

Sandhurst School

Owlsmoor Road, Owlsmoor, Sandhurst, Berkshire GU47 0SD

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, leaders and governors are committed to improving pupils' life chances. Pupils feel very well supported and their achievements are regularly celebrated.
- Leaders and staff consistently promote equality and respect. These values are now firmly embedded into the positive school culture. Pupils' conduct is typically good and they treat one another with respect.
- Leaders are determined that all pupils will access the full curriculum. Their continual focus on improving attendance is ensuring that pupils, including the disadvantaged, attend school regularly, arrive on time and are ready to learn.
- The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe because staff understand their responsibilities and know their pupils well.
- Leaders' changes to the curriculum have broadened the breadth and choices available to pupils at key stages 3 and 4.
- The sixth-form curriculum provides an appropriate choice of options for students. Leaders routinely check on teachers' planning, teaching and assessment. Students make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics because leaders regularly review and improve the quality of learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils and their parents value highly the continual support they receive from staff.
- Leaders track and monitor progress routinely. They identify where pupils are falling behind. However, the support that some pupils receive in a few subjects to help them to catch up is sometimes too slow.
- Most teachers plan engaging lessons. Activities are interesting, and appropriately challenge pupils of differing abilities to develop their knowledge and understanding. However, some teachers' expectations are too low and they are not sufficiently stretching pupils' potential.
- Some teachers provide helpful feedback for pupils to help them to improve their work, but many do not check that pupils are using this information productively.
- Pupils achieve outcomes which are broadly in line with national averages. However, some disadvantaged pupils could do better in some subjects.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a school strength.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen how leaders and managers develop teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - leaders evaluate teaching and learning to identify where strong practice is enhancing pupils' progress, and accelerate the actions taken to improve weak teaching
 - subject leaders use school information as well as the leaders of English, mathematics and geography to identify and support pupils who are falling behind, and to raise standards
 - teachers follow the school's policies, ensuring that pupils use feedback effectively to deepen their knowledge and understanding
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, can achieve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders are determined that pupils at Sandhurst School achieve academic success and leave as responsible citizens. Leaders have invested heavily in the pastoral support and care which enhances pupils' well-being. Leaders lead by example, demonstrating positive relationships to ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are valued, cared for and supported. As a result, staff, pupils and parents work closely to nurture pupils' development.
- Parents and pupils have confidence in the good leadership provided by the headteacher. Leaders are highly visible around the school and know their pupils well, regularly talking to pupils about their achievements and progress. The vast majority of parents would recommend this school to others. They believe pupils are well looked after and are provided with 'the opportunity to succeed'.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is superb. Pupils' knowledge is thoroughly embedded through religious studies, outside speakers, assemblies, and activities such as pupils' contribution to the global citizenship project and their charity work for Rwanda. Pupils understand the differences between religions and cultures. Pupils also develop their social consciences, recognising, for example, the need to support those less fortunate than themselves.
- The sixth-form leader has shared his vision with teachers as to what effective teaching looks like at post-16. He regularly checks on the quality of provision across a range of subjects. He uses his analysis to identify areas where further support is needed, and tackles students' underperformance. Consequently, students make progress broadly in line with others nationally.
- Leaders use the catch-up funding in Years 7 and 8 to improve pupils' reading ages and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Year 7 pupils who read to inspectors could explain the context and meaning of a piece of text. They also told inspectors they read regularly both in school and at home.
- The new subject leaders in post since September 2017 in English and mathematics have a clear strategy and vision as to how their subjects need to be further improved. They are beginning to address and improve the quality of teaching, so teachers stretch the most able and adjust the curriculum to support all the varying prior-attainment groups, including the disadvantaged.
- Leaders have created a very inclusive school that supports vulnerable pupils well. A few pupils who have not succeeded in other local schools are typically successful here.
- Leaders have found it difficult to find qualified teachers in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science due to shortages nationally. Leaders are attracting well-qualified support staff who later train to become highly skilled practitioners. Staff enjoy working at this school and they embrace the school's culture and ethos.
- The new special educational needs coordinator is highly ambitious for her pupils. She recognises that funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is helping these

pupils to access the curriculum. She is keen to evaluate and share which strategies make a profound difference to the progress and attainment of these vulnerable pupils.

- Leaders and governors make effective use of pupil premium funding to help disadvantaged pupils. Leaders target their spending on supporting pupils to read well and communicate effectively through their 'fresh start' programme in Year 7. Well-directed support enhances some disadvantaged pupils' mathematical skills in Year 11. Staff also support groups of disadvantaged pupils through a mentoring programme, meeting regularly to check progress and to offer advice and support when needed. These actions are helping disadvantaged pupils catch up. However, leaders recognise that further steps are needed to improve the outcomes of some disadvantaged pupils in a wider range of subjects.
- Senior leaders have adapted how they use information and set aspirational targets for pupils at each key stage. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and geography use this data effectively to identify which groups of pupils need further support. This helps pupils in these subjects catch up and prevents them from falling further behind. However, some subject leaders are not using school information effectively, resulting in action being too slow to support those pupils who are not on track to succeed.
- Leaders have a strategic plan to improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at school. Heads of house and form tutors work well to secure improvements in tutor programmes to improve pupils' well-being, personal development and attendance. These actions are routinely reviewed and evaluated and have a positive impact on pupils' confidence, organisation, resilience, attitudes to learning and attendance.
- The new leader responsible for teaching, learning and assessment has recently created and implemented a checking process to measure pupils' progress in different subjects. This is helping leaders to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment across the school. A bespoke programme of training and support has recently been introduced to support teachers with weaker classroom practice. However, this needs time to embed before the programme can be properly evaluated.
- Leaders are acutely aware that some subject leaders are not as effective as others. These subject leaders do not always understand how school improvement links to training, classroom practice and pupils' outcomes. Leaders have recently introduced a more rigorous process to improve leadership and tackle pupils' underperformance in some subjects. Actions already taken are starting to have a positive effect, for example on pupils' progress in science and history.
- Most subject leaders are keen to make improvements which will have an impact on pupils' attainment. Middle leaders meet regularly to discuss the progress of different groups of pupils in different subjects, through 'teach meets'. However, leaders have not had sufficient time to measure the impact of these new meetings.

Governance of the school

- Governors are extremely committed. They share the headteacher's passion to create a school where pupils feel safe and secure. Governors also expect all pupils to succeed academically, while having pupils' well-being at the forefront of all school actions.

- Governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They trust school leaders to carry out the actions identified to improve the outcomes for all pupils, including the disadvantaged.
- The chair and members of the governing body work closely with school leaders to monitor the school's work and provide challenge where appropriate. All governors have a link to aspects of school life, such as safeguarding, SEN, and different subject areas. Governors visit the school regularly. They frequently review the actions that school leaders take and the impact these have on pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The recording of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- A culture of keeping pupils safe stretches across the school. The school has several senior staff who have been trained to a high level in safeguarding. They use this expertise well to ensure that pupils who need extra help get the support they require. All staff are trained appropriately and understand their responsibilities. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and are confident about who to talk to if they have any concerns. Parents also confirm that they believe pupils are safe at school.
- School leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported in school. School staff work very well with parents and the local authority to protect pupils in need of care and support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils and set challenging activities in lessons. Teachers consistently plan focused activities in English, mathematics, art, music, geography, physical education and religious studies. These are pitched appropriately to challenge all pupils, irrespective of their starting points. Most teachers use their strong subject knowledge to question and check on pupils' understanding. Homework is set regularly and is used effectively to reinforce and develop learning. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils. Teachers praise regularly and pupils value their reward points. Pupils trust their teachers and value their support and that of their peers. Pupils are not afraid to have a go at challenging work. They are happy to ask their teachers questions if they do not understand something. Pupils respond well to teachers' verbal feedback and probing questions which unpick errors and misconceptions. Most teachers use effective questioning to consolidate and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils' confidence and subject expertise develops.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants in class. Where teachers have high expectations of what these vulnerable pupils can achieve, pupils rise to the challenge. This is especially the case in art, English and geography.

