

Sandford St Martin’s Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Sandford, Wareham, Dorset BH20 7BN

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has changed considerably since the last inspection. The resulting instability has contributed to the decline in standards.
- Over the last three years, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have made less progress than their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders’ action plans are not sharp enough to evaluate which actions are having the most effect.
- Governors’ monitoring of the actions taken by leaders, including their use of additional funding, has not been incisive enough.
- Middle leaders lack the time, and some of the leadership skills, needed for strategic leadership of their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers do not consistently plan learning which is well matched to pupils’ starting points. The most able pupils are not challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their work because they do not always receive effective guidance from their teachers.
- Rates of absence are still too high for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check remains below the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher are working with determination to achieve success for the school.
- The early years provision is effective in providing children with a good start to school.
- The school is a warm and welcoming environment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - governors challenge leaders more stringently, including for the use of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and for the development of sport
 - leaders sustain recent improvements and check the impact of their actions through precise and measurable plans
 - middle leaders develop their skills and expertise so that they have a greater impact on improving standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make better progress through each year group by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan and adapt tasks to meet the needs and abilities of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND
 - providing sufficient stretch and challenge so that the most able pupils achieve their potential
 - identifying pupils' knowledge and understanding accurately so that gaps in learning are reduced quickly, including in the accuracy of spelling and punctuation, as well as their letter and number orientation
 - improving the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by continuing to implement strategies to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the school. These include a change in age range, a site relocation and five headteachers within an 18-month period. Staff morale has remained high but this instability has impeded the school's ability to establish consistency and the impetus to improve pupils' progress. Nonetheless, since the appointment of a new headteacher in 2017, governors have not challenged leaders rigorously enough to check that actions are having the intended effect.
- Since the appointment of new senior leaders in 2017, governors and leaders have refreshed the vision and values of the school. They have established more effective structures to monitor the quality of the school's work. However, there is still much work to do to improve some of the weakest aspects of teaching in some classes.
- Due to the decline in outcomes, the local authority has provided the school with the support and challenge needed to hasten the speed of improvement. School leaders are not reliant on this support and have themselves sought guidance to improve reading. The progress of current pupils is improving but this is not yet sufficient to overcome the legacy of weaker teaching. This is particularly evident in the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have developed assessment systems to track pupils' performance more regularly. This scrutiny identifies the pupils who fall behind so that additional support is put in place. Teachers moderate assessment and share practice with other schools so there is now greater confidence in the accuracy of this information.
- Leaders meet with teachers regularly to discuss pupils' progress and agree strategies to improve this. However, the actions agreed are sometimes too dependent on additional support and do not focus on how teachers will adapt their planning in response. The success criteria agreed are too generic and ambiguous and not closely enough aligned to pupils' outcomes. Therefore, it is difficult for leaders and teachers to know what has worked and what has not. Strategies that have not shown impact are often continued.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not meet age-related expectations by the end of Year 2. In 2018, there was an improvement in their performance in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, the progress that current pupils make varies across classes. Too many pupils do not make sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable about the needs of pupils with SEND. Funding is used successfully to provide the resources needed to support the social, emotional and therapeutic needs of pupils. However, the evaluation of the impact of these interventions on academic outcomes is not secure. The SENCo has not been given sufficient licence to monitor the progress of pupils rigorously and to challenge practice that falls below expectations. Consequently, pupils, particularly in key stage 2, do not make enough progress from their starting points.
- Middle leaders feel well supported by senior leaders and have welcomed the recent

changes to the organisation of middle leadership. These have provided greater cohesion to this team and have served to clarify roles. Middle leaders are knowledgeable about their subject areas and provide resources and advice to their colleagues. They have developed their networks and they work in partnership with other schools and advisory services, for example in music. However, some middle leaders do not feel that they have the time needed to fulfil their roles as effectively as they would like. They are not yet strategic enough in their understanding of how their roles align with improvement priorities. Neither do they hold their colleagues to account for improving pupils' progress.

