

Sandgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118505
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291151
Inspection date	9 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hillary Tolputt
Headteacher	Helen Tait
Date of previous school inspection	19 February 2002
School address	Coolinge Lane Folkestone CT20 3QU
Telephone number	01303 257280
Fax number	01303 251422

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and is heavily oversubscribed. It draws its pupils from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Their attainment on entry is broadly in line with the levels expected for their age. For the last two years just under half of the pupils joining the Reception class were summer born children. Many of these children were at an early stage of development in language, literacy and mathematical skills. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average and very few pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status, Investors in People recognition, the Silver Flair Award for Modern Foreign languages and the Eco 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: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils flourish academically and grow into mature and confident young people. Parents are almost unanimous in their praise of the school. As one put it, 'I feel my child gets an excellent all-round education.' This is one of the school's greatest strengths. Not only do pupils achieve exceptionally well and reach very high standards in all areas of learning, their personal development and well-being are also outstanding. They have exceptionally positive attitudes to school and contribute a great deal to community life.

So what are the key ingredients in this recipe for success?

Firstly, the outstanding leadership and management result from a real team effort. The headteacher, governors and senior managers know the school inside out and are extremely rigorous in evaluating its effectiveness; so rigorous that they are never satisfied and constantly seeking ways to do even better. The whole staff team works together remarkably well with a common purpose and a shared vision for the school's future. The quality of pupils' learning is everyone's main concern and recent initiatives to build pupils' involvement in their own learning are paying dividends. Not only do pupils thoroughly enjoy learning, they also make choices about the best way to tackle different tasks. As a result, many are making much more rapid progress than they were a couple of years ago. Standards in English and science have risen to exceptionally high levels in response to improvements in teaching, writing and scientific investigation. Standards in mathematics have improved significantly over the past year to well above average levels, but the school is still working to improve pupils' problem solving skills.

This unswerving focus on pupils' learning has transformed the quality of teaching and the curriculum which are both outstanding. Pupils get off to an excellent start in the Reception class and make particularly good progress in learning sounds and numbers, as well as developing very good social skills. From the very start, learning is an exciting journey for pupils at Sandgate. The curriculum is rich and varied, and reaches beyond the school to include links with Africa and India, not to mention making the most of what the local area has to offer. Lessons are fast paced, always interesting and highly motivational. One pupil summed it up succinctly when he said, 'You can tell the teachers really enjoy teaching us.'

Another reason why pupils thrive at this school is the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support they are all given. Every teacher knows exactly what pupils are good at and when they need additional support. Every pupil has targets to achieve and knows what must be done to reach them. First-rate systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress from term to term provide teachers with an 'early warning system' which helps them to spot pupils who are not making as much progress as expected. This leads to prompt and highly effective intervention to help pupils overcome difficulties.

There is not a hint of complacency at Sandgate. Staff and governors are fully committed to continuous improvement and have demonstrated an outstanding capacity to lead the school to even greater successes in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend pupils' skills in solving problems by applying their mathematical knowledge in a variety of situations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

