Inspection of Sandy Secondary School

Engayne Avenue, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1BL

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Sixth-form provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils here, no matter their needs, circumstances or challenges, are supported to achieve their best. The school is inclusive and puts pupils at the heart of every decision, ensuring that they have an education that is right for them.

The school is growing alongside its pupils, with many building projects underway. This has been carefully considered to cater for the needs of the pupils, but also to foster and develop their interests. Although academic outcomes are not yet strong for all pupils, the school has high expectations and is working hard to achieve these.

Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour and show respect for one another. They are polite and respectful. Together, staff and pupils nurture a strong sense of community, where everyone feels valued and treated equally.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through a broad and well-rounded curriculum that addresses a range of key challenges that pupils may face. Pupils take comfort in knowing that trusted support is always accessible to them, which helps to foster a strong sense of confidence, safety and well-being.

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

The schools' curriculum is broad and allows pupils to experience a range of subjects. It enables pupils to work towards the English Baccalaureate into key stage 4, while enabling them to select additional subjects they are interested in. Where pupils struggle to access the full curriculum, the school makes sure the qualifications they work towards are well considered and suitable to their needs. This gives all pupils the opportunity to acquire the right knowledge and qualifications to equip them for their next steps.

Pupils are well supported in their lessons with structured teaching that enables them to progress steadily. This sees teachers breaking down what is to be learned to ensure that pupils understand and build a firm base before they move on. Some pupils secure the required knowledge more quickly than others meaning there are missed opportunities to move pupils on when they are ready.

Teachers possess strong subject knowledge. They form positive relationships with pupils and regularly check that pupils have understood their tasks. However, at times, pupils are not given enough opportunity to outline or explain their thinking through appropriate discussion or written responses. As a result, some pupils do not develop a secure and deep understanding of key concepts over time.

The school provides useful support for pupils who struggle to read. Staff are adept in supporting pupils to master their phonics or, build their vocabulary or to gain valuable practice reading aloud. These different levels of help match pupils' needs and their builds confidence and skills. The school has also introduced a new library and purchased many new books for pupils to select. Pupils enjoy the range of texts on offer and look forward to their reading sessions.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported at this school. The school is quick to identify pupils' needs and ensure teachers have the information they require to support pupils effectively within their lessons. The school's cognition and learning provision exemplifies its commitment to inclusion. Skilled staff create an environment where pupils can focus on their subjects while also benefiting from a supportive environment, tailored to their individual needs. This theme of ensuring equal opportunity continues into the schools 'aspirational provision' where pupils can opt for a pathway which develops their football expertise and skills alongside their academic studies.

The sixth form provides students with a broad and diverse curriculum through which they can deepen their learning. Thoughtful guidance and careers support ensure that students are well informed about a wide range of future pathways.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop character and leadership. They are now following a more robust personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, ensuring that they are prepared for life in modern Britain. A range of trips and clubs extends opportunity beyond the classroom. Pupils are eager to improve their school alongside staff. Groups such as the 'anti bullying committee' and the 'equality and diversity team' aim to ensure that pupils are heard, seen and understood.

Sandy Secondary School demonstrates a strong commitment to raising pupils' outcomes. There has been progress seen across key areas and further determination to sustain this momentum. Governors provide well-informed support and have a clear understanding of the school's priorities. Occasionally, the level of checking around school operations is not always as sharp as it could be in some areas. Staff are dedicated to ongoing improvement and feel that their workload, well-being, and contributions to leadership are both recognised and respected.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not always provide opportunity and support for pupils to deepen their thinking and develop responses. This means that pupils often provide responses that are too simple and generic. The school should ensure that teachers develop methods that support pupils to form considered responses to the tasks and questions they are posed.
- The school does not make full use of assessment information to tailor learning to pupils' needs. As a result, tasks that pupils complete do not align closely with their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. The school should ensure that staff

are supported to assess pupils' learning and adapt teaching and activities when necessary.

- On occasion, governors rely on information suggested and provided by leaders, rather than asking for information themselves. As a result, they do not always have an accurate oversight of the schools' work in certain areas. Governors should review the information they need to receive, and how best to gather this, so that they can gain a more accurate and precise understanding of the school's performance.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	109669
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10378440
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1206
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Principal	Karen Hayward (Executive Principal)
Chair of governing body	Tim Gardiner
Website	www.sandysecondaryschool.com/
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 January 2023, under section 5 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 two registered and 6 unregistered alternative provisions
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is a foundation school. It is funded by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: design and technology, English, history, languages, mathematics and physical education. 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 and a representative from 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- 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.
- An inspector held telephone calls with a range of alternative providers.
- The lead inspector considered the responses and free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Louise Cooper, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector

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