- Leaders have a clear vision for the curriculum. They show integrity in their commitment to widening pupils' knowledge. As one pupil said, 'There are loads of fun things to learn about.' Middle leaders are considering the development of pupils' understanding across a range of subjects and their acquisition of subject-specific skills. This discussion is particularly effective in the development of pupils' scientific skills and understanding. The forest school area, for example, is already used to good effect to explore concepts such as 'habitat'. However, there is a disparity in the quality of pupils' work across different areas of the curriculum because of variability in teaching.
- Staff organise a range of enrichment experiences for pupils. Activities such as outdoor learning, educational visits and those involving sport and the creative and performing arts make a significant contribution to pupils' experiences. Leaders have used the sport premium effectively but are not able to evaluate the impact of these activities on pupils' skills and participation rates.
- Leaders support staff to develop their skills through training and professional development opportunities. Newly qualified teachers receive effective guidance to ensure a secure foundation at the start of their teaching careers.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognise the positive attitudes displayed by pupils, the support of parents and carers and, therefore, the enormous potential that the school has. They are determined to ensure that the school continues its recovery. They have had success in redefining the school's vision and expectations to establish a better foundation from which to build. They are willing and able to act on advice and guidance.
- Governors are beginning to ask the right questions of school leaders but have not interrogated fully whether actions are having the desired effect. Therefore, underperformance has not been rectified quickly enough. Too many pupils have left the school without achieving the standards of which they are capable.
- Governors willingly give of their time, for example to hear pupils read. They have established a positive working relationship with leaders and staff. They visit the school so that they have a first-hand knowledge of the school's work. However, there is not yet a coherent or systematic approach to this monitoring. Therefore, the conclusions reached are not shared more widely with the full governing body so that subsequent actions can be agreed.
- Governors have completed the necessary training and are diligent about their statutory responsibilities. They are currently reviewing their structures so that they can support

and hold leaders to account more effectively. They have recruited new governors with relevant experience to support them to ask more probing questions of school leaders.

- The school's action plans and reports to governors' committees are too focused on the narrative of actions taken for comparative analysis to be possible. This is also true of the scrutiny of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and the development of sport. Therefore, it is difficult for governors to gauge the impact of leaders' actions on improving standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding and pupils feel safe, protected and happy in school.
- Leaders are conscientious in their approach to safeguarding and are thorough in their record-keeping. All staff receive relevant training and are confident in how to report concerns. When referrals are made, staff are informed that action has been taken. Staff work effectively with external agencies and ensure that there is a follow-up when they are not satisfied with the resolution of a referral. Employment checks are in place to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying is rare and understand the difference between this and pupils getting 'carried away'. They know that they can talk to staff about any concerns they might have. They are confident that staff will take such concerns seriously. Parents agree that this is a positive aspect of the school's work. One comment made is reflective of many: 'We have always been impressed with the consistent and high level of care', meaning that pupils are 'thriving and love being part of the school'.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe when online. They spoke about their work to recognise risk in their everyday lives. These messages are reinforced through the curriculum and in assemblies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable. The work in pupils' books, assessment of their progress and observations in lessons show that pupils are capable of achieving more. Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Therefore, the rate of their progress slows.
- Teachers do not use their assessment of pupils' skill and competencies to direct them to activities that are well matched to their ability. The most able pupils are not directed towards tasks that provide apt challenge. They often start at a level that is too easy before they attempt more complex questions. Teachers, at times, provide additional work of a similar standard, rather than requiring pupils to demonstrate a higher level of skill.
- Where teachers do not adapt their planning or identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, misconceptions continue for too long. Teachers do not routinely target

their support for pupils who are unsure or who fall behind, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Where this is the case, pupils accomplish little in the time given. There are some exceptions to this in some classes where teachers circulate effectively and teaching assistants reinforce and develop pupils' skills well. Where this is the case, pupils persevere with activities that they find difficult.