- Where teachers plan engaging activities which stretch and challenge pupils well, pupils listen carefully and take an active role in their learning. Their written work reflects their positive progress.
- Most pupils develop their ability to read well. A range of interventions, including pupils from Years 10 and 11 listening to younger pupils read, are in place to help improve reading. These ensure that those whose abilities are below age-related expectations on entry into Year 7 quickly catch up.
- Pupils receive regular written feedback from most of their subject teachers in line with departmental policy. This helps them to identify which topics they understand and how to further improve. Some teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. In these lessons pupils use this feedback effectively to further develop their understanding and reinforce their learning. However, some teachers' low expectations and poor-quality feedback are not helping pupils to improve at the same rate as their peers.
- Where teaching is less effective, for example in science, modern foreign languages and history, teachers set pupils activities which either lack challenge or are not sufficiently engaging. As a result, pupils make slower progress and take less pride in their work, and some pupils disengage. In such circumstances low-level disruption and/or passive behaviour is not appropriately well managed by the teacher.
- Pupils' learning is further enriched by a large number of extra-curricular activities and fundraising opportunities, and pupils' contribution to the wider community. Some pupils are involved in school plays, musical productions, sporting teams, leadership programmes, raising money for school charities, and buddy reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They take pride in their uniforms, and arrive ready to learn. The school site is well kept and pupils value their surroundings. Pupils are confident, friendly and courteous to visitors and to one another.
- Pupils describe their school as one with 'strong character and morals'. Pupils joining the school in Year 7 value the extra support offered by staff and older pupils through their vertical tutor groups. All pupils recognise that they have a responsibility for themselves as well as the wider school community.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support and guidance their children receive across all year groups. Almost all parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that pupils are very safe at school and their well-being is at the heart of school life. Parents would definitely recommend this school to others.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the many differences in British society today. Pupils who spoke to inspectors during the inspection commented on the equality and inclusivity of the school community. Pupils said, 'You can be whoever you want to be at this school and you don't have to conform to peer pressure, because differences are celebrated.'

- A few pupils who did not settle in their previous schools thrive in this school. They are successful and cope well with life at Sandhurst School due in large part to the strong school culture and ethos.
- A few pupils who need extra support with their behaviour attend College Hall, a local pupil referral unit. School staff regularly visit and check with College Hall leaders the progress these pupils are making.
- The school uses alternative programmes at Path Hill, an outdoor activity centre, to help some pupils stay on track at school. Some pupils attend the activity centre, and a few pupils follow a work-experience programme there one day a week.
- The student council meets regularly with school leaders. It identifies where further improvements can be made to school systems to help pupils and staff. Some pupils also take an active role in Bracknell youth council.
- Pupils value their personal, social, health and economic education. They also enjoy learning about British values. As a result, they know how to stay safe and healthy, and the importance of tolerance and respect, as well as gaining a clear understanding of the rule of law.
- Pupils appreciate the impartial careers advice and guidance they receive. This is helping pupils in Years 11 to 13 make important decisions about career options and raising their aspirations. As a result, pupils are taking challenging next steps into further education, employment and training.

Behaviour

- Behaviour in school is good.
- Disruption in lessons is rare and serious disruption is very rare. Systems to manage poor behaviour are used well when they are needed. There are only a few pupils with repeated incidents of poor behaviour across Years 7 to 13. Most of these pupils have complex issues.
- Bullying incidents are very infrequent. Pupils in Year 10 told inspectors that, 'If there are any incidents of bullying then they only ever happen once, because staff sort it, fast!' Parents also felt any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly by staff.
- Attendance of pupils is improving and is in line with national averages. The attendance levels of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is also improving. Pupils' attendance continues to be a high priority for school leaders in order to reduce the negative impact which poor attendance has on pupils' progress. Vulnerable pupils routinely meet with leaders prior to school. This helps them to prepare for the school day and is improving their punctuality and their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. In 2016, the overall progress of pupils at the end of key stage 4 was in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving a pass in both English and mathematics

was in line with pupils nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils with similar starting points made less progress than others in a range of subjects.

