

Sandye Place Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109651
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	324996
Inspection date	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	463
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Jaegar
Headteacher	Mr Peter Teague
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
School address	Park Road Sandy Bedfordshire SG19 1JD
Telephone number	01767680420
Fax number	01767691141

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- progress made by pupils taking into account their age, starting points and time at the school
- the quality of teaching, especially in relation to behaviour management
- how well the school has responded to curriculum reforms and how well the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, achievement and attainment information, including the QCA optional test results, observation of lessons, scrutiny of documentation provided by the school, observation of the school at work, discussions with senior managers, talking to governors and pupils, and an analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Sandye Place is an average-sized middle school serving the town of Sandy. There is pre-school provision on the school site which is not managed by the governing body. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds but the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. There is a larger number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is found nationally. These are mainly moderate learning and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has gained the School Achievement award, Healthy Schools status and Sportsmark.

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 which has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The headteacher leads and manages the school extremely well. He has created a happy and hard working school with high expectations and clear moral values, where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best.

Achievement is outstanding, pupils really enjoy their work and achieve challenging targets. From a low skills base in Year 4, pupils consistently achieve results above the national average in the Key Stage 2 tests and in the optional tests in Years 7 and 8. Pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and a wide range of successful intervention strategies are put in place to help them make progress. Those who require extra help with their learning make rapid progress due to the quality of skilled individual support they receive. Girls do not achieve as well as boys, but the school is taking action to try to remedy this situation. Pupils are very well cared for and this is contributing to their desire to succeed. Staff are committed and dedicated. This has a positive impact on learning and progress because pupils are supported by staff who know them well and challenge them to make the best possible progress.

Personal development is good. Pupils are well mannered, friendly and are keen to express their views. Behaviour is outstanding and is promoted by an effective reward and sanctions system which includes a Saturday morning detention. This proves to be a real incentive for pupils to behave well, as one pupil remarked, 'It really works!' Attendance is good and improving because of stringent monitoring. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding about how to keep safe and healthy. Many do not always apply this knowledge to the packed lunches they bring to school. The vast majority of pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of physical activities, educational visits, and clubs provided by the school. An active school council encourages pupils to participate in making decisions, such as improving the facilities in the playground, and they feel their views are taken seriously. Pupils contribute well to the wider community by, for example, raising money for charity and organising local sports tournaments. Pupils feel well prepared for the transition to the upper school and have started to think about their futures supported by a good careers education programme. However, financial capability and wider economic understanding are less well developed.

Parents appreciate the work the school does for their children. As one parent wrote, 'We feel the school is doing everything necessary to make Sandye Place a school where children are happy to go and willing to learn.' However, several parents expressed concern about the level of bullying at the school. When questioned, during the inspection about this, pupils replied that they felt safe in school and that incidents of bullying were dealt with promptly and effectively. This view is endorsed by the school's own regular pupil surveys.

The school is a very caring and inclusive community where pupils feel valued and secure. The care and guidance shown by staff is outstanding, and is clearly seen in their efforts to ensure that all learners are healthy, happy and safe. Robust arrangements for safeguarding are in place and the child protection policy, along with regular training, ensure that staff are aware of what procedures to follow.

Teaching is good. The very few incidents of poor behaviour are managed extremely well with the minimum amount of disruption for other pupils. Difficult situations are defused and confrontation avoided through positive reinforcement and very effective use of praise and

encouragement. This gives pupils clear expectations for both behaviour and learning. The teachers' high level of specialist subject knowledge helps them to make learning exciting and motivates pupils to want to find out more. Occasionally, the tasks set do not match the abilities of the pupils and the pace of the lesson is too slow. Assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress are strengths of the school. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, where the pupils were writing a discursive account of a story about the Fire Python, the teacher noticed the pupils were not using capital letters. She stopped the activity and did a quick recap of capital letters, making excellent use of a computer programme. As a result, when the pupils went back to their written work they used capital letters correctly and their work was greatly improved. Pupils know the levels they are working at and are involved in setting their own targets. They are able to recognize the progress they are making.

The curriculum is outstanding. There is good emphasis on literacy and mathematics, and all pupils study French from Year 5. Pupils are taught in small groups that are determined by ability and sometimes by gender, so that individual needs can be met. Liaison with the lower schools and the upper school has improved greatly so that pupils settle into school quickly and are confident about moving to the upper school. The school has responded well to the demands of the new curriculum reforms, for example, by ensuring that pupils in Years 7 and 8 study careers education by using a specialist computer programme. The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent with artists in residence, visits to art galleries, museums and the theatre, as well as sporting and musical clubs. The school ensures that no pupils are excluded from activities because of lack of funding so that no pupils are disadvantaged.

The school's leadership team is dynamic and determined, and over the years has been willing to become involved in a number of initiatives which have helped to raise achievement. The roles of senior and middle managers in monitoring and setting targets for different aspects of the school's work are very well developed and the schools' self-evaluation is accurate. There is good capacity for further improvement. Governors use their professional expertise well in support of the school. Finances are managed very efficiently and the school has achieved the Financial Management in Schools award. Resources are deployed so that pupils are very well supported by a good ratio of adults to pupils. The school achieves excellent value for money. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of the local area which the school serves, and work hard to raise pupils' aspirations and to prepare them for life in a diverse community.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve the consistency of teaching across all subjects in the school by:

- setting a brisk pace in all lessons
- ensuring that the tasks set match closely the ability of the pupils.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandye Place School, Sandy, SG19 1JD

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your school on 25 February. I enjoyed talking with you. Sandye Place is an outstanding school. I thought you would like to know what was so good about your school.

- The school is very well led by the headteacher and there is an excellent team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; most of you come to school every day, behave very well and are kind to each other.
- You are making excellent progress in your work and achieve very good results in your tests.
- Teachers make your lessons interesting and they keep very careful records of how well you are doing so they can give you extra help when you need it.
- You enjoy the excellent range of activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. You are confident to report any incidents of bullying and you say these are dealt with promptly and effectively. There is excellent care and support for all of you.
- Older pupils feel confident and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

How I thought it could get even better.

- Teachers could make sure all the lessons have a fast pace and that the work they set you always match your ability.

I wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector