

Sandridge School

Woodcock Hill, Sandridge, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 9EB

Inspection dates

19 to 20 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Following disappointing results in 2017, leaders' swift action has brought about rapid improvement. Current pupils are now making good progress across a range of subjects.
- The headteacher acts with determination and sets high expectations for staff and pupils. This has helped to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Leaders have used training well to tackle weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Governors are committed to the school. They use their skills effectively to support the school and contribute to its continuous improvement.
- A carefully constructed curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to study different subjects. It contributes well to their academic progress and personal development.
- Teachers plan tasks that meet the needs of all pupils effectively. Teachers ask good questions to check pupils' understanding and provide help for those that need it.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements. They welcome the guidance they receive from their teachers and the care shown by all the staff. The pastoral support for pupils helps to ensure that they feel safe at school.
- Exciting and engaging activities ensure that children make good progress in the early years.
- Pupils are taught to write well. They write for different purposes and apply their skills across the curriculum. This means they are writing with increasing fluency and expression.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Pupils have a secure understanding of the sounds letters make and use it well to read and write.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive well-targeted support. This ensures that they make good progress.
- Subject leaders have embraced their roles enthusiastically. They are continuing to develop their skills, but do not yet have a full understanding of how well pupils achieve across the curriculum.
- There have been significant improvements in the teaching of mathematics. However, teachers do not routinely plan opportunities to develop pupils' reasoning skills.
- Many parents say that pupils are looked after well. However, some parents do not consider that leaders address poor behaviour effectively or respond quickly to their concern.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of foundation subject leaders so that they fully understand how well pupils achieve in their subjects and how well they are taught in all foundation subjects across the curriculum
 - improving communication with parents so that there is an increased confidence about how leaders respond to their concerns and a better understanding of the school's approaches to managing pupils' behaviour.
- To continue to improve the teaching of mathematics by ensuring all teachers understand how to plan opportunities to develop pupils' reasoning skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has brought about rapid improvement since taking up post and has addressed the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection. As a result of strong drive and setting clear expectations, the quality of teaching is now consistently good across the school.
- Senior leaders know the school well. They use this knowledge to ensure that support and training are helping to improve teachers' practice. Teachers, including those who are new to the school, appreciate how leaders have introduced new ideas, while taking account of their workload. All staff who responded to the online survey valued the professional development opportunities they receive and are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders of English and mathematics have a secure understanding of their subject areas and responsibilities. They make regular checks of the quality of teaching and use their knowledge to provide advice and share ideas about how to improve this further. Teachers have responded positively to the support given, so that pupils are now making consistently good progress in these subject areas.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding to provide tailored support that contributes to disadvantaged pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Pupils' needs are considered, and parents are also consulted. This has led to more creative uses of the funding used to tackle the barriers to pupils' achievement. Evidence from books shows that disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress across all areas of their learning.
- The special needs education co-ordinator (SENCo) ensures that the needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified. She uses this knowledge to make sure pupils get any extra help that they need. Adults who lead this support are well trained. The SENCo checks that the support provided makes a good contribution in helping pupils meet their personalised targets.
- The sport premium funding is used efficiently. Professional development for staff means that they are increasingly confident about teaching physical education. A range of clubs has increased pupils' participation in sport. The daily mile is recorded by each class to help and encourage pupils' fitness and health.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that provides pupils with knowledge and skills to prepare them for future learning. There is a strong focus on the local area as a resource for pupils' education. Through different topics, that are carefully planned and sequenced, pupils link learning experiences to gain a deeper understanding. Leaders have ensured that pupils apply their basic skills across the curriculum so that it supports their progress, especially in writing. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their engaging learning opportunities.
- Subject leaders' regular checking of teaching is giving them a better understanding of how the curriculum is covered. However, some subject leaders are still developing their skills to be able to fully evaluate the impact teaching is having on pupils' progress in their own subjects and across the foundation subjects as a whole.

