



Sandwich Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118547
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280341
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	School Road
School category	Community		Sandwich
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Kent CT13 9HT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01304 612228
Number on roll	149	Fax number	01304 613358
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Pamela Wright
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Maria Blackburn

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized infant school which draws its pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds. Whilst the majority of pupils are White British, around 10% come from other ethnic backgrounds and a few are at the early stages of learning English. More pupils than is usual enter and leave the school part way through their infant years. Most of these move to the area temporarily from abroad because their parents are redeployed to a nearby international company. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to that seen in most schools. The headteacher was seconded to the local authority in September 2004. A new headteacher has been appointed for September 2006.

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 school which is continually striving to improve the quality of education for its pupils. It gives good value for money. Since its last inspection, the school has made significant strides in developing an interesting and innovative curriculum which boys and girls alike find enjoyable and exciting. They particularly enjoy the special 'enrichment' events such as 'Inspire' days and a recent trip to Sandwich Museum. Enthusiastic teachers have high expectations of the pupils and make learning fun. For example, Year 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed testing out scooters, bikes, hula hoops and skateboards to find out how they moved. This work was exceptionally well planned to encompass science, literacy and mathematics and the most able pupils created graphs and pie charts on the computer to show their results.

Improvements in teaching and the curriculum, which are both good, have led to rising standards. Standards are above average, except in writing, where recently introduced strategies have not yet had their full impact. Pupils achieve well because teachers use a wide range of methods to suit the different ways that children learn. This begins in the Reception class where children get off to a good start, learning through an effective combination of play and more structured direct teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their consistently good behaviour underpin their good progress. Rigorous assessment procedures enable teachers to set suitably challenging targets for pupils and to follow their progress carefully. The arrangements for checking how well pupils have understood new ideas in lessons are developing well but are not yet consistently good. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve.

The school places equal value on raising pupils' achievement and nurturing their personal development and well-being. Very good pastoral care and a strong emphasis on moral and social development help pupils to feel safe, secure and happy and to grow in confidence and self-esteem. They know why it is important to eat a healthy diet and take regular exercise. Through class discussion in 'circle time', the school council and fundraising for charity, pupils develop a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities and become more mindful of the needs of others. Parents greatly appreciate these aspects of their children's education.

All has not been plain sailing since the last inspection. Standards in national tests have fluctuated between just below and just above average. The school has had to deal with weaknesses in teaching which have affected pupils' progress in the past, increasing numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school at odd times, a high turnover of governors and the secondment of the headteacher to the local authority. These potential barriers to progress have strengthened the determination of staff and governors to pursue excellence in all areas of pupils' education. The acting headteacher has led the school well for the past two years, continuing to build upon the foundations laid by her predecessor. High levels of expertise amongst subject leaders have contributed significantly to improvements in teaching and the curriculum. Good teamwork and shared commitment to raising standards are key features of the good leadership and management. Regular monitoring of standards, teaching and the

curriculum by staff and governors gives everyone a clear idea of what the school does well and where improvement is needed. As the school awaits the arrival of its new headteacher, staff and governors continue to pursue a clear plan of action which has raising standards at its heart. What is lacking is a long-term strategic plan to guide the school's future development, with specific and measurable criteria to enable staff and governors to evaluate its effectiveness.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by helping more pupils to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Establish consistent procedures for assessing pupils' progress in lessons to ensure that they understand how to improve their work.
- Produce a long-term strategic plan for the school's development which includes precise criteria for measuring the impact of the actions taken.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are rising. Children make good progress in Reception from a slightly lower than average starting point, especially in language and communication skills. They continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2, where progress is accelerating due to improvements in teaching. The results of national tests followed an upward trend until 2005 when there was a significant dip due to the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in that year group. In the current Year 2, standards are above average in reading and mathematics. Although standards in writing are also improving, they are broadly average because too few pupils are reaching the higher levels. In reading and mathematics, higher attainers do well. Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English for the first time make good progress because they receive well-targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

These are good. Events such as 'Healthy Week', free fruit at morning break and plenty of opportunities for vigorous exercise help pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Very good moral and social development results in good behaviour and very good relationships which help pupils to feel safe and happy in school. Good spiritual development through assemblies and discussion times enables pupils to reflect on their feelings. An exciting range of activities motivates pupils to learn and ensures high levels of enjoyment. Attendance is satisfactory, marred only by the high number of holidays taken in term time. Strong links with the local community and a keen awareness of the needs of others through charity fund-raising expand pupils' horizons, as do their links with a French school and visits to many places of interest. Pupils learn to appreciate cultural diversity through learning about each other's varied backgrounds.

