

Sandgate School

Sandylands Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 6JG

Inspection dates 11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school. Select

- Although the school is not as effective as it was at the time of the last inspection when it was judged to be outstanding, the quality of teaching is usually good or outstanding.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress from their starting points. Some pupils make outstanding progress.
- Older pupils follow externally accredited courses which prepares them for the next stage of their lives.
- The focus on adventure learning develops pupils' confidence and life skills.
- There is a good climate for learning in classes and around the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are well cared for and feel safe while at school.
- Pupils are motivated learners and develop life skills appropriate to their ages and the nature of their special educational needs.
- Good leadership ensured the school effectively managed the re-location of the older pupils. Leaders are not afraid of making changes if they think it will benefit pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Communications with parents through the school's website is not good enough.
- Teachers are not using homework well enough to extend pupils' learning in order to move them further on in their learning. Not all teachers are using established classroom routines and what they know about pupils' learning well enough in lessons.
- Governors are not exercising enough oversight over all aspects of the school's performance.
- School leaders have not taken enough steps to ensure they understand the training needs of staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons. This included all teachers and classes. Three lessons were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, separately with three members of the governing body, a representative from Cumbria local authority, and with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View), to the responses to the school's recent survey of parents, and to the one letter they received.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's assessment information on pupils' progress, documents relating to safeguarding and attendance, and the school's own self evaluation of its performance.

Inspection team

Henry Moreton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The number of pupils at the school has risen significantly since the last inspection. There are more boys than girls on the school roll.
- All pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are now co-located on the site of a local secondary school.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The nature of pupils' special educational needs include profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties.
- Pupils join the school at any time of the school year, into any year group. Several pupils are dual placements with local maintained schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British, and a small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school uses Cowran Training Limited, as an alternate provider of land-based vocational training.
- In 2011 the school was accredited with 'Adventure Learning' status. This year it achieved the 'National Enterprise' standard and won the national 'Giving National Challenge' competition.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the quality of teaching improves by:
 - managing pupils' behaviour consistently
 - all staff being familiar with and making maximum use of the new assessment system
 - improving the use of homework
 - ensuring texts used are accessible to pupils of all abilities
 - involving more pupils, where appropriate, in answering questions during class discussions.
- Ensure the governing body monitors all aspects of the school's work, including how school leaders oversee provision by any alternative providers.
- Quickly improve the school website to improve the flow of information between pupils, parents and the school.
- Find out what further training some staff feel they need, and take the necessary steps to provide the training or other support that might rectify the matter.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies very widely. Because of their special educational needs, pupils' attainment is well below the expectations for their age.
- By the end of all five key stages pupils' progress is good in reading, writing and mathematics. They gain social and communication skills which promote their independence well.
- Girls and boys achieve equally well. There is no difference in the progress of the different groups of learners.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as others.
- All pupils have equal opportunities to learn and the older pupils of all abilities take some type of externally accredited course.
- Some of the more able pupils achieve entry level certificates and a range of other awards embracing English, mathematics, information and communication technology and art.
- There are examples of outstanding practice, such as in the performing arts where older pupils collaborate with pupils from the co-located school, for example, in a highly successful production of 'Les Miserables'.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take the next steps in their education and training because there is a strong emphasis on enterprise activities and work related learning.
- More able pupils gain Bronze Duke of Edinburgh awards which greatly enhances their well-being and confidence.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is usually good. Sometimes it is outstanding, while at other times it is satisfactory.
- Teachers are becoming proficient in using the new assessment system to identify pupils in their class who are not making the expected progress and, with school leaders, identify strategies for improvement.
- Teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils. Challenging behaviour is usually dealt with effectively. Where pupils experience difficulties in managing their own behaviour positive behaviour plans are put in place. For instance, this term new reward strategies have been adopted to address the learning needs of the more challenging pupils in Key Stage 3.
- Where teaching is most effective planning is meticulous and questioning is well targeted. Staff model good behaviour and ensure the learning environment is conducive to successful learning. Teachers direct teaching assistants well in order to provide targeted support for pupils. Teachers take opportunities in lessons such as food technology to reinforce learning in numeracy and literacy.
- Where teaching is less effective it is because some pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 are slow to settle where class routines are not as secure as in the rest of the school. Sharing pupils' learning and celebrating good work is not planned for routinely. Sometimes opportunities are missed to use more accessible texts for less able pupils and for older pupils to have input into discussions.
- Homework is not used well enough and does not encourage parents to participate in their children's learning. Similarly, the school website does not support learning.
- Pupils with additional learning needs are well supported in their learning by the team of teaching assistants and specialist support staff.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities through teachers' good use of the local community, in such areas as musical theatre, dance lessons and instrumental tuition.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most pupils enjoy school.
- Attendance is good and is improving, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. There have been no exclusions since 2010.
- The school is calm and orderly and pupils are well supervised in and out of lessons.
- Evidence suggests that the good behaviour observed during the inspection is typical of behaviour over time. This view is supported by the views of most parents and staff.
- Pupils are well supported in enabling full access to the curriculum by the team of teaching assistants.
- Older pupils of all abilities benefit from participating in drama activities, including taking part with other schools in local events. This promotes equality of opportunity, and contributes greatly to their sense of well-being and developing their confidence.
- Enterprise challenge days develop pupils' social and team-working skills, while older pupils have contributed to the development of a community garden.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know that bullying is wrong and have some understanding of the different forms it can take. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are responding well to their new setting, although some are still getting used to things and do express misgivings, due to higher noise levels.

