planning caters well for all pupils of all abilities, and lessons are pitched to take account of pupils' starting points
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively so they make a positive difference to pupils' learning
 - pupils are well prepared for the challenges of the next stage of their education
 - teachers plan tasks that appeal to pupils and develop pupils' thirst for learning.

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.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Standards have deteriorated considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement has declined significantly and for the last two years has fallen below the government's minimum expectations at the end of key stage 2. Standards are too low.
- Following the appointment of the new headteacher, leaders have established a clearer line of sight, determining what is needed in order to restore the high standards seen at the previous inspection. The headteacher, supported by other senior staff, has instigated a number of well-considered changes to improve the school's effectiveness. Improvements to safeguarding arrangements, a restructuring of staffing, a rise in standards in key stage 1 in 2017, clearer expectations of pupils' behaviour and an upturn in pupils' attendance all indicate that, despite the current position, leaders have the capacity to arrest the decline and improve the school.
- At the beginning of this academic year, leaders implemented a thorough and more robust assessment system. Although information is accurate and gathered regularly, teachers are not yet fully conversant with what the information means. The rate of progress that pupils are expected to make is not fully understood by staff. Leaders have rightly made further information available but it is too soon to see any noteworthy impact on raising standards.
- Leaders do not know how well pupils are learning in the wider curriculum. There is insufficient monitoring or evaluation of standards in subjects such as science. In some year groups, pupils are not covering topics in sufficient depth or in line with leaders' expectations. Pupils' books show sporadic coverage of units of work including in science, history and religious education. Standards in many subjects are too low and not all pupils are receiving their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Over time, leaders have not apportioned additional funding with suitable precision. In addition, checks on how effective actions have not been systematic enough. Too little has been done to help disadvantaged pupils catch up with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged, and most able disadvantaged, pupils are underachieving across the school. However, leaders have taken more appropriate action this academic year, appointing a pupil premium champion, implementing a suitable action plan and allocating funding better than in the past. Nevertheless, greater urgency is required and a pupil premium review is recommended in order to accelerate progress.
- Although there is evidence that some teaching is improving, leaders' monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough and takes too little account of how well pupils are learning, both in lessons and over a longer period of time. Subject leaders and other leaders, including those responsible for the early years and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, do not contribute to this work strongly enough. This is because they have not developed the skills needed to accurately monitor and evaluate progress in their subject or area of responsibility. Senior leaders are at a very early stage of reviewing this aspect, providing introductory training and positioning staff more appropriately in order to take greater responsibility.
- The school's funding has not been managed well. Historically, the school has not

ensured that it achieves value for money. In recent times, the headteacher has taken the initiative and insisted that funding is allocated more appropriately. Following an appropriate staffing restructure, some staff, including the school's SEN coordinators, have taken on other responsibilities, including that of class teaching,

