

Sandford St Martin's Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113818
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	378756
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynette Davies
Headteacher	Simon Donlon
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 January 2009
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed seven teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, analysed 77 questionnaires from parents and carers, and spoke with a few informally. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including pupils' work, systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress, plans for improvement, and reports written by the local authority. Questionnaires completed by 81 pupils and 21 staff were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective are leaders at all levels in driving forward improvement and maintaining the trend of all groups of pupils doing well?
- How effective are strategies in teaching, learning and curriculum development in improving the attainment and progress of more-able pupils in mathematics and writing?
- What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and what is its impact on children's progress?

Information about the school

Sandford St Martin's is an average-sized first school on the outskirts of Wareham. Pupils are drawn from Sandford and the surrounding area including Wareham. There are currently seven classes. One is for the Early Years Foundation Stage children and six are mixed-age classes, three for Years 1 and 2 and three for Years 3 and 4. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has achieved several national awards, the most recent of which are Healthy Schools Award, International Schools Award and Artsmark. There is a privately run nursery on the school site and a privately run breakfast and after-school club, which are inspected separately. The school is subject to reorganisation and will be changing to a primary school with effect from September 2012. A new school building is planned to open for September 2014.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Sandford St Martin's is an outstanding school. Due to excellent leadership and the full commitment of staff and governors there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. The leadership's pursuit of excellence has resulted in consistently high levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics over the last three years. The school gives outstanding value for money because of the excellent outcomes for all pupils.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptionally well led and managed and excellent relationships and outstanding teaching ensure that all children make very good progress. This is built upon throughout the school. By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment is high and this is maintained until pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. All pupils make consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, progress and their overall achievement is outstanding. Initiatives to improve the progress and attainment of more able pupils are showing notable signs of improvement in both mathematics and writing.

The school's strong religious ethos and outstanding care, guidance and support result in excellent relationships that underpin all its work. As a result pupils' behaviour and attitude to school work and life are exemplary. They are extremely punctual to lessons and their attendance is above average. The enriched curriculum is highly effective in engaging pupils in their learning and making a substantial contribution to their strong progress. All pupils are set challenging targets and know clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Safeguarding procedures are meticulously adhered to so that pupils feel very safe in school and parents and carers endorse this view. All of these factors, together with the consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching, ensure a very positive climate for learning. Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in decision making in many aspects of school life. Due to the excellent gains they make in personal and social skills, together with their acquisition of outstanding academic skills, pupils are very well prepared for the future.

Highly effective monitoring procedures have given rise to extremely accurate self-evaluation and this is resulting in significant professional development for teachers. Despite considerable disruption to staffing and uncertainty because of the school's impending reorganisation, a compelling determination and drive has ensured that the significant improvements in teaching made since the last inspection have been sustained. Rigorous tracking and regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress,

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accurate analysis of data and thorough use of securely embedded assessment procedures lead to very carefully planned learning that meets pupils' individual needs well in most of the teaching. However, on a few occasions, planning does not meet the full range of learning needs and, sometimes, the pace of learning slows. The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities exceptionally well, supporting the school during a time of considerable turbulence, monitoring its work and challenging it to continue to improve. At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to be satisfactory. Since then there has been significant improvement in all aspects of its provision and, consequently, in outcomes for pupils. The school has demonstrated consistent success in securing these improvements and this gives it an outstanding capacity to sustain and build further on the improvements already made.

The school's work is exceptionally well supported by its many partnerships and fulfils a valuable role in sharing its own good practice with others. Parents and carers have a high regard for the school and value its work, making such comments as 'We are very pleased with the excellent education and care our children receive at Sandford First School' and 'The school have always taken my concerns about my child's learning seriously and have helped in a big way'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by sharing the outstanding practice that exists within and across year groups, ensuring that:
 - in all lessons the learning needs of all pupils are met so that they make the best possible progress
 - all lessons have an appropriate pace to accelerate the speed of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children enter school with levels of knowledge and skills broadly as expected for their age although some aspects of literacy are below expectations. National tests show that in the last three years attainment has been high in Year 2. High attainment is maintained in the current Year 2, and in Years 3 and 4.

All groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils really enjoy learning, show considerable perseverance and the ability to work independently. The most able pupils are given very good opportunities to work on challenging activities in mathematics when, for example, they take part in solving problems and investigating numbers. In a Year 1/2 mathematics lesson, an enthusiastic, more-able group of pupils made very good progress when challenged to find out how many different ways they could make the number 17 using aliens with differing numbers of legs.

Topics such as 'Time Travel' and 'Aliens' have been particularly successful in raising standards in writing and pupils enjoy preparing their work for writing exhibitions. A

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focus on groups working with the teacher to improve their writing skills has had a significant impact on the progress of more-able writers. In preparation for writing poems, Year 3/4 pupils first learned to write similes and metaphors and were then challenged to add alliteration. The more able were exceptionally well challenged as they were introduced to using a thesaurus in their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do very well because they are given extremely good support and work that helps them make quick progress in developing basic skills. When writing a group poem they became very well focused on the task because it was at the correct level and they were supported by a very skilled teaching assistant.

Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of how to keep safe. For example, they can talk about keeping safe while they play, knowing not to play in certain areas of the playground when it is wet because of the danger of slipping on leaves. They say they get on very well together and are very friendly towards each other. Through their commitment to fruit snacks and enthusiastic participation in sporting activities they show that they have a good understanding about healthy living. This has been validated by the school's recent acquisition of Healthy Schools status. The well-organised school council is a definite voice for getting things done in school and in the local community. Pupils have a very good understanding of cultural differences globally through their link with a school in France and their work to gain the International Schools Award. Their understanding of the cultural differences that exist today in the United Kingdom is less well developed. Nonetheless, their spiritual, moral and social development overall is particularly strong.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good with some that is outstanding. Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent, allowing pupils to easily seek help and support. Teachers are enthusiastic, their subject knowledge is strong and they use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to engage pupils and retain their attention. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and very well used by teachers. Shared lesson planning results in challenging activities that, in most lessons, meet the learning needs of pupils very well. Occasionally, tasks are not at the correct level for a few pupils and so they do not make as much progress as they might. In a very small minority of lessons the pace of learning is affected by pupils spending too long listening to the teacher. Teachers use assessment techniques well to question pupils in lessons and to plan the next steps in their learning. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to improve their work because of consistently helpful direction from marking and from individual targets.

The curriculum is outstanding. Pupils recall, with enthusiasm, exciting topic work such as 'The Great Fire' and 'Pirates'. Pupils are frequently asked to input their ideas into curriculum development, for example in the current 'Space' topic. Through these topics significant home learning takes place such as investigating ideas and building models. Very clear links are established across subjects offering all pupils, including the more able, many opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Visits and visitors regularly enhance learning. The school's recent award of the Artsmark demonstrates its strengths in music, art and drama. Extra-curricular activities considerably enrich pupils' experiences through a wide variety of very well-run and well-resourced clubs. Pupils say 'learning is the best thing in this school'.

Pupils are extremely well cared for and very well known to adults. They know that adults listen to them carefully and respect their views. Parents and carers and pupils show a very high level of satisfaction with school safety, and safeguarding procedures are carried out diligently. Links with outside agencies are very good, supporting the well-organised and effective provision for potentially vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior team are highly effective. Together with the governing body, they have welded together a whole-school team with a very strong commitment to continuing to improve. Initiatives to improve teaching and learning so as to raise attainment and improve progress have been highly successful. This is because self-evaluation is very thorough, accurately identifying the correct priorities and supporting these with detailed action plans and challenging targets.

Responsibilities for the many areas of the school’s work are now shared very effectively across the whole-school team. Everyone is extremely positive and determined that the school should provide the very best education possible. The school’s financial position has been particularly well managed as the transformation into a primary school begins.

The governing body is very well organised and knowledgeable, with governors linked to subject areas or aspects of the school’s work, and regularly involved at both a strategic and operational level. They ask challenging questions and monitor the school’s performance carefully.

