

Sandfield Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130961
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	381281
Inspection dates	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Eric Craven

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Kerr
Headteacher	John Hudson
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2009
School address	Sandfield Walk West Derby Liverpool L12 1LH
Telephone number	0151 228 0324
Fax number	0151 252 1273
Email address	sandfield-ao@sandfieldpark.liverpool.sch.uk

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	29 February 2012–01 March 2012
Inspection number	381281



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Eric Craven

Nell Banfield

Drew Crawshaw

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In addition to 17 lessons and 14 staff being observed at the school and at the hospital site, two tours of the school were made accompanied by students and a series of short visits were made to literacy lessons. Around seven and a half hours were spent observing teaching and learning. Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, a group of students, two members of the governing body and the school's improvement partner. In addition a phone conversation took place with a parent. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans and assessment data. The 35 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed along with those from staff and students.

Information about the school

Sandfield Park School is an average-sized special school providing for students with physical disabilities, complex medical needs and associated learning difficulties. Increasing numbers of students with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders are joining the school. The school also provides a hospital-teaching and home-tuition service for the local authority and had contact with around 600 students last year. These students remain on the roll of their home school. Of the students on the roll of Sandfield Park School, half are girls. Students are transported to and from school and come from all parts of the city. They all have a statement of special educational needs. At 60%, the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Very few are looked after by the local authority and the vast majority are of White British heritage. The school has Investors in People, the Green Flag Environmental Award, Healthy School status and Quality in Study Support status at an advanced level.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Sandfield Park is a good school, a view heartily endorsed by parents and carers. It has a tangibly upbeat and cohesive atmosphere. It is driving forward with improvements and its success demonstrates good capacity to improve further. It is not outstanding because, although good, teaching is not always of the highest quality, and because there remains room for more challenge to be presented to some students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school has excellent extra-curricular provision.
- Teaching is good overall and the school recognises more needs to be outstanding. Lessons promoting activity are commonplace and capture students' interest well. In the best lessons, the pace is swift and teaching is enthusiastic. Where teaching is less strong there is insufficient challenge for the more-able students and questioning does not always get the students to think deeply enough. The targets set for some on home-tuition could be more specific.
- Students achieve well in comparison to students nationally with similar needs. Improvements have been made to their rates of progress in English and mathematics. The sixth form is good and all students gain externally accredited awards. The school responded well when finding that some students with autistic spectrum disorders achieved less well; their progress was boosted effectively.
- Students' behaviour and safety are outstanding. Conduct in lessons and attitudes to learning are excellent. Students have splendid relationships with staff and each other. Infrequent squabbles are amicably sorted out and bullying is extremely rare. The systems for ensuring students' safety are extremely robust.
- Good leadership and management have improved the school since its last inspection. Teaching is well led and rigorously managed. Staff's skills are developing well. They are unified and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Data are used effectively but more could be made of the data on the progress students make to help shape the school's development plans and to inform the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making full and systematic use of the training being undertaken by some teachers on how to move from being a good to an outstanding teacher
 - finding ways to share and spread the best teaching practice.
- Improve students' rates of progress by:
 - providing more challenge for the most-able students
 - using questioning to deepen the thinking of students
 - setting more precise targets for students on home-tuition programmes.
- Make more use of the data on the progress students make to set targets in school development plans and to inform the governing body more fully.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The students' attainment is low in comparison to students of the same age nationally. This is because the school is increasingly providing for students with more severe and complex needs. Nevertheless, students are gaining more accreditation for their achievements. The average number of qualifications they have gained has increased year-on-year for the last three years. All 14 students who left the school last year went into further education. Students make good progress from their starting points, including in the sixth form. Those receiving their education in hospital and through home tuition also make good progress, with a few progressing outstandingly well. Teachers' assessments are moderated effectively and this provides a reliable record showing the progress students make. These data are now being compared with those for students with similar needs and starting points nationally and this shows sizeable groups of students at this school are making better than expected progress. The best rates of progress are in science and progress in English and mathematics has improved.

Good training for staff and the introduction of more detailed assessments have enabled the school to meet the needs of some students with autistic spectrum disorders more effectively. Different groups of students make similarly good progress; for example girls and boys fare equally well. In the lessons observed students made good progress because they listened carefully and were interested and curious about what they were learning. Invariably they concentrated well and quite a few were able to show how they could learn independently. The systematic teaching of reading is a successful feature of the school's work and some students make very good gains in reading. They apply this skill well across their subjects.

All of the parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire agree that their children are making good progress. One parent, typifying the sentiments of many others wrote, 'My son has developed the most amazing social awareness since attending Sandfield Park and his self-esteem is enormous. I am ecstatic and almost don't believe the progress he is making.'

Quality of teaching

Unanimously, the questionnaire responses of parents and carers say they feel their children are well taught, a view supported by the inspectors. Students say they find lessons fun, illustrated by a student stating, 'In science, when we did forces, we did tug-of-war.' Teachers sometimes imaginatively enliven lessons, which powerfully engages students' interest and sustains and deepens their learning. This was well illustrated in a history lesson where the teacher used desks to form trenches and the interactive white board to create atmosphere. As a result, the students empathised with the thoughts and feelings of soldiers during the Christmas truce in the First World War. This contributed extremely well to their spiritual development. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher dressed as a witch and had students making magic potions as a way of learning about capacity. As a result, they moved forward in their learning. Teaching assistants work in harmony with teachers and play a full part in the life of the school.

Lessons are planned well and include reference to what different groups of students should be able to achieve. This leads to a good match of work to students' abilities in most cases. Sometimes the needs of the more-able students could be better met if their learning was stretched further; opportunities are missed to pose them difficult questions or tasks that demand more effort and application. On occasion, questioning of other students does not get them to think hard: the questions require simple, less considered responses. Targets set for students on home-tuition programmes are not always specific enough to allow the student and staff to measure whether or not the target has been achieved.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. There have been no exclusions or racial incidents for at least the last three years. The infrequent incidents of squabbling are recorded and show how effectively and swiftly the school deals with these. These include very rare incidents of bullying, which are typified by name-calling. The school invests a good deal of time in successfully promoting the students' moral and social development. Projects on anti-bullying and the school council's contribution to the behaviour management policy carry great weight with the students. A small number of students have behaviour-management plans and these are well formulated with cooperation from parents and carers to aid consistency of approach and swifter successful outcomes. Students' splendid relationships with one another, and the understanding they have about differences between people, show that outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes have become well embedded.

The school takes students' safety very seriously and its procedures for appointing and vetting staff and assessing risks are very robust. Students are treated with dignity and respect and their care and security are paramount. Parents and carers feel the students behave well and are kept safe, as shown by the unanimous affirmation of this in the questionnaires. Nearly 90% of the students say behaviour is good all or most of the time and virtually all say they feel safe all of the time.

Leadership and management

Testimony to the good leadership and management of the school is that 100% of parents and carers returning the questionnaire said they would recommend this school to another parent. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, typified by the way staff have been trained and supported in developing skills to meet the needs of students with more complex needs. The school has high aspirations and recognises it needs to make more teaching outstanding in order to help the students achieve even more. Toward this end four teachers are on a training course designed to move their teaching from good to outstanding. The school also acknowledges the value of sharing the benefits of this training and existing best practice to further improve the quality of teaching. Improvements the school has made, aligned with very effective self-evaluation, show it has a good capacity to improve further.

The harmonious work of staff is promoted well by senior staff, who encourage colleagues to help review the school's achievements and set out its development plans. Indeed, all members of staff who returned the questionnaire confirmed they know what the school is trying to achieve. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is good. The headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and how it is improving. The leaders of the sixth form, home-tuition and the hospital site are performing their roles well and playing their full part in keeping the school driving forward. The sixth form achieves a healthy balance by being distinct and different from the rest of the school while still being very much integral to it. This strongly promotes the older students' increasing maturity. Teachers are using the data the school collects on the achievement of the students to plan their lessons effectively. Middle leaders monitor the effectiveness of the subjects they manage but could make more use of data in setting targets in action plans for their subjects.

The governing body is performing its role well and its members' range of experience and expertise helps them probe the work of the school. They have ensured that students' safeguarding is highly effective and kept under regular review. The training they receive and information from the headteacher and subject leaders helpfully put them in the picture on the school's work. Nevertheless, they would be in a stronger position to hold the school to account further if they had more detailed information on how well the students are achieving in comparison to similar students elsewhere.

Staff ensure that no student misses out; they are watchful for discrimination. Their imaginative and earnest work enables all students to have equal opportunities for success and full access to the curriculum. The ethos of the school and respect and courtesy shown by staff contribute enormously to the students' empathy for other people and excellent appreciation of right from wrong. Students benefit greatly from the plentiful opportunities they are given to learn about and appreciate the life styles and aspirations of people from different cultures, religions and parts of the world.

The curriculum is kept under review and meets the students' needs well. Projects and themes are utilised extensively and successfully add interest and meaning for the students. Sixth-form students have a curriculum which rightly focuses more on life skills and work-related learning. Staff provide an impressive range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and these add greatly to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, students engage in Disability and Deaf Arts projects, have a Samba Band and some are sports leaders. Impressively, every student in school takes part in at least one extra-curricular activity each week. The school has achieved a national award for its curriculum enrichment.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Sandfield Park School, Liverpool L12 1LH

Thank you for your warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. It was a pleasure to meet you all and I am grateful to those of you who shared your views through the questionnaire and in conversations.

We have judged that Sandfield Park is a good school and one or two parts of its work are outstanding. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and we were impressed by the way you paid attention in lessons. We were also very pleased to see how well you get on together. The staff are doing a good job in making sure you are safe and well looked after. The quality of teaching you get is good. We liked the way teachers make lessons as interesting as possible, sometimes by dressing up and in one case making the room into a First World War trench. Because of this good teaching you learn well. It is pleasing that all of the students who leave the sixth form do so with qualifications. You learn a lot about people from other cultures and religions and it was great to hear that every one of you takes part in at least one activity after school or at lunchtime; you certainly have a lot from which you can choose. Mr Hudson and the other senior staff are doing a good job in making improvements to the school all the time. I know the school council have made suggestions that have been used to improve the school. Do keep playing your part.

We have asked Mr Hudson and the staff to make one or two things better. So you can make more progress we think more of the teaching needs to be even better than good. We have asked teachers to sometimes give more difficult work to some of you to get you to think harder. Finally we have asked that the information the staff have about how well you are doing is used more in the plans the school makes.

You have my very good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.