- Pupils write for different audiences and purposes. However, pupils are not always able to convey their ideas in a legible and understandable way. This is because teachers do not consistently remedy errors in letter orientation or focus on supporting pupils to improve their handwriting skills. Pupils' compositions can lose meaning because of prolific errors in spelling and punctuation. There are marked differences in the quality of pupils' writing in different subjects across the curriculum. This reflects the varied levels of teachers' expectations.
- In mathematics, leaders have identified the weaknesses in pupils' understanding and are beginning to implement a more structured approach to overcome these. Pupils' fluency and confidence in their arithmetic skills are improving as a result. However, while there has been a focus on supporting pupils to show a deeper level of understanding, pupils are not directed to these tasks quickly enough. Therefore, pupils do not always have the scope to apply their knowledge to problem-solving and reasoning questions. Sometimes, weaknesses in pupils' literacy prevent them from explaining their conclusions with clarity.
- Despite the weaknesses described above, there are pockets of strong practice. Where teachers use assessment well, pupils reflect on their learning and can make noticeable improvements. Pupils vary their vocabulary, structure their work using time connectives and use complex punctuation to create more sophisticated sentences. However, practice such as this is not evident in all classes. Teachers are not always skilled in using agreed approaches to facilitate pupils' progress. As it is not routine practice, pupils are not yet confident in making improvements to the quality of their work.
- Reading is an improving aspect of the school's work. Pupils are encouraged to choose their own books and read for enjoyment. For example, many pupils were observed at breaktime sharing their reading as part of World Book Day. Their books are usually well matched to their level of ability and pupils can read with accuracy, fluency and expression. However, where pupils' understanding of phonics is not secure, they struggle to decode words and their reading becomes stilted, which makes it difficult for them to follow meaning easily.
- An increasingly structured approach to guided reading directs pupils towards a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. As a result, the most able pupils develop their skills in comprehension, prediction and inference. Where pupils' reading is not secure, vocabulary can be too complex, and this hinders them from developing their skills independently.
- The large majority of pupils conscientiously complete the work that teachers set. They are keen to share their ideas and explain what they are doing. However, where teaching is not well directed, pupils do not sustain their focus. This is, however, a reflection of the quality of teaching rather than pupils' attitudes. Where pupils are uncertain, they often wait for the teacher to direct them. They do not show the initiative required to use the resources supplied to seek out support for themselves.

- School leaders have considered how to engage parents in their children's learning. Parents have been invited to open-class events and the recently convened parents' forum allows teachers to share information. Home learning is used to reinforce pupils' understanding and apply their skills and interests to respond to projects. For example, the replica tank built by a pupil as part of a home-learning challenge has taken pride of place in the library area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Parents are pleased with the pastoral care their children receive. Many parents commented to inspectors about the support their children had received from staff to help them settle into school. Pupils say that 'everyone is nice and kind' and 'will look after you'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted and reinforced through colourful displays around the site. Pupils can speak about these concepts with confidence. The Christian values that underpin the school are known to pupils. They can describe the meaning of concepts such as 'humility' and 'generosity' and how they can demonstrate these qualities. Pupils also explore and understand other faiths, customs and beliefs.
- Pupils participate and contribute to their local and school community. Pupils are proud of the responsibility they are given, such as being a sports ambassador or an e-safety champion. A member of the school council said that 'we get to do really important things in the school', such as the development of the outside play equipment. Teachers encourage pupils to share their thoughts through the 'ideas box'.
- Pupils understand concepts such as democracy, tolerance and respect, which makes them well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are less sure about the dangers posed by those who might try to influence them with extreme views.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a friendly and welcoming environment. This promotes pupils' social skills and gives them the confidence to initiate conversations with adults. They are proud of their school and want to meet with visitors. Pupils are curious and engaging. These positive qualities are demonstrated in their relationships with each other during lessons and social times. Pupils were observed sitting and chatting or playing cooperatively in the spacious outside areas. Vulnerable pupils are supported well at these times and have a supervised safe space. Pupils respond well to the clear routines and expectations of staff.
- Leaders have developed strategies to support pupils who find behaviour expectations difficult to manage. Staff keep a close track on incidents and respond effectively when these do occur. As a result, fixed-term exclusions are used as a last resort. When these are unavoidable, leaders ensure that they are warranted, that actions are documented

and that parents are involved. Therefore, the number of repeat exclusions is low. Where necessary, leaders work with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the necessary support.

