

Sandown High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118215
Local Authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	339168
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	13–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,619
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	370
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Harris
Headteacher	Mr J Bradshaw
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
School address	The Fairway Sandown PO36 9JH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited approximately 50 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including questionnaires completed by staff, students and 122 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether lessons enable all groups of students to make sufficient progress
- whether the changes that the school has made to the curriculum are supporting improvements in students' achievement and enjoyment
- the effectiveness of actions taken to strengthen leadership across the school
- the impact that sports college status is having on the school's drive for improvement.

Information about the school

Sandown High School is a large comprehensive school. The school has been a specialist sports college since September 2004 and a specialist science college since September 2009. The school is also a training school and offers initial teacher training through the Sandown Training Partnership. It has Healthy School status.

Most students come from Sandown and its surrounding area, although many live further afield and choose to attend the school. A small proportion of students come from a minority ethnic heritage and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

The school faces reorganisation over the next few years as the Isle of Wight moves from a three-tier to a two-tier system of schooling. Current plans indicate that the school will become an 11–18 academy in September 2011.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Sandown High School provides a satisfactory standard of education. Much of the school's provision is good and, in the last year, senior leaders have made some important changes that are helping to strengthen the school's capacity for further improvement. Recognising that the most significant barrier to improvement was inconsistency and variation in many areas of the school's work, they looked to tackle this issue by strengthening aspects of the school's leadership and management. They, for example:

- introduced sharper accountability for staff
- developed the way in which they use data about students' targets and achievement
- improved the way in which they observe lessons and provide feedback to staff, so that it is sharper and more precise.

This work is having a positive impact, although there is still variability in the effectiveness of leaders across the school and, as a result, the quality of provision and outcomes for different groups of students. Leaders are able to evaluate the school's performance with considerable accuracy: their evaluation of the school's effectiveness matched that of inspectors very closely. The way in which they measure and evaluate the impact of the actions taken to support improvement is less well developed and governors do not always provide sufficiently sharp challenge. As a result, the school's actions sometimes lack sufficient persistence.

GCSE examination results have dipped slightly in recent years. Senior leaders correctly identified two reasons for this.

- A curriculum that did not fully meet the changing needs and interests of all groups of students.
- Wide variation in the quality of teaching across the school.

The school has made significant changes to the curriculum. A broader range of subjects is now on offer and a much larger proportion of students follow BTEC or other vocational courses. Although the impact of this cannot yet be seen in examination results, there is clear evidence that the curriculum is now much more appropriate for students and that, as a result, students' achievement, enjoyment and attendance are improving. There is still a great deal of variation in the quality of teaching across the school. In particular, significant numbers of lessons move too slowly or do not challenge students of all abilities.

The school has a pleasant and positive atmosphere. Students are polite and friendly, and they behave well. They make an excellent contribution to the school and local

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community – a large number of students are involved and many opportunities arise from the school's work as a specialist sports college. Students are well cared for by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to be more consistently good by:
 - making greater use of the significant good practice in teaching that exists across the school and the strengths in the sports specialism to help other teachers to improve their practice
 - ensuring that all lessons move at a sufficient pace, and challenge all students appropriately.
- Improve the consistency of effective leadership at all levels and ensure that governors provide greater challenge to the school's leaders.
- Sharpen the way in which leaders measure and evaluate the impact of the actions that they are taking to improve students' outcomes.

About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

- Students make expected progress and their attainment is broadly average. GCSE examination results are generally close to national averages, although they have dipped slightly in the last couple of years.
- Patterns of achievement are uneven. In particular, students in receipt of free school meals and some middle- and lower-ability students make less progress than other students. Improvements to the curriculum are helping to even out gaps in achievement between different groups of students.
- Students generally enjoy learning and respond positively to more effective teaching. Where teaching is less active and interesting, students are often rather passive. Students' wider learning skills are variable. Many have good speaking and listening skills, although some lack confidence when speaking. Where lessons allow, most students are able to concentrate and focus on activities for extended periods of time.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They say that behaviour has improved in recent years. There is some minor misbehaviour in a small number of less effective lessons.
- Students feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare and is dealt with well. This view was echoed by the parents and carers' responses to the inspection questionnaire.
- Students' attendance is slightly below average, although there is significant improvement this year.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

- Students are well cared for and supported. Potentially vulnerable students are provided with extensive support. A new programme aimed at Year 9 students with low self-esteem has proved particularly effective.
- The curriculum is now much more flexible. A course for Year 9 students with a history of low attendance, run in conjunction with the local fire service, is an example of innovative practice that is making a real difference to the lives of this group of students. Key Stage 4 students have the opportunity to study a wider range of vocational and applied courses, enabling them to select a combination of courses that meets their needs much more closely. The Key Stage 4 students that inspectors spoke to were very positive about their choice of courses.
- The range of extra-curricular activities on offer is impressive. These opportunities are popular with students and participation rates are high.
- Although variable overall, much teaching is good or even outstanding. Relationships between students and teachers are typically very positive. However, in weaker lessons:
 - the lesson moves too slowly, or
 - the aims and objectives of the lesson are not clear to the students, or
 - the lesson is not varied enough to meet the needs of students of different abilities sufficiently closely and some students are not challenged by the work.
- The quality and frequency of marking and feedback to students is variable.

