

Sandwich Junior School

St Bartholomew's Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 0AS

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and school leaders have a clear vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil within a caring community.
- Governors carry out their duties conscientiously under the leadership of an astute chair. They visit the school regularly to see how well pupils are learning.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. Pupils enter the school with average levels of achievement and by the end of Year 6 pupils' outcomes are well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Subject leaders know how well pupils are achieving in their subjects. They are exceptionally well focused on what their pupils need to learn next. This leads to excellent achievement in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching and learning is never less than good and much is outstanding. Pupils benefit from the high levels of expertise and depth of knowledge of many teachers.
- Pupils' love of learning is clear in the enthusiastic way they apply themselves in lessons. Leaders have developed a creative and challenging curriculum that stimulates, excites and engages pupils exceptionally well.
- Pupils' work is of a very high standard. There are many opportunities for pupils to write at length across all subjects. The quality of work they produce in a wide range of other subjects is of a similar high standard to that in English and is always exceptionally neat and well presented.
- The pupils are wonderful ambassadors for their school. They have excellent attitudes to learning. They speak eloquently about their understanding of how to improve their work. As a result, they make sustained and rapid progress.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is impressive. They are exceptionally polite and well mannered.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly successful and is a strong feature of the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong.
- Pupils feel safe and very well cared for in this harmonious environment. Everyone is valued and treated with respect. The school strongly promotes both mental and physical well-being.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Sometimes, plans for improvement do not include measurable targets that would allow senior leaders and governors to more accurately evaluate the impact of their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership even further by setting out in action plans clear, measurable targets and what will be achieved by key points in the year so that senior leaders and governors can monitor the impact of the school's work on outcomes for pupils more precisely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have been unwavering in their determination to drive improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher's passion pervades the school. Staff morale and relationships within the school are very positive. The staff who completed a survey as part of the inspection overwhelmingly support the school's leaders and feel proud to work at the school.
- Subject leaders are a strength of the school. They form an enthusiastic team who are effectively improving teaching of subjects across all years. They check carefully how well pupils are acquiring skills in different subjects and quickly address any weaknesses that come to light. For example, the art subject leader arranged for a local artist with expertise on Turner to work with Year 4 to develop their painting of seascapes. Pupils' improved technique was then used to illustrate their study of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. As a result of their determined, cooperative and effective subject leadership, there is strong capacity for continued improvement.
- Leaders accurately identify strengths and areas for development in teaching. Well-targeted training and coaching is then used to improve teachers' practice. For example, in the autumn term the subject leader for science spotted that pupils' writing of conclusions was underdeveloped. She immediately provided bespoke coaching to rapidly improve teachers' practice so that they could do more to develop the quality of this type of writing.
- There is a strong sense of community, based on the school's four core values, represented by animals. Pupils who met inspectors could enthusiastically describe examples of how they helped each other through teamwork, exemplified by the wolf, or how they had soared high to reach their potential, like the eagle. Pupils were inspired by the salmon to never give up and to take risks to achieve their goals. They understand that failing sometimes is an important stage in learning and they were not fearful of doing so. They cited the dolphin as their symbol for having fun and enjoying their learning. Kindness and respect were evident in the harmonious atmosphere around the school.
- The exciting and interesting curriculum is designed to promote pupils' physical and mental health as well as meeting the needs of individual pupils. It promotes enthusiasm and underpins outstanding outcomes for pupils. It is clear from pupils' books that they have many opportunities to explore, examine and investigate a wide variety of subjects. Teachers know the skills and subject knowledge pupils need to learn effectively. Leaders are committed to making links between subjects to enhance the progress of pupils. For example, the subject leader for geography identified the need to improve pupils' understanding of maps. Through joint planning with the history subject leader, the Year 5 pupils who had recently conducted a walk around the town with the Sandwich History Society will now create a map of the town.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is woven throughout the curriculum. For example, the book *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* is used by Year 5 to debate the rights of Native Americans. The school focuses on 'developing the whole child for future life'. This is done in such a way that pupils grow and mature in their view of the world around them very well. Pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of tolerance, democracy and respect are strong because these values are reinforced through every aspect of school life.
- The school is highly inclusive and all opinions are valued and treated with respect. There is competition for places on the school council and members consider it an honour to represent their peers. Year 6 pupils take their responsibilities as librarians or magazine reporters very seriously. Pupils are proud of their work to raise money for charities, such as global polio eradication. As a result, by the time they leave, pupils are exceptionally well prepared to join the wider community of their secondary school.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is being used to provide a range of additional support that improves their learning and well-being. By the end of Year 6, the gap in their attainment compared with other pupils nationally has narrowed. The school was congratulated by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Education for winning a local award in the key stage 2 category of the Pupil Premium Awards 2016. The school is one of the highest achieving schools in the country for the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school uses the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding for primary schools to provide a range of specialist coaches as well as promoting physical activity across the school, such as 'wake up and shake up' every morning which brings the community together. However, school leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of this funding on participation rates.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. The vast majority say their children are happy and make good progress at the school and believe this is because their children are well taught and cared for by the

dedicated staff. Nine out of ten parents who responded to the online survey Parent View would recommend the school to other parents.