- The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is ineffective. Not all pupils have an up-to-date individual support plan, as is required. Furthermore, slippage in sharing information with parents has contributed to uncertainty and weak practice. Parents feel unfamiliar with how well their children are progressing. School information shows that some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not making the progress they are capable of.
- At the end of the previous academic year, the local authority conducted a helpful review confirming the headteacher's concerns about weaknesses in the school's effectiveness. However, despite this, local authority representatives were too slow to allocate strengthened support, allowing the school to languish. Officers have not acted promptly enough to support leaders in reversing the school's decline.
- Some recent support from the local authority to bolster the teaching of English and mathematics has been well received by staff. However, this is at an early stage so it is too soon to ascertain if it is making a difference to accelerating pupils' progress in these subjects.
- Some parents are rightly confident that the school is turning a corner under new leadership arrangements. One commented, 'The new headteacher seems to be taking the school in the right direction', while another noted, 'With the new headteacher there has been a new sense of what the school and children can achieve.' Parents are suitably assured that leaders are demonstrating the capacity to improve the school.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has not tackled the school's underperformance. Governors have too little understanding of how well the school is doing in comparison to others or how well pupils are learning. They do not hold the school to account sufficiently well and in the past have taken too little responsibility for finding out things for themselves.
- The school's finances have not been managed well. Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively, nor monitored other funding such as that invested in staffing or SEN to ascertain value for money. Governors have not reviewed the school's spending with sufficient rigour or shrewdness.
- In recent times, several new governors have been appointed. The governing body has grasped this fresh start to reorganise its committee structures appropriately. This year, governors have intensified their support by beginning to develop a firmer presence through their more regular visits. The governing body is beginning to support the headteacher more strongly, for example in the school's recent revamp of its safeguarding processes. This means that responsible stakeholders are starting to become better informed and, consequently, starting to influence, more credibly, much-needed change.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher rightly prioritised reviewing all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures in her first few months in post. All staff have now received the appropriate pre-employment checks and training. Leaders and governors have assured themselves that all are safe to work with children. The extent of work in this aspect epitomises the headteacher's commitment to the pupils of Sandhills. One parent noted, 'The new headteacher has done wonders by putting in new procedures and making the school safer.'
- The full range of safeguarding arrangements are very thorough. Procedures for supporting children through links with outside agencies are sound. All aspects of site security have been reviewed, and arrangements are now effective and much more comprehensive than in the past. For example, relevant staff have a much better knowledge of who is on the school site at any given point throughout the day.
- Consequently, pupils feel safe and 98% of parents agree that their child feels safe at school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching over time has not been good enough. As a result, pupils do not have the basic skills needed in reading, writing and mathematics, and are attaining below the standards expected for their age.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Where this is the case, tasks and activities are not sufficiently challenging for all pupils, including the most able, and this hinders their progress. Some parents expressed concern to inspectors about the lack of challenge for their children.
- Some teaching does not stimulate and interest pupils, including boys, sufficiently well. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils, but planned tasks do not regularly engage pupils fully and capture their curiosity. As a result, some pupils complete work sluggishly and with a degree of indifference.
- Despite leaders' expectations, some teachers' planning affords insufficient attention to developing pupils' skills, such as those of scientific enquiry. Too much weak teaching and a narrow curriculum fail to spark pupils' interest. A key stage 2 pupil observed, 'We don't have science very often.'
- Teachers are only just getting to grips with the new assessment system. It is not yet fully understood. As a result, teachers are not making accurate use of assessment information to plan tasks that are at the right level for different groups of pupils including pupils who have fallen behind and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Over time, pupils have made insufficient gains in their learning because teaching often fails to move pupils' learning on quickly enough. When pupils have clearly grasped the ideas being presented, teachers are too slow to adapt tasks in order to deepen and extend pupils' thinking.
- Teaching assistants have a limited impact on learning in some lessons. When teaching

assistants are deployed effectively, they are a valuable help to pupils, providing effective support for pupils with specific needs and abilities. However, in other cases, teaching assistants are not deployed so successfully to support pupils' learning.

- Where teaching is most effective, well-planned activities take close account of pupils' individual and collective starting points, which develops and deepens their skills and understanding. For example, in a Year 2 writing lesson, pupils responded enthusiastically to the challenge of using expanded noun phrases in their writing. The teacher's secure subject knowledge was used well to bring the subject to life and pupils were enthused to think for themselves.
- The teaching of phonics is improving. Year 1 pupils are now developing better early reading skills as a result of the strengthened, structured approach to the teaching of phonics. In addition, the headteacher's recent revamp of the school library is also promoting reading more effectively than in the past. Nevertheless, there is some variability across the school in the frequency with which pupils read to adults.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in the wider community, demonstrating a commanding understanding of tolerance and diversity. As one pupil commented, 'If everyone was the same, it wouldn't be any fun.'
- Pupils quickly develop a secure appreciation of social responsibility. Pupils are proud that they always make new pupils feel welcome. They told inspectors that their school is a friendly place to be.
- Parents too speak highly of their children's personal development. One parent commented, 'The school teaches pupils to develop a positive sense of identity, well-being and self-belief.'
- Pupils are developing the skills required in order to become positive role models to others. For example, recently appointed 'sports ambassadors' conscientiously run activities at lunchtimes for other pupils.
- Pupils are happy with the way that occasional bullying is tackled and feel comfortable that worries will be dealt with quickly. Parents agree and have confidence in school leaders. One commented, 'I have been impressed by how the school deals with bullying behaviour. It's dealt with straightaway and always taken seriously.'
- The school ensures that there is no discrimination. Pupils from different backgrounds work together happily and there is good racial harmony. A good number of clubs and visits contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school and successfully support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- Attendance is below that seen nationally. Persistent absence is particularly high. Some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, do not attend regularly enough. Poor attendance remains a significant factor in the low attainment of some pupils, particularly the disadvantaged.
- Recently, leaders have set about emphasising more strongly the importance of attending school regularly, and implementing new and appropriate strategies with a high degree of commitment. Well-considered initiatives, such as weekly updates on the school newsletter, a system for signing in when late and parenting contracts are all paying dividends. As a result, attendance is slowly increasing as pupils, particularly those with historically poor attendance, are beginning to attend more frequently.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in adults' expectations of pupils have had an adverse effect on the attitudes of a few pupils to learning. For example, in key stage 1, pupils from time to time set about causing distraction to others such as when pretending to drop belongings or slip from their chairs. More is needed in order to achieve greater consistency in pupils' application towards, and participation in, learning tasks.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved recently as the school's new behaviour policy has taken hold. Inspectors found that there has been a notable decline in the number of more serious misdemeanours that warrant a 'red card'. Pupils' behaviour, particularly during social times, is progressively improving. Parents agree.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Standards have declined over the last three years and are too low in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, too few pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are working at age-related expectations in key stages 1 and 2. Pupils are not catching up quickly enough.
- In 2017, too few pupils exceeded the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. The school's current information shows that too few pupils are working at greater depth. Tasks offer insufficient challenge for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, and this limits their ability to achieve well.
- Across the school, boys achieve less well than girls. Gaps exist in nearly every year group and in every core subject but are most marked in writing.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are too low. Pupils are not encouraged to work as productively as they might. Consequently, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too slow, and many are not reversing a legacy of previous underachievement quickly enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not achieving the standards expected for their age in reading, writing or mathematics. They achieve less well than their peers and have not benefited sufficiently well from additional funding.
- In 2017, the proportion of children who secured a good level of development was below that seen nationally. Boys did less well than girls and disadvantaged pupils did less well than their peers. These children were not prepared well enough for the challenges of Year 1.

