



# Sandhurst School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110068  
**LEA** Bracknell Forest LEA  
**Inspection number** 278363  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Christopher Schenk HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Owlsmoor Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Owlsmoor
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Sandhurst GU47 0SD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01344775678
<b>Number on roll</b>	1110	<b>Fax number</b>	01344771575
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Jan Edwards
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Fletcher

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<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278363
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Sandhurst School is a mixed comprehensive 11-18 community school, which achieved science specialist status in February 2003. The majority of its students live within walking distance and come from a variety of backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is less than half the national average and so is the proportion of students whose first language is believed not to be English. The proportion of students who have been identified as having special educational needs is around average. A significant minority of students come to the school during their secondary education: this was true of a quarter of last year's Year 11. The school is in an area where house prices are high and this causes continuing difficulties with the recruitment and retention of staff. The school has achieved three consecutive Investors in People awards, two careers awards, a schools achievement award in 2003 and the Healthy Schools Silver award.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good, and the inspection team agrees. The school has many strengths. The students' personal development is good. They feel valued and included. The teaching is generally good and in some departments particularly good use is made of continuous assessment to make sure that the good teaching results in good learning and progress, but this is not yet sufficiently widespread. The curriculum is good and offers increasing flexibility and choice in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Monitoring and evaluation are well established and a varied programme of lesson observations is effective in helping teachers to develop specific skills. Standards of attainment are above average but this has not made the school complacent. Their self-evaluation has identified that in recent years the results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have not been as good as they should have been, given the above average starting points of many of their students. There has been a marked improvement in results at the end of Key Stage 3 this year, and some improvement in Key Stage 4, but the school acknowledges that there is further to go, especially in English. The school responded effectively to nearly all the key issues from the last inspection. However, the time allocated to religious education (RE) in Key Stage 4 is still not sufficient to enable full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus, even though the limited time available is particularly well used. More recently, the school's self-evaluation has identified the need to improve attainment in French and information and communication technology (ICT). This has led to changes in time allocation and curricular provision in modern foreign languages (MFL) and ICT. The school has also identified the need to improve boys' achievements. The improvements that have already been made, in achievements in the core subjects, and the good progress that students make in their personal development show that the school has the capacity to improve further and gives good value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are below average because many of the school's higher attaining students choose to go to a nearby sixth form college. Although results at A level are well below average, the progress and achievements of students are satisfactory. Standards on vocational courses are in line with course expectations and achievements are also satisfactory. Personal development and well-being are good: students make progress in their self-confidence and maturity as a result of the good support they receive from their teachers and tutors. The teaching and learning are generally good and so is the curriculum although, as the school recognises, there is a need for more vocational courses. Personal and academic guidance and support are both good. Over recent years changes in personnel and problems with recruitment have adversely affected the leadership and management and slowed down the pace of development. However, leadership and management are now satisfactory and are demonstrating a capacity to make improvements.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

