

# Inspection of Sandy Secondary School

Engayne Avenue, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1BL

---

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

---

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There are many positives about school life at Sandy Secondary School. Most pupils, including students in the sixth form, are smartly dressed and take their studies seriously. Generally, pupils get on with each other and with staff. Staff know pupils' and students' individual needs well. Staff help if pupils find things tricky or need extra support with school life.

Most pupils behave well. They respect their teachers and enjoy learning. Pupils do not often experience derogatory language or bullying. When it happens, staff sort out the problem quickly. However, pupils do not always behave well. Some lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Around the school, pupils are boisterous in the corridor. Some pupils are unhappy about the behaviour of others.

A range of clubs and trips give pupils and students the opportunity to do something different. Pupils and students 'get their say' in improving the school through leading assemblies or designing the school charter.

While students in the sixth form access a good quality of education, pupils in the rest of the school do not get the same standard of provision.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders ensure pupils, including students in the sixth form, access a range of academic and vocational subjects, such as applied science. The curriculum is ambitious, as illustrated by the high number of pupils who choose subjects from those that make up the English Baccalaureate. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can pick subjects matched to their interests and talents.

Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has changed to take into account new year groups of Year 7 and Year 8. In some subjects, such as mathematics, the curriculum changes outline and sequence knowledge step by step from Years 7 to 13. Here, teachers' checks in class tell them what pupils know and can do. Teachers then change what they teach to build pupils' knowledge and to plug any gaps in pupils' understanding.

However, some curriculum areas are not as well devised. In some subjects, teachers do not give pupils enough time to really get to know a topic. In others, leaders have not identified and arranged logically the key knowledge they want pupils to learn. Some assessment is linked to broad examination criteria rather than the small pockets of knowledge pupils need to remember before moving on to more complex tasks. This makes learning harder than it should be for pupils.

The sixth-form curriculum is more effective. Leaders have set out what students should know in different subjects. Teachers use this information confidently, alongside their secure subject knowledge, to teach students in the sixth form effectively. Sixth-form students progress well through the curriculum.

Leaders have begun to strengthen the provision for pupils with SEND and improve the information teachers receive about pupils' needs. Most teachers use this information to make effective changes to their lessons, which supports pupils with SEND in their learning. As a result, pupils with SEND make similar progress through the curriculum as their peers.

There is a clear system to spot pupils who struggle with their reading. Leaders' effective use of phonics and other appropriate strategies helps these pupils to catch up with their peers.

There are opportunities through form time, 'drop-down' days and assembly for pupils to learn about topics such as diversity, relationships and careers. These experiences, however, are sometimes not well sequenced or linked together. On occasion, opportunities are repeated or not adapted to the mixed-year form groups. This means pupils are not learning as much as they could. Additionally, while pupils and students get useful careers advice and guidance, their experiences vary because of changes to the careers curriculum and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, in-person work experience for pupils and students is just returning.

Some staff do not follow the school's clear behaviour systems consistently well. As a result, pupils' behaviour varies from class to class and around the school. Leaders understand the challenges that some pupils face and have put in place a range of effective emotional support for pupils who need it. Some pupils, however, still struggle to attend school regularly. Persistent absence remains high.

While governors hold leaders to account, they are limited by what leaders tell them. Some leaders are not rigorous enough in quality assuring their areas of responsibility. For instance, they do not identify patterns in behaviour. In other areas, where leaders are clear about the issues and know how to address them, the green shoots of improvement are beginning to show.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff access appropriate safeguarding training. Staff know the signs to spot if a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that pupils and students know how to keep safe, both online and in the community.

Systems to report concerns are used well by staff. Safeguarding records show prompt actions in response to worries about pupils. Leaders use a range of different agencies to support pupils and their families appropriately.

The process to deal with child-on-child abuse is effective. Adults take all concerns, including bullying, seriously. Pupils know where to go if they have a worry about themselves or a friend.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some areas of the curriculum, including personal, social and health education and careers advice, important knowledge has not been identified or sequenced in a logical way to help pupils remember more of the intended learning. This means that pupils do not learn sufficiently well. Leaders should ensure that all areas of the curriculum are equally well sequenced and adapted.
- Assessment is inconsistently used by some staff. In addition, some assessment is driven by examination criteria too early and not matched to what pupils have learned. This means that it is not helpful for teachers in identifying gaps in knowledge and skills, and therefore pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all assessment aligns tightly to what pupils have been taught and is consistently well used by staff to address gaps in learning quickly.
- Not all leaders have the skills they need to oversee and quality assure their areas of responsibility effectively. This means that leaders are overgenerous in their evaluations or not clear about what is needed to improve the provision. Senior leaders and governors should ensure that all leaders have the right training and support to oversee their areas and to continue to improve the school.
- Some teachers do not consistently apply the behaviour policy, both in and out of the classroom. This means that some pupils do not behave as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently applied so that the minority of pupils who presently do not behave well improve their behaviour.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Persistent absence remains high for some pupils. They are missing out on school life and learning. Leaders should implement effective strategies to support all pupils to attend school regularly.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109669
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10254991
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,127
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ian Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Hayward (Executive Principal)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.sandysecondaryschool.com/">https://www.sandysecondaryschool.com/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 December 2017 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Greensands Federation, which shares leadership and governance with another local primary school. The executive principal oversees both provisions.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is currently undergoing extensive building works.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was an upper school catering for pupils from Year 9 to Year 13.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art, English, geography, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited lessons in other subject areas of the curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including behaviour records, bullying logs and attendance registers.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils over both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with different leaders, including the school's special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors considered a range of documentation related to supporting pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. Inspectors looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records. They spoke with pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 221 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 221 free-text responses. The lead inspector considered email correspondence from parents.
- Inspectors also considered the 97 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 335 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

## Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Daniel	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Leonard	Ofsted Inspector
Sufian Sadiq	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Mellors	His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023