- Provisional information indicates that pupils in Year 11 in 2016/17 attained outcomes broadly in line with national averages. Pupils made stronger progress in English, mathematics and geography. Disadvantaged pupils also made stronger progress in 2016/17 than in previous years. However, their progress is still below that of other pupils nationally in a number of subjects.
- The percentage of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieving a strong grade in both GCSE English and mathematics has improved significantly in the last academic year.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who follow support programmes in reading and comprehension in Years 7 and 8 make between 12 to 21 months' progress in their reading age, as a result of being part of this programme.
- Leaders set challenging targets for pupils in Years 7 to 13. Leaders accurately evaluate the progress pupils are making. Some teachers are overgenerous in their assessment of Year 11 progress. They sometimes predict well above the school targets. This adversely affects which pupils are provided with extra support. In 2016/17 some pupils made less progress and attained lower grades than expected in science, design technology, French, Spanish and history.
- The pupils following alternative courses at College Hall and Path Hill all achieved at least a pass in their qualifications.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make progress in line with their school targets. Across Years 9, 10 and 11 some disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress as their peers. School data indicates that progress towards the highest grades for the most able is only achieved by pupils with the strongest teachers. Leaders recognise that the progress of all pupils is a key priority. Work to support those who are disadvantaged is constantly ongoing.
- Leaders are aware that the progress some pupils make in science, history and French is not as strong as in other subjects. Not all teachers routinely check progress, and some pupils' workbooks do not record accurately their learning over time. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders of the sixth form have high expectations. There are effective systems and plans in place to drive improvement.
- The sixth-form leader supports the school ethos by instilling in students an 'I can' attitude, improving their inner confidence and developing in them a passion to succeed. As a result, students are proactive and use their learning time well. Teachers further support this desire to succeed using verbal and written feedback in a lively way to challenge and channel students' knowledge and understanding so that they further improve.

- Curriculum changes at post-16 provide a better suit of options for students staying on from Year 11. Informative support and guidance is helping pupils make relevant progression routes in Year 13.
- Leaders' work with local post-16 colleges to improve the types of activities which stretch and challenge students is being adapted and enhanced by post-16 teachers. This is helping teachers to further challenge pupils' thinking and enhance their learning.
- Frequent monitoring and discussion with students confirms that they are happy and on track to succeed. Retention rates between Years 12 to 13 are high. Increasing numbers of pupils are going on to university.
- Outcomes for students on A-level and vocational courses are broadly in line with national averages.
- A few students join the sixth form needing to improve their GCSE English and mathematics grades. Most of these students gain their C grades.

School details

Unique reference number	110068
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10039603

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,009
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Edwards
Headteacher	Debbie Smith
Telephone number	01344 775 678
Website	www.sandhurstschool.org.uk
Email address	head@sandhurst.bracknell-forest.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2013. The head of the sixth form was appointed in September 2015.
- Sandhurst School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. It is below the national average for those who have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- A few pupils in key stage 4 attend College Hall, a pupil referral unit, for additional support.
- A few pupils in key stage 4 follow alternative courses at Path Hill College.
- Some pupils in Year 11 do work experience one day a week.
- School leaders support six other schools' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The majority of pupils and students are White British. Almost 10% are Asian or Asian British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.
- The sixth-form outcomes are in line with the national threshold.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 46 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Sixteen of these lessons were visited jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' written work across a range of abilities, subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors visited three tutor groups. They met with pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 and talked to pupils, both during lessons and more informally around the school. Inspectors listened to Year 7 pupils read and talked to pupils about the books they were reading.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. They met with the chair and members of the local governing body. They also spoke to a local authority representative.
- Inspectors considered the school's policies, including those for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, pupil premium and SEN. They reviewed the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and governing body meeting minutes. They also looked at records relating to current pupils' progress and attendance, as well as behaviour and exclusion logs.
- Inspectors reviewed the 171 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 169 responses from parents on Ofsted's free-text service.

Inspection team

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Neil Strowger	Ofsted Inspector
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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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