All of these things, together with good development of their basic skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their learning journey.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

High expectations, good subject knowledge and very supportive relationships with pupils are important factors in the good teaching. Quite simply, teachers enjoy teaching and their enthusiasm is contagious. Pupils respond with eagerness to learn and obvious enjoyment. Lessons are well planned and take good account of pupils' differing needs and their previous attainment. Lessons move at a brisk pace so there is no time for pupils to become bored or disaffected. The strong emphasis on practical 'hands-on' learning ensures all are fully engaged and making good progress. The school recognises the need to achieve greater consistency in the way in which teachers check on pupils' progress in lessons in order to ensure that they understand how to do even better next time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Relevant and interesting links between different subjects are one of the best features of the school's good curriculum. Not created artificially but arising naturally from teachers' good subject knowledge, they make learning more meaningful for the pupils. The strong emphasis on learning through investigation pays dividends. How much more exciting for pupils to learn about scientific forces by exploring bikes, scooters and hula hoops than by lots of teacher talk! The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning is gradually improving as teachers' expertise grows but is not yet fully developed, although some good links with making graphs in mathematics were seen. Pupils' all-round development is significantly enhanced through links with a French school, events such as Arts Week and 'Inspire' days and an interesting range of visits, visitors and clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Very good relationships, personal knowledge of the pupils and sincere concern for their well-being are key features of the good care, guidance and support. Rigorous procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety and for protecting vulnerable children underpin this good provision. Adults are vigilant and alert to pupils' needs. Parents are actively welcomed and involved in supporting their children's progress. Several expressed their delight at how well their children are cared for and encouraged to achieve high standards. Although there are good procedures for setting individual targets for pupils and tracking their academic achievements from term to term, the

arrangements for monitoring their progress on a day-to-day basis are not yet consistent between classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The impact of the school's good leadership and management can be seen in the pupils' good achievement and personal development. Strong teamwork amongst staff and governors ensures that all are working towards the same end – what is best for the pupils. It has also helped the school to overcome challenges that might otherwise have hindered progress. Good leadership by the acting headteacher has enabled the school to continue to build on the achievements of her predecessor.

Subject leaders have become increasingly effective in isolating the causes of underachievement and taking action to remedy shortcomings in teaching. They have proved to be very effective in transforming the curriculum. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings, and, under the able leadership of their new chair, are learning to become more critical and analytical.

Issues from the last inspection have been dealt with thoroughly and effectively. Rigorous analysis of standards, regular monitoring of teaching and attention to the views of governors, parents and pupils all help to give leaders a realistic picture of the how well the school is doing. Commitment, enthusiasm and teamwork place the school in a strong position to continue on its upward path.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed coming to visit your school and meeting you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful and telling us what you like about school.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and we can see why. Here are some of the good things we found out:

you work hard and do well at school because the teachers make lessons fun

all of the adults care for you very well and help you to feel safe and to become more confident

you behave well and get on well with each other and with the grown-ups

when the teachers plan your lessons, they include lots of activities that help you to learn by exploring and finding things out for yourselves

all of the people who run the school keep looking for ways to help you do even better.

We have asked the teachers to do some things to make your school even better:

help more of you to reach high standards in your writing

make sure you understand what you need to do to make better progress in lessons

work out a plan to show how the school is going to improve in the next few years.

We hope you continue to enjoy all of the exciting things that happen in school and, for those of who will be leaving soon, we hope you will be very happy in your new schools.