The leadership and management are good

- The local authority provides light touch support for this school which was outstanding at its last inspection, and is now good.
- School leaders are forward thinking, always seeking to improve provision for pupils. This is typified by the recent adoption of a new assessment system across the school. While this is still bedding in so that it includes all pupils, the data produced enables teachers and managers to track pupils' progress in comparison with those with similar learning needs.
- The school provides an effective and developing curriculum. School leaders are seeking to build on the adventure learning initiatives enjoyed primarily by older pupils, supporting independence and the development of skills for life.
- Pupils in the sixth form benefit from good opportunities to pursue qualifications in key life skills which prepare them well for life after school.
- School leaders monitor the progress of pupils and groups of pupils well. The data provides teachers with a good view about how most of the pupils are performing in comparison with others. They use the pupil premium effectively to provide for individual pupil needs.
- School leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching, agreeing with inspectors about the strengths and weaknesses in all three of the lessons that were jointly observed, however, they are unaware of the desire of some staff for more training.
- School leaders use resources effectively. Good use is made of specialist teachers to provide expert teaching in science, and design and technology for the younger pupils. The dedicated numeracy and literacy room enhances learning, while the low-technology multi-sensory space enables the less able pupils access to key programmes for developing their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Very good use is made of the drama suite by older pupils. The school has three trainers who provide in-house training and support to staff on issues such as safer handling and behaviour management.
- Learning experiences in land based activities, such as agriculture, horticulture, farm animal care and small animal care are available off site from an alternative provider which are useful additions to the range of accreditations available.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are sensitive to the needs of others and their own safety, and have an appropriate knowledge of right and wrong.

- Pupils' learning is enriched by day and residential trips, as well as by visitors to school, all being important extensions to pupils' learning and contributing well to their achievement. Outdoor activities such as sea kayaking provide exceptional opportunity for some more able older pupils.
- There is a secure link between the quality of teaching and the setting of targets for staff performance, and a clear line of accountability between class teachers and the teaching assistants, who are also part of the school's performance management programme.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide good support to the school and have a clear strategy for its improvement over a three year time period. However, they do not have an accurate view of the school's performance and have yet to determine how they are to monitor performance as the school moves forward.
 - Governors' commitment since the last inspection in overseeing some significant and challenging issues is commendable. This includes the transfer of the whole of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form onto purpose built integrated accommodation on another site alongside pupils from a mainstream secondary school. The space enables more age appropriate activities during social times, and is improving provision overall.
 - The governing body is not sufficiently rigorous in overseeing all aspects of the school's work, including, for example, provision made by any alternative providers.
 - Statutory duties are met and safeguarding arrangements, while not exemplary as they had been at the time of the last inspection, meet current requirements.

A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection has been investigated by the appropriate authorities and is now closed. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112465
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	403875

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Shiach
Headteacher	Joyce Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2010
Telephone number	01539 773636
Fax number	01539 792101
Email address	office@sandgate.cumbria.sch.uk

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