

# Sandling Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118511
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	291153
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Denise Morris

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	415
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Sherman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catharine Archer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 June 2001
<b>School address</b>	Ashburnham Road Maidstone ME14 2JG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 763297
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 200015

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, is about average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school where pupils show outstanding enjoyment of their education and develop good personal and academic skills. Relationships among the school community are a key strength, ensuring that pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. They work well together and help each other. Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and take part in many sporting activities to keep fit. They work well with the local community, raising money for charities and linking with other schools in a wide range of sporting activities. They are well prepared for their futures. Pupils work safely and they come to school regularly, leading to above-average attendance.

Pupils achieve well and attain standards that are above average overall by the end of Year 6. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are a little below those expected, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress in Reception and achieve well. They enter Year 1 having achieved the goals for children of their age, with many children exceeding them in some areas. Throughout Years 1 and 2 pupils also achieve well. In the 2006 assessments, standards in reading and writing were broadly average at the end of Year 2, and were above average in mathematics. Standards have improved this year. Pupils make good progress overall in Years 3 to 6 so that they achieve well. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 6 were above average in mathematics and science, and well above average in English. Inspection evidence suggests that the above-average standards will be maintained in this year's tests.

Teaching is good in most lessons and results in good progress. Just occasionally teaching is weaker because questioning is not sharp enough to extend pupils' thinking and occasionally marking is inconsistent. The curriculum is good and is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular experiences. The needs of all groups of pupils are well met by the curriculum. Pupils are well cared for. The support that they receive in relation to their personal and academic development is good. Pupils feel secure at school and procedures to keep them safe are effective.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the senior management team have worked hard to bring about improvements over the past few years. Past weak teaching has been eradicated and the school is improving. Effective assessment and tracking procedures have been introduced and these are helping to drive standards up. Several parents and carers do not think that the school seeks their views well enough or takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The good improvement since the last inspection and the positive improvements that have occurred recently, as well as the now stable staff team and strong senior management, means that there is good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school so that all pupils can achieve their best.
- Review the way that the views of parents and carers are sought so that their suggestions and concerns are taken into account.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In the 2006 national tests for pupils in Year 6, standards were above average. The number of pupils attaining the higher levels in all subjects was well above average. Pupils across the school achieve well and make good progress in most lessons. Children make good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage because of good provision and good teaching, so that they enter Year 1 with just above expected standards. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 were not as high as they could have been. They were broadly average. This is because year groups vary in relation to their prior attainment, and also because of some past weak teaching. Monitoring records show that teaching has improved considerably across the school this year, enabling pupils to achieve well. This has resulted in improved progress in the current Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, pupils also achieve well and the above-average standards recorded in 2006 look to have been maintained this year.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school is reflected in good attendance and punctuality. Their good attitudes and behaviour are underpinned by excellent relationships. Pupils say bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Good gains in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enable them to appreciate other's achievements and show care and consideration for one another.

Pupils contribute well to the school and work appropriately with other schools. They contribute well to the local community. They enjoy taking responsibility, as, for example, when acting as playground leaders or buddies. The school council makes an effective contribution to school life and ensures pupils' views are well represented. Through its activities, it gives a valuable introduction to the workings of democracy. Raising money for charities and the strong focus on basic skills, together with many opportunities for working together, lays a firm foundation for pupils' future working lives. As one pupil commented, 'It helps us to think about what we have got and what others haven't.' Pupils have good understanding of healthy lifestyles, including keeping fit and eating plenty of fruit and vegetables. Together with the staff they are working hard to gain 'Healthy School' status. Pupils show good understanding of the need to stay safe.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and result in pupils making good progress. Some outstanding teaching was seen in the Reception classes where children benefit from some high quality experiences that help them to achieve well. Teaching across the school is characterised by well-planned lessons, effective use of resources including the interactive white boards, and particularly strong relationships that help pupils to grow in confidence. In a few lessons teaching lacks pace so that pupils do not do as much as they could, and books are not always marked with helpful comments. Questions are generally used well to extend pupils' understanding and thinking skills, but just occasionally questions are not used as well as they could be. Teaching assistants are well used and give valuable support to learning particularly for pupils with learning

difficulties and disabilities. Management of pupils is good. The vast majority of teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well to meet the varying needs of pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Significant changes, including better links between subjects are having a positive impact on learning. The school has responded well to identified weaknesses in Key Stage 1 performance, especially by boys. Changes to the curriculum have led to more practical approaches and enabled pupils to be more involved in planning. This has resulted in improved performance by all pupils, including boys. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good. It is well planned and provides a good balance of learning activities. Good quality enrichment through themed days and visits and visitors such as the Year 5 day on 'the Romans' during the inspection are a positive feature of the provision. The good range of extra curricular opportunities is well supported by pupils. The school's comprehensive programme of Personal, Social and Health Education, together with the work leading to the award of Active Mark has enhanced sporting provision.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The good care, guidance and support that pupils receive has a positive impact on pupils' well being and on their academic achievements. Procedures to deal with all aspects of pupils' pastoral care and welfare are very thorough. Systems to protect pupils are secure. Rigorous checks are undertaken to keep pupils safe. Academic guidance is generally good. Targets are in place although procedures vary between classes. Pupils have a good knowledge of their targets and are aware that their own targets may be relevant to more than one subject. Assessment procedures have improved recently and the way in which data is now collected and monitored is having a positive impact on improving standards and achievement across the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and assistant headteachers have a clear vision of the schools' strengths and areas for improvement. Good progress has been made on raising standards, particularly in Year 2, and in improving the achievement of boys. This has been because the senior managers have clearly identified where improvements are needed and have put strategies in place to move the school forward. For example, rigorous data gathering has identified which pupils need additional help and support, and this has been provided. Monitoring of teaching and learning has resulted in changes of staff and a settled staff team following a period of instability. There are still areas where teaching is inconsistent however, and in these classes pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. The school is fully inclusive enabling all pupils to be fully involved and achieve as well as each other. Governors support the school well. They are aware of their responsibilities but could be more challenging in their roles. Links with support services are good. Most parents are happy with the school, they like the 'family atmosphere and the team spirit.' A minority however, express some concerns. The most recurrent themes relate to behaviour of pupils, although inspection evidence found behaviour to be good. Despite the best efforts of the school some parents do not feel that their views are sought well enough or that their suggestions and concerns are taken into account.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

17 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Sandling Primary School, Ashburnham Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2JG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about all the interesting things you do at school. You were very helpful to us. We think yours is a good school.

You told us that you really enjoy school. We know that you come to school regularly and that you make good progress in your lessons. You achieve well. We noticed that you behave well in and around the school and that you work happily together. We think that the relationships you have with other pupils and with your teachers are excellent. Teaching is mostly good, although it could be better in a few classes. Your teachers and teaching assistants take good care of you and provide some exciting activities for you to do. We know you enjoy sport and we were pleased to see that you are trying to lead healthy lives. Your headteacher and the other staff work hard to help you improve and to keep you safe. Senior staff lead the school well. There are two things that we are asking the school to do better:

- Make sure that all the teaching is good so that you all achieve well.
- Find ways of improving links with parents and carers. You may be able to think of some ideas to help improve these links.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Morris Lead Inspector