- The school works closely with a group of five schools to offer support and challenge through external moderation and to offer joint opportunities for pupils. For example, the most able pupils from all five schools recently visited Windsor Castle as the culmination of their project on British history.
- Leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of their school's strengths and weaknesses. They take well-judged, effective actions to improve outcomes for pupils. However, action plans sometimes lack measurable targets in terms of improving outcomes for pupils, which makes it more difficult for governors to monitor the impact of the school's work precisely.
- The school enjoys a productive relationship with the local authority. The local authority provides light touch support because it has confidence that the school shows the capacity to lead further improvements. However, local authority advisers have not challenged leaders' improvement planning sufficiently.
- The headteacher has deployed senior staff to successfully support another local school to improve.

■ **The governance of the school**

- Governors fully share the headteacher's vision for Sandwich Junior School to provide education of the very highest quality and they care deeply about each pupil that belongs to it. They are very proud of the school's achievements.
- Governors have wide-ranging expertise and participate in training to enhance their skills.
- Governors know about the school's strengths and weaknesses because of information provided by the headteacher and their frequent visits to the school. They are particularly knowledgeable about developments within subjects and which skills pupils need to develop further. However, they do not always hold senior leaders to account quite as rigorously as they should for the impact of their actions on the progress of pupils. This is due to a lack of measurable targets against which governors can evaluate progress. Nevertheless, governors know precisely how groups of pupils are performing, particularly disadvantaged pupils and others vulnerable to underachievement. The capable chair of governors is aware of the need to sharpen improvement planning to aid evaluation.
- Governors have ensured that pay increases for teachers are only awarded when the staff are effective in their work, including securing at least good achievement among pupils.
- The required information about governance is not present on the website.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and procedures are rigorous. The school has excellent partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies. Safeguarding training for staff and governors is up to date, including training to ensure that staff employed by the school are suitable to work with children. All appropriate checks are carried out. All staff are very vigilant in their approach to pupils' welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is outstanding

- Teachers throughout the school are highly skilled at motivating pupils to learn exceptionally well. Their excellent subject knowledge and the school's rich curriculum enable pupils to make very good progress.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and plan learning that meets closely the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers skilfully assess the progress of pupils by asking challenging and probing questions. Teachers' well-developed subject knowledge supports them to do this very well. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, teachers adjust tasks to move pupils on when they are ready, or allow more time for others to develop a secure understanding. Occasionally, teachers recap what has been learned for all pupils rather than further stretching the most able pupils.
- Teaching assistants make a very effective contribution to supporting pupils' progress. Their questioning techniques skilfully support and challenge pupils' thinking and learning. They encourage pupils to work out answers for themselves. Teaching assistants also run a range of highly effective interventions under the direction of the special educational needs coordinator, who understands pupils' individual learning needs very well.
- Pupils throughout the school show a very clear understanding of where they need to focus their efforts to improve because teachers provide them with clear guidance for learning. Regular, detailed feedback is used by pupils to improve their work. There is a culture of ambition, in which pupils are not afraid of failure. For example, a pupil in Year 4 explained to an inspector how he had assessed his own learning in mathematics, explaining how he knew he had understood and what he would do next. His explanation was accurate and knowledgeable. This very powerful learning is seen across the school and plays a large part in why pupils make such excellent progress and attain very well.
- In line with the school's policy on feedback to pupils, teachers provide incisive and precise feedback

during lessons and in the pupils' books. The personalised feedback shows how thoroughly the teacher has read and valued pupils' work. Challenging questions deepen pupils' thinking. For example, a Year 3 pupil was asked 'why are cats' eyes not sources of light?', to which she replied 'because they reflect headlights'.