The school is a very cohesive community and strong at both a local and global level, illustrated by their International School Award, regular weekly visitors from the church and links with local sports clubs. Pupils’ understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in the United Kingdom is less strong.

Strong partnerships enhance outcomes for pupils; the school engages parents and carers very well and has an extremely good range of partnerships with other schools and agencies. Promoting equality of opportunity for different groups of pupils is very well managed through scrupulous monitoring. Leaders are clearly focused on ensuring that all pupils make the best possible progress. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The governing body and school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and regular training and monitoring ensure that this is maintained at a high standard.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is one of the many strengths of the school. Outstanding teaching, excellent relationships and a safe but stimulating and exciting environment, together with the correct balance of adult- and child-chosen activities, enable children to make very good progress. As a result all reach the goals expected and many exceed them by the end of the Reception Year. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is particularly good. Children’s interest was entirely captivated when the teacher laid a tea party out on the carpet for six soft toys. Children learned quickly as they confidently gave out bowls and cups and were challenged to add together the number they needed for the party. Their learning was carefully assessed during ‘Lets Explore’ time when they chose to independently lay the table again.

The curriculum and indoor and outdoor environments are entirely suitable for Reception children. Adults interacted very well with children as they excitedly built a trap for one of ‘The Three Bears’ that had left sandy footprints around the outdoor area. Appropriate questioning facilitates children’s rapid development. In whatever they are engaged, children behave very well as they share resources, especially enjoying using small tweezers to pick up sequins to decorate their work while practising their manipulation skills. Their level of concentration is excellent. They are confident and at ease in the surroundings because their independence and personal development is carefully fostered as they choose their tasks and tidy away afterwards. Very good assessment procedures are used to plan the next steps in learning for individual children. This makes a significant contribution to progress. Parents and carers are encouraged to contribute instances of learning at home to each child’s beautifully collated learning journey. They show their appreciation of the outstanding provision by making such comments as: ‘We were welcomed very positively. Communication is good. I feel that the Reception base is well managed and a fantastic learning environment for my child.’

Reception has excellent links with the private Nursery on site, creating a seamless transition for young children from Nursery to Reception. This very good liaison and induction ensure that both parents and carers, and children are very familiar with the Reception class and well supported before starting school. Children are extremely well cared for in a safe, healthy and calm environment and their welfare is paramount. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. It is an exceptionally strong team.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very supportive of the school. Of the very small number of concerns raised most were individual issues. A few parents and carers felt that their children were not making sufficient progress and that this was largely related to staffing issues. Inspectors found that pupils make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress, and that attainment is high in comparison with national averages. A few also felt that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found pupils' behaviour to be exemplary; a very small minority of pupils who exhibit occasional behaviour difficulties are extremely well managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandford St Martin’s Church of England First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	75	17	22	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	65	23	30	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	40	52	32	42	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	56	22	29	7	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	51	66	22	29	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	43	56	30	39	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	57	31	40	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	39	36	47	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	48	33	43	5	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	42	29	38	3	4	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	45	34	44	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	35	45	32	42	3	4	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	61	27	35	3	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2011

Dear Children

**Inspection of Sandford St Martin's Church of England First School,
Sandford, Wareham BH20 7AJ**

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently and for spending time talking to us. We really enjoyed meeting you. We found Sandford St Martin's to be an outstanding school. These are some of the best things we found.

- You really enjoy coming to school and are very polite and well behaved. This is helping you to do very well indeed.
- You have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and know how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- You enjoy helping in school and get on really well together.
- Your teachers teach you well and you have a very good attitude to your work.
- You are very well cared for and you told us that you feel very happy and safe in school.

All the adults in your school want you to do your very best. Although they know what needs to be done next, we have asked them to do some things to make your learning even better.

- We have asked them to ensure that the tasks teachers give you always help you to make the best progress possible and that your lessons always move at a good pace.

Please keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Anna Sketchley
Lead inspector

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