- In 2017, the proportion of pupils who met the standard required in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below that seen nationally. This represents a decline from the previous year. Leaders have reorganised the school's approach and early reading skills are now taught more regularly and skilfully. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work on raising standards.
- Pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate more rapidly in Year 6. School information shows that this year's cohort are performing better than their previous year's counterparts at this point in the year in reading, writing and mathematics. There are early signs that leaders' actions are beginning to affect positive change.
- In 2017, standards at the end of key stage 1 rose. The proportion of pupils who achieved the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics was slightly above that seen nationally.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children enter the early years with skills and attributes that are typical for their age. Over time, children's progress has not been good enough across the early years to prepare them well for Year 1.
- In 2017, standards fell and too few children developed the skills and understanding needed to secure a good level of development. As a result, many children, including boys and the disadvantaged, did less well at the end of their first year than their national counterparts.
- The leadership of the early years is at a very early stage. Leaders do not use assessment information well enough to evaluate the quality of the provision, including for groups. Self-evaluation is underdeveloped and leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching and learning with sufficient rigour.
- Nevertheless, working with the local authority, support for staff has increased in recent times. This is beginning to increase the capacity of leaders and teachers and make a positive difference to raising standards. As a result, children are beginning to develop the skills needed for success more rapidly.
- Adults plan for all aspects of children's learning, including learning outdoors. Their teaching ensures that children receive a balanced programme of activities containing those that are directed by adults and others which children choose for themselves.
- Children's behaviour is good. Children rapidly gain confidence and assurance. They are enthused by the broad range of activities and pay careful attention to each other. However, leaders note that some more challenging behaviour last year was not managed so effectively and adversely affected children's outcomes.
- Adults interact well with children, engaging readily in productive conversation that promotes the development of early skills. Adults keep careful records of children's achievement, ensuring that assessment records cover all areas of learning adequately.
- Leaders recently invested considerably in developing the early years learning environment, including the outdoor area. There are abundant opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills through the use of bicycles and play equipment. Senior leaders' development of the early years environment has helped to ensure that

children's physical development needs are met effectively.

- Adults ensure that routines and expectations are well established. Resources are well organised and easily accessible, and there is a good range of activities supporting all aspects of the curriculum both indoors and outdoors. Children take full advantage of the wide range of activities on offer, quickly gaining in independence.
- Children, including those who are at an early stage of speaking English, benefit from plentiful opportunities to develop their communication skills. Short, focused phonics sessions are effective in developing reading skills and promoting good attitudes to learning. The opportunities for children to develop their writing and mark-making skills are plentiful, giving children the confidence to 'have a go'.
- Safeguarding procedures in the early years are effective, as in the rest of the school. Staff are attentive and keep sharp oversight of children during the school day. Children respond well to the guidance of adults. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced, ensuring that children are safe, happy and well cared for.

School details

Unique reference number	123027
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10040697

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Saskia Jamieson
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Settle
Telephone number	01865 433 000
Website	www.sandhills.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.2401@sandhills.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2014

Information about this school

- Sandhills Community Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2017. Since the previous inspection, the membership of the governing body has changed, including the chair of the governing body.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding for children looked after, pupils eligible for free school meals and children of service families is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and who are supported through school action is slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported with an education, health and care plan, including those with a statement of

special educational needs, is below the national average.

- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in 2016 and 2017.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors visited 33 lessons or part-lessons, including nine with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to four pupils read in Years 3 and 4, looked at work in pupils' books and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and also met with six pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Parents' views were taken into account through face-to-face informal discussions and the 76 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 41 free-text comments.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 21 survey responses submitted by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, leaders' monitoring activities and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Frances Nation	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Francis	Ofsted 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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