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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While much is informative and helpful, in other cases students are not clear what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

- Provision in the specialist subject of physical education (PE) is good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

- The headteacher and his deputies are providing clear direction for the school’s improvement and development. They rightly see the eradication of inconsistency as their top priority. Recent changes have strengthened the systems that support monitoring and accountability across the school. However, these changes are still at a relatively early stage and the effectiveness of leadership across the school is uneven.
- Governance meets requirements and governors provide a range of help and support to the school. However, their understanding of the school’s key strengths and weakness is more limited.
- The school meets government requirements for safeguarding. However, the way in which leaders monitor the school’s work in this area, although satisfactory, lacks rigour.
- Senior leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Inspectors observed lessons jointly with a number of leaders. In each case, the leader was able to judge the quality of the lesson with considerable accuracy.
- Although the achievement of different groups in the school is uneven, the gaps are beginning to close. Recent improvements to the way in which the school analyses data about students’ progress are providing a sharper focus on the achievement of groups and helping senior leaders to hold staff more accountable for any differences.
- The school now works in close partnership with other schools and providers in the local area. The school also has a number of international links, providing students with opportunities to widen their understanding of life in other countries. However, links within the United Kingdom that would enable students to gain a better understanding of life in more ethnically diverse communities are less well developed.
- The school’s work as a specialist sports college is making a clear and growing contribution to the school’s drive forwards. PE staff are increasingly being used to support the development of teaching across the school. Specialist status also supports the school’s extensive partnership work with other schools and within

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the local community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

- Examination results are improving. Students generally make the progress expected of them, given their starting points, when following A-level courses, although there is variability between subjects. There is clear evidence that this progress is now accelerating. In some courses, notably in the BTEC sport course, students achieve very well.
- Many aspects of students’ personal development are good. In particular, students make a strong contribution to the rest of the school, for example by leading activities for younger students.
- The quality of sixth form provision is satisfactory overall, although it is improving and has a number of strengths. Students feel well cared for and supported. The school does much to raise their aspirations and encourage them to apply to university. The quality of lessons is improving as a result of the school’s recent focus on sixth form teaching.
- In the absence of the head of sixth form, arrangements have been put in place to share the leadership of the sixth form across a number of staff. Despite the potential difficulties that this presents, these arrangements are supporting improvements in sixth form provision and achievement.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Relatively few parents returned the inspection questionnaire. The large majority of returns were positive. There were relatively few comments. Of the negative comments that were made, most related to variability in the quality of teaching. This accorded both with the school’s own evaluation and the findings of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandown High 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 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1619 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	25	78	64	9	7	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	24	92	75	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	29	76	62	9	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	24	67	55	19	16	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	17	14	82	67	19	16	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	14	68	56	27	22	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	17	77	63	20	16	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)	28	23	69	57	10	8	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	20	80	56	14	11	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	15	72	59	22	18	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	7	76	62	21	17	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	19	16	73	60	23	19	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	26	72	59	12	10	3	2

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



4 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Sandown High School, Sandown PO36 9JH

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We judged the school to be satisfactory. We found that the school also has many good features. The school has a very positive atmosphere and students are polite and friendly. Staff care for and support you well. We were particularly impressed by the way in which you are able to contribute to the school and local community.

Achievement has dipped a little in recent years. The school's leaders worked out that this was due to two things:

- a curriculum that was rather 'traditional' and didn't interest everyone
- variation in the quality of lessons.

The curriculum has developed and is now much better. You are now able to follow a much broader range of courses. The school's leaders are also working to improve the consistency of lessons. However, they acknowledge that there is more to do, as too many of your lessons don't interest you or help you to make rapid progress.

The school's leaders recognise that they need to improve consistency and have made some good changes recently to help to do this. We have asked the school to concentrate on three things in particular.

- Improving teaching so that it is more consistent. We have identified a number of things about lessons that could be improved, for example ensuring that lessons move at a fast enough pace.
- Working to make the school's leaders more consistently effective.
- Ensuring that leaders monitor the impact of their actions so that they know whether they are working.

Best wishes from the inspection team.

Yours sincerely
Chris Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector

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