

Sandown School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118573
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326848
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	308
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Gollins
Headteacher	Neil Dodson
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Golf Road Deal CT14 6PY
Telephone number	01304 374951
Fax number	01304 380896

Age group	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 in an area of mixed housing. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools. The majority of these pupils have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. A small proportion of pupils are from ethnic minorities and/or speak English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage children are in the Reception classes. Deal is an area where the number of school-aged children is decreasing considerably and the school is affected by this situation in its falling roll, which reduces its funding.

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. It has some outstanding features. Principal of these is the excellent personal development and well-being of pupils of all ages. This is evident in the warm and friendly welcome visitors receive and in the wide smiles of adults and pupils alike throughout the school. Excellent relationships between all members of the school community, together with what a parent describes as 'family values', encourage a great sense of belonging. The strong pastoral care in this 'very friendly school' ensures that all pupils are very well supported so that 'all children thrive', as another parent put it.

Behaviour is exemplary and pupils play very well together, despite the cramped playgrounds. Pupils' great respect for each other is evident in the way they help each other. For example, pupils enjoy acting as buddies for newcomers. 'Our daughter has enjoyed every day at Sandown,' commented one Year 6 pupil's parent. Pupils' views are valued and pupils are encouraged to develop responsibilities for each other and their environment. They do a lot to keep healthy, such as 'Wake and Shake' exercise sessions, and they know how to keep safe. They enjoy their healthy school lunches and there is a well-attended breakfast club which provides a healthy start to the day. However, one Year 6 pupil bravely admitted, 'I like getting active and eating healthy food, but breakfast club food is all healthy – I don't want to eat celery for breakfast!'

Achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils make good progress, often from low starting points, so that by the time they leave Year 6 their standards are broadly average. Teaching has focused particularly on improving writing since the last inspection, with the result that writing standards have risen. However, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not having enough opportunities to develop their reading skills, so that reading standards at this early stage are lower than they should be.

Good teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities work hard and take a pride in their work. One Year 6 learner summed up the views of many by saying that 'teachers make lessons as much fun as possible'. The interesting curriculum is well enriched with additional learning opportunities, such as the 'brilliant' Year 6 residential trip. Academic guidance is developing well in some classes, but this is not consistent across the school. As a result, not all pupils know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. Several parents comment on how well the 'dedicated' headteacher and staff are leading the school. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff at all levels and in all roles. Leaders and teachers are seen as 'kind and helpful – firm but fair' by pupils, whilst parents praise their approachability. As one commented, 'We always find a solution to any problems, not that there are many at all.'

Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate being welcomed in to help as well as to see what their children are learning. 'A fantastic school', said one parent whilst another commented: 'I would highly recommend this school to other people.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception classes have a good start to their education. The good teaching and excellent care and support ensure that children settle in well and quickly gain confidence. When they first start at the school, children's skills are at levels below age-related expectations, and well below in terms of their language development. Children make good progress so that, by

the time they move on to Year 1, they reach standards broadly in line with national averages. Indeed, in the past two years, there has been a stronger focus on early reading and writing so that Reception children now make outstanding progress in the development of their language skills.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent in the Reception classes. Children work and play in harmony together. They develop confidence in making choices and taking responsibility in their learning. In this way they develop independence as well as good social skills. Teaching is well planned and adults use assessment effectively to help ensure all children's needs are met. However, occasionally tasks for the more able learners are not challenging enough. The classrooms provide a lively and attractive learning environment and children benefit from a good balance of stimulating activities to engage their interests, so that they enjoy their learning and are eager to participate. The outside area is safe and secure and is the focus for continuing improvement to make it more attractive and inviting for the children.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed by a team which includes Reception teaching staff, the Reception leader and the headteacher. Together they have improved provision considerably over the past two years. Parents are 'very impressed' with their children's experience and the 'lovely' way they settle in. 'I am amazed at what my daughter has learned. I only have the school to thank for that,' said a Reception parent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading in Years 1 and 2 by ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their individual reading skills.
- Ensure greater consistency in academic guidance so that all pupils are helped to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There has been an upward trend in standards and achievement since the last inspection. Nearly all pupils now make good progress in English, mathematics and science throughout the school and their achievement is good. The focus on raising writing standards has been very successful. However, there is a dip in reading progress in Years 1 and 2, where pupils do not always have sufficiently regular opportunities to read individually to adults in order to develop their reading skills and fluency. As a result of the excellent support they receive, the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils is a distinctive feature of this school. Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to develop a strong code of values which they demonstrate in the great respect both adults and children show towards one another. The active school council meets regularly and contributes ideas to help improve the school. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and demonstrate a great enjoyment of learning and of all the school has to offer them. They are eager to raise funds for those in less fortunate circumstances, both in their own locality and further afield.