- Mathematics teaching has improved and is now highly effective, leading to rapid progress for all groups. There is a strong emphasis across all year groups on ensuring that pupils gain a secure understanding of mathematical concepts, use accurate terminology and become adept at solving complex problems. Pupils are proud of their multiplication skills, which they apply confidently to new situations. Pupils are expected to explain their mathematical reasoning from Year 3 upwards.
- The teaching of reading is well focused, with proportional support to enable the less confident to catch up. Many pupils, including the most able, can draw inferences well and give an opinion about the text. The improved library and an increased selection of different types of reading material have inspired the pupils further. The links between pupils' reading and their development in writing can be clearly seen in their books. Pupils' writing is also enhanced through the use of drama and debate to articulate their ideas. In a Year 6 religious education lesson, pupils were highly engaged discussing the reliability of evidence pertaining to the murder of Thomas Becket, before writing about it. The quality of the writing was exceptional, particularly from the most able writers.
- Teachers are very skilled at teaching science. Pupils in all year groups are successfully focusing on improving their conclusions following investigations. Their writing uses scientific terminology correctly, so that the most able pupils in Year 3 could tell the difference between the accuracy and reliability of information gathered. There were several examples in each year group where pupils' mathematical skills had been applied to their work in science, such as calculating averages and drawing graphs.
- Pupils receive regular homework to support their learning effectively in reading, spelling, mathematics and topic work. Pupils reported that homework completion is checked weekly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are very proud of their school and their achievements.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are confident, self-assured learners who understand what is expected of them. Pupils rise to the challenge of the high expectations placed on them. They are very successful in managing their own attitudes to learning with little or no prompting from teachers or other adults in school.
- Leaders have created a successful learning community where every pupil is known and cared for. Older pupils readily accept responsibility to support younger ones. They take their duties very seriously and understand that they are role models and should set the correct example for others. Opportunities to lead, such as being on the school council or managing the library and reading with younger pupils, are treasured.
- Great care is shown to all pupils, including impressive support for those facing challenges. Staff in the school show a relentless determination to help pupils overcome any difficulties they face and this is building the self-confidence of vulnerable pupils. All staff show extensive knowledge of the pupils. They work very effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they require.
- Leaders are passionate about supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The curriculum includes texts which cover bereavement and bullying to help pupils consider how to respond to these sorts of challenges. Pupils regularly practise relaxation techniques together in the school hall. A Year 3 pupil explained how walking around the recently installed labyrinth helped calm her down when she felt unsettled.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority. Leaders ensure staff are trained carefully to detect signs of pupils at risk. They also ensure that pupils receive teaching which helps them to know how to stay safe in a range of situations, including online. Members of the school council spoke sensitively about how they encourage their peers to share any concerns and how they have promoted ChildLine.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Relationships are excellent and pupils are fully engaged in lessons and enjoy their learning activities. All adults have the highest expectations of behaviour. Pupils are rarely off-task because lessons are generally well matched to their needs.

- Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly towards each other, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school and look after it well. The presentation of their work is of a very high standard.
- Attendance is good and improving for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Incidents of bullying or racist incidents are rare and are dealt with promptly. Pupils know that the use of derogatory language is not acceptable.
- Parents, staff and pupils all agree that behaviour is managed well at the school. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. There is a consistent and effective response to any boisterous behaviour in the playground.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils enter Year 3 mainly from the local infant school but also from a number of different infant schools. Overall, their attainment on joining the school is in line with that of pupils of the same age nationally.
- National test results for Year 6 pupils have been well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling for the last three years. The school's performance information indicates that current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve at least as well as in the recent past at the end of key stage 2.
- Although disadvantaged pupils did not attain as highly as other pupils in 2015, their progress was better than other pupils in the school and nationally. This trend has continued, which is narrowing the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.
- The school introduced a new method for assessing pupils' performance and tracking their progress when the national curriculum changed two years ago. The school's current information shows that most pupils in all year groups are on track to meet age-related expectations. School data about individual pupils shows that many pupils are currently achieving well above national expectations and on track to meet appropriately challenging targets. When a pupil falls behind, successful, closely targeted interventions take place to help them catch up. Some Year 3 pupils were keen to show inspectors how their spellings had rapidly improved through daily short, sharp, effective support by teaching assistants.
- The most able pupils are consistently stretched during lessons and make very good progress. Their written work shows deep understanding and they explain their thinking eloquently.
- Through the transition to a new assessment system, teachers have been checking pupils' progress against a range of learning objectives and skills. Work in books shows that most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, are making good progress and that teachers' assessments are reliable.
- Pupils' writing is of a high standard. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils were absorbed in writing a diary entry, based on the book *Street Child*. Having constructed well-thought-out entries, they regularly and independently re-read their text to check and improve it, before continuing to write.
- Pupils from different starting points make at least good progress in reading. They read with increasing accuracy, fluency and expression.
- Work in pupils' books in a range of subjects is of high quality. For example, pupils develop an appropriate range of scientific skills to support them in hypothesising and drawing sensible conclusions from their investigations. Pupils maintain the high standards reached in mathematics, reading and writing while working in other subjects. Subject knowledge is used across a wide range of subjects; for example Year 3 pupils applied scientific understanding when constructing fridge magnets in design technology lessons.
- In mathematics, Year 3 pupils were observed confidently using subtraction to decide how to spend £10 on the different contents of six equitable party bags. In all year groups, pupils' use of accurate mathematical language is a strong feature. In Year 5, one pupil explained to a teaching assistant how he solves a problem: 'my thinking is that I need to multiply the numerator by the denominator, but that may not work. If it's the inverse, it's more challenging.'

School details

Unique reference number	118548
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10003355

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Sharp
Headteacher	Sheilagh Roberts
Telephone number	01304 612 227
Website	http://www.sandwich-junior.kent.sch.uk/
Email address	office@sandwich-junior.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 June 2012

Information about this school

- Sandwich Junior School is smaller than the average junior school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website because it lacks some of the required information about governance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons across all classes, six jointly with school leaders. The lead inspector also visited six classes, several with the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and two governors. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the governing body on the telephone.
- The lead inspector met a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime and talked informally with staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 65 responses on the online parent questionnaire Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 44 free text question responses submitted by parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those to do with safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of visits by the local authority, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.

Inspection team

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