\* Continue to improve students' progress in the core subjects, and particularly in English\* Build on the good practice in some departments to spread effective use of assessment for learning throughout the school, and ensure that students are carefully assessed on entry\* Continue to improve attainments in ICT and MFL\* Improve boys' achievements\* Enable the Agreed Syllabus in RE to be fully covered in Key Stage 4.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievements in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are satisfactory and improving. Students with special educational needs make the same progress as others. Attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is a little above average in most years. Students make steady progress from Year 7 to Year 11 and results in the GCSE examinations are also a little above average although, as the school recognises, they could be better especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In 2004, results in the Year 9 national tests for mathematics and science were above average, although students performed less well in English, attaining average standards. Results in 2005 were markedly better than in 2004 for all three subjects, improving at a substantially greater rate than previously. At the end of Year 11 the school consistently achieves a high proportion of students who gain five or more graded GCSE results although the percentage of students who gain five or more high grade passes is closer to the average. Almost all students gain at least one graded result. These results reflect well the school's aim to be inclusive. GCSE results in 2005 are slightly up on those in 2004. Performance in English is once more comparatively lower than in mathematics and science. Art and design, German, history and music have consistently performed well although performance in physical education, ICT and French has been relatively weak. The school has identified that girls do substantially better than boys: the gap between the performance of boys and girls is wider than nationally. Additionally, the significant minority of students who join the school after Year 7 achieve less well than those who have a full five years at the school. In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress because, although some of them find advanced studies challenging, they are taught well and the school supports them effectively over the two-year sixth form period.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development is good and is a significant strength of the school. Most students enjoy school. They express a high level of satisfaction with what the school offers and are proud of it. They develop in maturity as they move through the school because they are treated seriously by staff and given opportunities to take responsibility and make a contribution. The school is calm and well ordered. Students are sensible and, with a few exceptions, behave well. Minor disruption and misbehaviour is generally well managed by staff. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development is good. The school has made progress since the last inspection in encouraging students' spiritual development. Students know right from wrong. Relationships between staff and students and between the students themselves are very good. The school is a harmonious place where students of different backgrounds and ethnic groups mix well together and respect each other. The students have an understanding of and respect for their own and other cultures. The confidence students feel that their cultures will be taken seriously was shown when a group of Hindu students made a presentation to the inspectors as part of their celebration of Divali. Students feel safe in the school. They report that examples of bullying and harassment are rare and are confident that the school responds swiftly when problems arise. Participation in the Healthy Schools initiative is helping students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They are encouraged to get involved in school life and have the opportunity, through a range of student council committees, to make their voices heard. Student representatives are enthusiastic and mature in the way they approach their responsibilities especially now they have been given a substantial budget to fund improvements. In the sixth form, students continue to make good progress in their personal development. They are encouraged to join in the work of the school, for example through leading and organising inter-house competitions and helping younger students develop their reading skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are generally good. In most lessons, effective planning ensures that learning has good continuity and pace and that the needs of all students are met. Teachers successfully engage and involve students with stimulating and enjoyable tasks. They question skilfully to encourage students to explore their ideas and views in an open-ended way. In the best lessons, such as one in Year 7 RE that considered the existence of God, discussion reached a high standard. When support assistants are present to help students with learning difficulties, they make a valuable contribution. The school acknowledges that it now needs to ensure that the good teaching is fully effective in raising achievement in examinations. In some subjects, for example history and MFL, assessment makes a major contribution to long-term progress. However, in this important aspect of teaching, there is too much variation. Assessment is not always well used and marking is not always sufficiently helpful in showing students how they can move forward. In the sixth form, the small teaching groups allow substantial individual attention but there is a drawback because they limit the opportunities for students to learn from each other. Nevertheless, the students have very good attitudes to learning and some outstanding lessons were seen, for example in sociology.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is good. It is broad and balanced and meets most statutory requirements. However, insufficient time is allocated to RE in Key Stage 4 to cover the Agreed Syllabus. There is a particularly well-planned course in personal, social and health education, citizenship and cultural awareness which makes a good contribution to the students' personal development. Students entering Key Stage 4 benefit from a good range of options. The school works well with the local college of further education to offer additional choices of academic and vocational subjects. Careers guidance, work experience and workplace skills are well catered for. The school regularly reviews its curriculum and takes account of a range of indicators such as performance statistics and the views of students and parents in planning improvements. For example, improvements in the provision for ICT and MFL have recently been introduced. Good enrichment is provided by extra-curricular opportunities in which students can participate in a wide range of sporting, creative and cultural activities. The curriculum in the sixth form is generally good but is in need of some further development. The school is working increasingly successfully with local partners, for example to combine teaching groups from several schools. There are sensible plans to introduce further vocational courses in 2006.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Students feel safe and valued. The well-established house system makes them feel part of a supportive community. The school works well in partnership with parents. A survey of parental attitudes undertaken last year showed high levels of parental satisfaction and support and this was confirmed by the response to a questionnaire sent out at the time of the inspection which was very positive. Members of staff are knowledgeable about students with special educational needs and vulnerable students, and are active in ensuring that they are well supported. Child protection training, involving governors as well as members of staff, is regularly undertaken and contributes to a good understanding of responsibilities. Processes for tracking students' progress against their targets are generally good. Students receive good advice as they move from one stage of their education to another. They are very positive about arrangements to help them settle in when they arrive in Year 7. Induction arrangements for the significant minority of students who arrive later in their secondary career enable them to settle in quickly but these students would benefit from a sharper analysis of their attainment to ensure they are quickly placed in appropriate groups. In the sixth form, there is good support for the development of learning and study skills such as managing time effectively and researching information. Students feel well supported as they grow in independence, confidence and responsibility. Those that move on to higher education are well prepared and guided through the application process and this helps them to gain entry to university. As one sixth former said: 'This is a good school: there is always someone to help you'.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

### Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership and management are generally good, though with some important areas for improvement. The consensual style of leadership has created a sense of common purpose among staff, students and the wider school community. The members of the senior leadership team work well together and have complementary strengths. They are effectively focused on encouraging the inclusion of all students and promoting their personal development. In this, they are well supported by heads of houses. Leaders and managers at all levels have identified the need to raise standards further and improve students' achievements in the core subjects. They have worked together to bring about a marked improvement in Key Stage 3 results this year, and some improvement at Key Stage 4, but the school acknowledges that the improvements are not yet enough, especially in English. There is very good leadership in some departments, but leadership at this level is too variable. There are good systems for monitoring and evaluation, and for departmental reviews. A programme of regular lesson observations is in place and good work has been done to identify the different purposes of these observations. The school's self-evaluation has taken account of the views of parents and students. For example, the recent decision to introduce Spanish reflected widespread views among parents and has proved very popular with students. The Governing Body has experienced continuing difficulties in filling all its vacancies: at the time of the inspection it was under-strength by nearly a third. Nevertheless, the existing governors work hard to fulfil their responsibilities and are seeking ways to improve their effectiveness further. The school is aware that its improvement plan is rather unwieldy and has experimented with a change in format. This work needs to be kept under review to ensure that the planning is focused, succinct and accessible to governors. Leadership and management of the sixth form have been adversely affected over the last few years by changes of personnel and problems of recruitment. Leadership is now satisfactory and the sixth form leadership team have a clear vision of what they wish to achieve.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for your welcome when we visited your school.

We were impressed by your good attitudes to learning, your enjoyment of school and your openness and courtesy to us, to your teachers and to each other. We think you are usually well taught and you are given a good range of interesting work. We are pleased that you have recently been given more opportunities to use computers and that you can now learn Spanish at school. You are able to make choices from a pretty good range of courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, though we are pleased to hear that the school has plans to increase the range still further in the sixth form. We think that some of your teachers are particularly good at helping you to understand how you are getting on and to see what you need to do to improve further. We would like all your teachers to do this in the future so that you can be helped to get even better examination results.

Before we left the school we met your headteacher and the senior leadership team and we asked them to do the following things to make the school even better.\* Continue to improve your progress in maths and science, and particularly in English.\* Use assessment well throughout the school.\* Make sure that the extra opportunities in ICT and modern foreign languages help you to improve your skills.\* Help the boys in the school to get on with their work as well as the girls and to reach similar standards.\* Make sure that you have enough time in RE in Key Stage 4 to cover all the things you are supposed to.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Schenk HMI