Pupils are keen to explain how to keep healthy and safe. They are confident that they have someone to speak to about any concerns they might have. They say there is rarely any bad

behaviour. Parents comment that any incidents are quickly dealt with. Attendance is improving and for the majority of pupils it is likely to be above average this year. There have been no exclusions over the past year. There are good links with other schools and local churches and pupils take part, singing and performing in community events. Their good progress in acquiring academic and social skills prepares pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good planning and good teaching result in the good progress pupils make. 'Teachers really help us,' said one pupil, echoed by many others. Indeed, teachers came out top when a group of pupils of all ages were asked what they liked best about school. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they pass on to learners. Experienced teaching assistants give good support during lessons, especially to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An inspiring Year 6 numeracy lesson during the inspection skilfully linked art, history and science with mathematics to extend pupils' learning about measuring. This enthused pupils to achieve outstandingly well in their measuring tasks, as they attempted to disprove Leonardo's theory and to apply the Ancient Greeks' 'golden ratio' to everyday measuring. Work matches the needs of pupils well in most classes, but a few teachers' expectations of what younger pupils can do are not always high enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and consequently learners enjoy their work. Teachers are increasingly making links between subjects to make learning more relevant. Rigorous curriculum planning provides a good structure for teaching. There is good provision for English, mathematics and science, leading to good progress in these subjects through the school. The curriculum makes good provision for personal, social and health education, which contributes well to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The school is planning to develop the curriculum more creatively in response to the need to link all subjects more coherently in order to further engage the interests of all learners. Curriculum provision is well enhanced by a wide variety of popular clubs and after-school activities, together with enjoyable themed days and weeks, visitors and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is outstanding and is a strength of this school. 'My child has benefited strongly by going to Sandown School,' wrote the parent of a dyslexic pupil. 'He has had many opportunities he would not have had at other schools.' All pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support at this school. As a result they make outstanding progress. The school has very good links with external agencies and provides high quality support for its vulnerable pupils, so that all can develop and achieve well. 'Attendance Ted' and first-day calls are just two of the many actions the school takes to improve the level of attendance, which is now rising. Academic guidance is inconsistent and is therefore not as strong as pastoral care. Teachers' marking does not always suggest next steps pupils can take in their learning. Pupils in some classes have individual learning targets and are able to assess

their own progress. However, some learners do not know how well they are doing and are unsure how to improve their work, and this prevents them from making greater progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

'The headteacher is a hard-working and dedicated professional,' said one parent, echoed by many. He has a very clear direction for school improvement and, together with the strong and enthusiastic leadership team, is driving the school forward on all fronts. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, including upward trends in older pupils' standards and achievement in all the core subjects. Now that pupils make good progress across the whole school standards are on track to rise further still. The success of initiatives already in hand demonstrates a good capacity to make further improvements. Challenging targets are set and yet most are exceeded by pupils in Years 3 to 6. However, more challenging targets could be set for Years 1 and 2. Self-evaluation is good and is clearly linked with the school's improvement plan, showing that appropriate areas for development are identified and acted upon. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds have equal opportunities and there is good contribution to community cohesion, especially within the school and locally. There are early links with a school in Uganda, which could be further developed to help pupils understand how children live in other environments and circumstances, different to their own. Governors undertake their monitoring roles effectively and are well informed about how the school is doing, offering appropriate challenge to hold the school to 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	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?	2
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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	1
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Sandown School, Deal CT14 6PY

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel very welcome indeed. We very much enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a good school. It helps you to do good work and cares for you very well.

These are the things that are especially good about your school.

- You make good progress overall. Indeed, some of you make excellent progress. Well done!
- You very much enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is excellent.
- Everybody in the school looks after you very well and it is clear that you enjoy taking responsibilities and helping each other.
- You have a good understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe.
- Your teachers work hard to make your lessons exciting and fun.
- Your school gives you many enjoyable opportunities to take part in extra activities to extend your learning.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors work hard and lead the school well.
- There have been lots of improvements in your school since the last inspection.
- Children in the Reception classes have a good start to their school lives. The outstanding care and welfare arrangements provide them with excellent personal development and well-being.

This is what we think your school could do even better.

- Teachers could provide more opportunities for younger children to read more often and help them to progress more quickly with their reading.
- When they mark your books or help you set your own learning targets, teachers should make sure they all give you useful suggestions more often about what you can do to improve your work. You can help by making sure you know and remember your own learning targets.

You can also help the school by continuing to work hard and enjoy your lessons. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future learning. Keep up the good work!

Yours faithfully,

Jacquie Buttriss

Lead inspector