- In addition to the school's curriculum, leaders provide pupils with further opportunities to develop their wider skills. The recent development of a music studio enables all pupils to learn a musical instrument and perform within a school band. Use of specialists ensures a high standard of tuition and contributes to pupils' enjoyment and development of their artistic skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well. Opportunities for their development are threaded through the school's curriculum. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of social and moral values through their behaviour and the responsibilities they undertake around the school.
- The school's programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) helps pupils to reflect on their own qualities and uniqueness to help develop their character. The teaching of religious education (RE) and assembly themes help pupils to develop a deeper appreciation of other faiths and cultures. Pupils understand British values and they discussed with inspectors how each value plays a part in their daily school life.
- The majority of parents are supportive of leaders and the quality of teaching and care provided by staff. One view, typical of others on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, commented: 'The school has an excellent sense of community and supports all the children there. I have a huge respect for the staff, who are caring, professional and approachable.'
- A significant minority of parents do not feel that leaders deal well with their concerns or address pupils' poor behaviour. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils behave well when they are in school. Pupils are clear about the expectations of leaders regarding their behaviour. However, leaders have not been successful in ensuring that all parents understand the approaches staff use to manage some pupils' behaviour. There is still more work to gain the trust and confidence of all parents.
- Support from the local authority has been used well to support school improvement. Subject advisers have worked successfully with leaders to identify issues and provide ideas. By making effective use of this support, teaching is now consistently good.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is committed and works well with school leaders. They undertake a range of different training, which helps to improve their understanding of how to hold school leaders to account and fulfil their statutory duties.
- Governors use their skills well to gain an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They ask relevant questions. Their work is linked to the school's priorities, ensuring that they have a good insight on how well leaders' plans make a positive difference to pupils' outcomes. Governors make regular visits to the school to check the impact of the actions of leaders.
- Governors know how additional funding is spent. They meet with leaders to review the pupil premium funding strategy and check how well the needs of pupils with SEND are met. This monitoring helps to ensure that these groups are making good progress towards achieving their planned targets.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are well trained and understand how to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Training for staff is up to date, so that they are aware of how to respond if a safeguarding incident occurred. Staff spoken to during the inspection were able to explain how they record concerns and how matters are expected to be followed up.
- Leaders of safeguarding ensure that records are well organised and kept securely. They maintain a detailed chronology of events so that they can pursue other agencies when actions are agreed to support vulnerable pupils. The employment checks carried out on adults who work with pupils are well organised and meet statutory requirements.
- Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. For example, they understand what to be aware of when using the internet and know how cyberbullying could occur. Pupils say that they would share their concerns with adults should any issues arise and are confident that adults would deal with concerns quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have taken successful action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, pupils now benefit from consistent approaches to helping their progress across a range of different subjects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They generally use this well to ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding. Pupils use appropriate language when responding to questions because teachers insist on pupils using the correct terms. For example, in an English lesson, pupils gave the correct grammatical word and provided examples to demonstrate their understanding.
- The activities teachers plan engage pupils' interests and stimulate their learning. Teachers make careful checks on pupils' learning through the lesson so that all pupils are challenged consistently and think hard.
- Pupils make effective use of the guidance they receive from their teachers. Additional support and questions are provided to help address any misconceptions and deepen pupils' understanding. This means that pupils are making good progress.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to encourage pupils to think and become more confident with their learning. They are well trained and deliver specific interventions that support the good progress of pupils with SEND.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations and ensure that their work is neatly presented. Teachers challenge pupils to try their best, and they praise pupils for their ideas and thoughts during class discussions. As a result, pupils are willing to contribute and are not afraid to make mistakes.
- Across the school, pupils are given opportunities to use their writing skills in a wide range of contexts and for different purposes. Teachers set tasks that encourage pupils'

extended writing across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 5 used their persuasive skills to write letters about the impact of the use of palm oil on the rainforest.

- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Well planned activities ensure that pupils practise and apply their phonics knowledge in both reading and writing. For example, children in the early years used their phonics to sound out and spell the names of different dinosaurs. They were also supported well in letter formation to help their progress in early writing.
- Reading is taught effectively across the school. Teachers use their assessment of pupils' skills to plan tasks that are matched well to pupils' capabilities. Using the school's approaches, pupils work in groups to share texts and respond to targeted questions. This is developing pupils' comprehension skills and providing exposure to a wide range of different genres of writing. Special reading places in classrooms, such as the ship or the Egyptian pyramid, provide reading spaces to encourage reading for pleasure. Consequently, pupils are making good progress in their reading.
- Work in pupils' books shows that the teaching of science is thorough and is providing pupils with good knowledge and skills. Scientific investigations are broken into parts to build pupils' understanding of predicting, testing and forming conclusions. Pupils write in detail to demonstrate how they are thinking as scientists.
- In mathematics, pupils are taught a range of concepts. They develop their understanding through regular recall of basic numeracy facts and opportunities to apply their skills in problem solving activities. Teachers generally plan a sequence of work that builds on pupils' prior knowledge so that skills are deepened. However, some teachers do not provide consistent opportunities for pupils to use their reasoning skills. This means that, while pupils are making progress, their skills are not as secure as they need to be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff place a high priority on supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being. A pastoral leader works with pupils where concerns are identified. Friendship groups are arranged so that pupils gain a better understanding about how to sustain good relationships with one another. Pupils value the support and encouragement they receive from adults. One pupil reminded inspectors, 'Teachers are amazing because they care for you and your learning.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of their feelings and emotions. They have been taught to recognise how they feel and use their own 'toolkits' to help change their moods for the better. Consequently, pupils are confident because they are well cared for.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements at school. There is weekly recognition of pupils' efforts both academic and socially. Details are provided in school newsletters to acknowledge pupils' achievements. Roles on the school council and tasks pupils

perform around the school develop their leadership skills and sense of responsibility.

- Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe. This is because they learn about the different forms bullying can take. All pupils, when asked by inspectors, said that bullying was extremely rare in the school. They were confident that any concerns shared with staff would be resolved without hesitation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils listen well in class and learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Adults provide clear expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves around the school building and grounds. This ensures that the environment is calm and orderly.
- Pupils speak respectfully to adults and visitors. They are keen to answer questions asked by visitors or offer help should it be required. Playgrounds are well supervised, and pupils share their games willingly. They understand how different areas are used at lunchtimes so that playtimes are safe.
- Inspection evidence shows that any concerns with behaviour are well documented. Where pupils are involved in incidents, leaders use clear approaches to modify pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils are clear about actions leaders take to support their improved behaviour.
- Leaders have established clear systems to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Last year attendance was above the national average. Leaders' continued actions and monitoring are ensuring that pupils attend school frequently.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders' decisive actions have ensured that, since the previous inspection, attainment and progress have improved. In 2018, pupils' progress at the end of Year 6 was in line with the national average in all subjects.
- In 2018, pupils' attainment at expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was at least in line with the national average in both key stage 1 and 2. In key stage 2, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading and mathematics, and/or greater depth in writing, were above the national averages.
- Across the school, pupils are making strong gains in their writing. Work in pupils' books shows that they consistently apply their knowledge of grammar and spelling in every piece of written work. Pupils make effective use of the features of different genres, which are skilfully developed through the tasks planned by teachers. Adults model a range of vocabulary and use different texts to identify how authors have captured readers' interests. For example, older pupils made good use of information about a tropical island to collate different descriptive phrases and words for their own leaflets.
- Opportunities for pupils to choose their level of challenge ensures that all pupils are extended in their learning, especially the most able pupils. 'Spicy challenges' support the most able pupils to think more deeply about their work. Pupils' frequent editing of work shows how well they respond to comments made by their peers or adults. This

means that the final piece of work is improved and of higher quality.

- In mathematics, pupils independently select the resources that support them in their work. Pupils work hard at learning their multiplication facts. They recall them quickly when applying their knowledge to different mathematical concepts. However, the progress for some pupils is not as strong, because there are not enough planned opportunities for developing their mathematical reasoning skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. Plans to support their achievement are checked regularly by leaders. This ensures that adjustments can be made to sustain progress for these groups of pupils.
- Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects. Through class themes and topics pupils acquire appropriate knowledge and skills. Books show that each activity is clear about the specific subject skill pupils are learning. Pupils apply their basic skills in all parts of the curriculum, ensuring that they are well prepared for their future learning.

Early years provision

Good

- The proportions of children achieving the good level of development was below the national average in 2018. This was because children's starting points were lower than in previous years. Recent improvements to the quality of provision in the early years mean that current children are making good progress.
- Children in the Nursery settle quickly because routines and expectations are made clear. Adults' clear modelling of language and questioning means that children happily share their learning experiences. They talk in full sentences and describe what they are doing and what they have found out. Good use of these well-focused teaching strategies means that many children are working within age-related expectations.
- Teachers plan exciting activities that capture the interests of Reception children. Children work purposefully, helping them to develop into independent learners. Teachers use assessment well to build on children's previous learning while remaining centred on their experiences and understanding. For example, while studying traditional tales, children discussed different types of bridges that the billy goats gruff may use. They then experimented with different materials to construct a bridge so that the animals could get across the water tray.
- Leaders are enthusiastic and have a good understanding of the priorities for early years. They work well with other adults to ensure that their assessments are accurate. This information is used well to match work so that children make progress in all areas of development. For example, work recorded in children's learning journeys identifies children's next steps to support their progress.
- Children are busy learners and sustain their concentration well while they work and play. Adults support children's confidence and guide learning sensitively so that the tasks children start are completed. The indoor and outdoor environments are thoughtfully planned to support children's learning. Clear prompts and different areas are used effectively to develop learning in different contexts.
- Leaders make use of weekly newsletters to inform parents about the learning in early years. Parents are provided with ideas about how they can work with their child at home, including on areas that will be covered in the coming week. 'Share boxes'

provide opportunities for children to talk about things they have done at home so that leaders have a wide understanding of children's development.

- Safeguarding arrangements and welfare requirements meet statutory regulations.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117148 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10054377 |

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

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| Type of school | All-through Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 200 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andy Boxer |
| Headteacher | Lisa Roberts |
| Telephone number | 01727 850 576 |
| Website | www.sandridge.herts.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@sandridge.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 13 March 2018 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher was initially an interim headteacher. Her position was made permanent in October 2017.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported with an education, health and care plan is lower the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body.
- There is an after-school club that is separately registered with Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning across the school in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised the quality of pupils' work in all classes and undertook additional scrutiny of work in pupils' books. Inspectors spoke to pupils and listened to some key stage 1 pupils read. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally in the classroom as well as meeting with groups of pupils from across the school.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of the local governing body, and with the school's chosen improvement partner. Inspectors also met with the SENCo, the early years leader, a selection of subject leaders and a group of teachers. There was a discussion with the headteacher about the pupil premium and sport premium.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to attendance and behaviour, school improvement planning, assessment information, monitoring of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and school documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with parents when they collected their children from the school. Inspectors considered 77 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 65 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered 20 responses made on the online staff survey and 3 responses to the online pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Angela Savill

Ofsted Inspector

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