- Leaders now more stringently challenge pupils who do not attend regularly. There are effective systems in place to identify patterns of absence. In response, there is a suitable escalation of strategies to promote good attendance. Overall, attendance is in line with national figures and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over recent years, the proportions of pupils who achieve age-related expectations in reading and mathematics by the end of year 2 have been at least in line with national figures. A smaller proportion of pupils than seen nationally demonstrate a higher level of understanding. Weaknesses in the teaching of writing mean that, over several years, writing has not been strong. Current pupils do not make the progress needed to catch up after this legacy.
- By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in combined reading, writing and mathematics is still below national figures. The same is true for the proportion of pupils demonstrating a higher level of understanding. From their starting points, pupils make weak progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Their progress in the latter two areas has been significantly below that of their peers nationally over the last three years. The continuing variability in the quality of teaching means that current pupils are not making the progress needed to achieve their potential.
- Pupils with SEND do not make sufficient progress from their starting points. This situation is improving for current pupils, who are now making better progress as they move through key stage 1, particularly in mathematics. However, this is not the case for current pupils in key stage 2. Pupils make short-term gains in planned interventions but, because of the weaknesses in teachers' planning, do not sustain this progress in the longer term, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Many disadvantaged pupils do not meet age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. In 2018, there was an improvement in the progress that pupils made by the end of Year 6 in reading and mathematics. However, the progress of current pupils across both key stages varies according to the quality of teaching pupils receive.
- The most able pupils do not reach the highest standards. While performance in reading in 2018 improved to be in the highest 20% of schools nationally, the progress that pupils make in writing and mathematics has been in the lowest 40% of schools for the last three years. Current pupils are not being regularly challenged.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check remains below the national average and this has been the case for the last three years. Pupils improve their skills in Year 2 but current pupils across the school are not always confident in applying their skills independently. Pupils' spelling is not always

phonetically plausible when reading and spelling out unfamiliar words.

- The proportion of pupils who demonstrate a secure understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar by the end of Year 6 has improved and is now above the national average. However, current pupils, of all abilities, do not demonstrate these skills independently so their work is flawed in technical accuracy.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the Reception class with skills that are typically below those expected for their age. However, due to effective teaching, children make good progress and increasingly reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year, including disadvantaged children. Leaders are ambitious to improve the proportion of pupils who exceed expectations for their age.
- Leadership of this phase is strong. Leaders have identified the many strengths and the areas for development accurately. They assess children's skills regularly and plan activities that are well matched to children's skills and interests. For example, teachers have identified the need to develop children's fine motor skills. Therefore, teachers organise activities which vary in complexity to improve children's dexterity. Staff use the learning environment well and have devised plans to improve this further to promote good-quality independent learning and multisensory experiences.
- The atmosphere in the Reception area is purposeful and thriving. Children are motivated and engrossed in the activities that are provided for them. They persevere to complete tasks and are proud of their achievements when they do so. Strong pastoral welfare, combined with good teaching, ensures that children get off to a good start. Children's work reflects the progress that they make in their all-round development. Children with SEND are supported well to develop their communication, speech and language skills.
- Children make good progress in the development of early reading skills. They are able to apply their understanding of phonics and, as a result, many children exceed expectations for their age. Carefully matched interventions support pupils who are not confident in their reading. Staff encourage children to talk about their books and this motivates them to read independently.
- Children's mathematical development is improving so that they increasingly meet and exceed age-related expectations. Children demonstrate increasing confidence in counting objects and identifying shapes and patterns. The most able children begin to accurately identify number patterns, form sequences and solve simple calculations.
- Children's writing has been a priority area, particularly for boys. Children's skills are steadily improving, and more children are meeting and exceeding the standards expected for their age. Teachers carefully devise writing tasks and ensure that children develop a proper pencil grip. This supports children in moving quickly from tentative mark-making to forming recognisable words and then simple sentences.
- Staff engage well with parents so that they are informed and involved in their children's learning. Leaders provide information about the development of phonics, mathematics and early writing so that parents can support their children at home. They

are improving their liaison with pre-school settings so that they have a better understanding of children's needs when they begin in Reception.

- All welfare requirements, including paediatric first aid, are in place. Reception staff are professionally qualified and have the expertise to ensure that children are well prepared for their education in key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	113818
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10024939

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Muraro
Headteacher	Paul Beveridge
Telephone number	01929 552 949
Website	www.sandfordprimary.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@sandfordprimary.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2011

Information about this school

- Sandford St Martin's Primary is an average-sized voluntary aided school.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2017.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. The school has 11 of the 17 ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is broadly in line with that of most schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average.
- The school works in collaboration with schools within the Lychett Minster Pyramid and the Purbeck Education Pyramid.

- The school has received additional support from the Diocese of Salisbury and the local authority. This includes support from improvement advisers.
- Governors arranged a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools in July 2016. At that time, the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school were judged to be satisfactory.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised pupils' written work. Observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum and pastoral leaders. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' records.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium and the sport premium, and the curriculum were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, in lessons, at lunchtimes and at breaktimes, as well as around the school site.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke to several parents to seek their views about the school and considered the 84 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. A letter that was sent to the lead inspector was also considered.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bradley Murray	Ofsted Inspector
David New	Ofsted Inspector

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