An intense focus on how pupils learn has had a significant impact on their achievement over the past two years, raising it to its current outstanding level. Excellent new systems for setting individual targets and tracking pupils' progress have played a big part in raising standards so that these are now exceptionally high. Pupils get off to an excellent start in Reception where they achieve very well in all areas of learning from widely varying starting points. The quality of pupils' writing, especially boys, has improved by leaps and bounds as teachers have become increasingly proficient in motivating and inspiring them to be imaginative and creative in their work. Standards in science have risen in response to a focus on developing investigative learning. More recently, initiatives to raise standards in mathematics, especially for older girls, have had excellent results. The school recognises, however, that there is further work to be done in extending pupils' problem-solving skills. Very high standards of achievement are reflected in every year group and in many different subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' enjoyment of life at Sandgate is almost tangible. They exude confidence but at the same time show respect and courtesy and a keen desire to help others, whether it be their younger schoolmates or children in India and Africa, for whom they raise funds. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because it is central to the school's ethos and promoted exceptionally well in all aspects of school life, from lessons to assemblies and after school clubs. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour and attendance are exemplary. They take part in an extensive range of sporting activities and have an excellent awareness of how to keep healthy and safe. Designing and creating healthy fruit puddings in the 'pudding club' is just one example of the school's innovative approaches to promoting healthy eating. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and say that teachers listen to their ideas. The school council was instrumental in purchasing new playground equipment, and trained play leaders help to make playtimes more enjoyable for all. Pupils develop excellent skills that prepare them very well for the future, such as taking part in a business enterprise project and using the Internet to find information.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding throughout the school because teachers focus closely on how pupils learn and help them to find the ways that work best for them. They have very high expectations of every pupil and set challenging targets for them to achieve. Pupils respond to challenges with great enthusiasm. They know and use their targets very well and say that teachers always help them if they get stuck and explain things clearly. Teachers devise interesting and imaginative tasks that motivate pupils and hold their attention. The purpose of every lesson is very clear and shared with pupils at the outset so that they know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers make excellent use of computers and interactive whiteboards to enrich pupils' learning. Highly skilled teaching assistants support pupils very well, both in class lessons and when working with small groups of pupils with particular learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exciting, stimulating and continually evolving in response to new initiatives and research. It has a significant impact on pupils' enjoyment and achievement. It is also responsive to the changing needs of the pupils. For example, the very high proportion of summer born children in Reception for the last two years has prompted a change in the structure and organisation of their curriculum which meets their needs exceptionally well. Teachers make creative links between subjects and these make learning more meaningful for the pupils. The curriculum is further enriched by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs, visits, visitors and links with other schools and local organisations. The school is particularly proud of its sporting achievements and the inclusion of Spanish as its main foreign language. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is first-rate and there are excellent opportunities for pupils with special talents to pursue them to high levels. The school's close links with a children's home in India and a primary school in South Africa give pupils valuable insights into life beyond school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school does an excellent job of developing pupils' confidence, self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning. Adults are vigilant about ensuring pupils' safety and promoting their health and well-being. The school has significantly improved pupils' punctuality. Pupils eagerly await the weekly award of 'Punctuality Pup' to the class with the fewest late arrivals. Rigorous procedures for assessing and checking pupils' progress towards their targets enable teachers to provide very well targeted support where it is needed. Groups such as the 'Pink Ladies' mathematics group, are designed to meet pupils' specific needs and their impact is reviewed and evaluated regularly. The Family Liaison Officer works closely with pupils and their families to address particular concerns. Excellent links with other schools and external agencies further support pupils' academic and personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management have had an outstanding impact on raising achievement and enhancing the quality of all pupils' learning. A key factor in their success is that they are highly effective at all levels. The headteacher, senior management team and subject leaders monitor the quality of education that the school provides with exceptional rigour. Accurate and insightful self-evaluation clearly informs strategic planning and takes excellent account of the views of pupils, staff, governors and parents. All teachers share the responsibility for checking individual pupils' progress and ensuring that additional help is provided for those who need it. Governors support and challenge the school very effectively. They too have very rigorous systems for evaluating the school's performance. First-rate teamwork throughout the school ensures consistent approaches to promoting effective learning and personal development. Every member of the staff team contributes much to the school's vibrant and exciting environment and its warm and welcoming atmosphere.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Sandgate Primary School, Folkestone, CT20 3QU

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school and making my visit so enjoyable. I enjoyed sitting in on some of your lessons and talking to some of you about your work. Everything that I saw on my visit convinced me that Sandgate Primary School is an outstanding school. I was very impressed by all of you; your behaviour is excellent and you are polite and helpful. You work very hard but you also have a really good time. The school helps you to grow into confident and mature young people, ready to make the most of life.

Here are some of the best things about your school:

- You make excellent progress and achieve very high standards.
- You really enjoy learning because the teachers make lessons fun and give you lots of interesting challenges. All of the teachers help you to understand the best way to learn.
- You know your targets and use them very well to help you in your learning.
- The teachers plan excellent topics and themes which link subjects together in exciting ways, and this helps you to learn more effectively.
- All of the adults take excellent care of you and give you extra help and support whenever you need it.
- There are lots of opportunities to take part in clubs and other activities. I popped in to see one or two of them and could see how much you were enjoying them.
- The adults who run the school do an outstanding job and are always looking for ways to make it even better. All of the staff and governors help in this and want you to be successful.
- All in all, the school gives you an exceptionally good all-round education that prepares you very well for the future.

The teachers and governors all know the school inside out and keep a very close eye on how well you are doing. They found out that some of you could be doing a little better at solving mathematics problems and are already finding ways to help you. I have asked them to help you reach higher standards in this aspect of mathematics and I am sure you will help them by working as hard as you usually do.

With my best wishes for your future success,

Carole Skinner Lead inspector