

# Sandbach School

Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 3NS

**Inspection dates** 18–19 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leadership and management have improved and are now good. Determined actions by leaders and governors have ensured that important improvements in teaching and the achievement of students have been secured.
- The quality of teaching is good and enhanced by improvements in teachers' marking and feedback to students. As a result, students are now making good progress in their learning. Furthermore, the proportion of students gaining five grades A\*-C at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has risen.
- Different groups of students in the school are learning well. Students with special educational needs make progress that is as least as good as other pupils in the school. In addition, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others is closing quickly. This is because teachers have increasingly high expectations of these students.
- Students behave well and display positive attitudes to learning. Arrangements to keep students safe are good.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding. These contribute very well to students becoming well-rounded individuals.
- Attendance rates are above average and rising.
- The sixth form is good and continues to improve. Students achieve well in their chosen courses, be they academic or vocational. Sixth form students continue to make an outstanding contribution to the wider school.
- Leaders' partnerships with other agencies are strong. Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement are accurate.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able students are not always challenged to do their best.
- While improved, the identification by teachers of strengths, weaknesses and next steps in students' work is not consistently applied across the school.
- While gaps are closing, fewer disadvantaged students attain five grade A\*-C at GCSE, including English and mathematics, than other students in the school.
- When incidents of less than good behaviour occur, leaders do not routinely evaluate the impact of actions taken to bring about improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and members of the school’s leadership team.
- Discussions were also held with 40 students representing Years 7 to 13, four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector spoke with a leader from ‘Changing Education’, an organisation providing alternative provision for students requiring additional support.
- Further discussions were held with seven parents, one via telephone.
- Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching and learning. During this time, inspectors observed the teaching and learning in the lessons taught, spoke with students, looked at the information held by teachers about the progress of students within the classes, and examined work completed over time in students’ books. One third of this inspection activity was conducted jointly with members of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Inspectors made visits to registration sessions to see the school’s personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme in operation.
- Inspectors also took into account 213 responses received from parents on Parent View. They also took into account an email from a parent sent to CfBT, the inspection service provider. Other surveys taken to account were the school’s own surveys of parents and staff.

## Inspection team

Mark Williams, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Bimla Kumari	Additional Inspector
Anthony Nicholson	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Sandbach School is a larger than average sized secondary school for boys.
- Following the school's last inspection in January 2013, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) monitored the progress of the school.
- The school's sixth form has a very small number of female students.
- The school became a free school in September 2011. Prior to that date, the school was an independent school fully funded by the local authority.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those eligible for funding through the pupil premium, is lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students or with special educational needs is below average.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage.
- A very small number of students in Key Stage 4 attend 'Changing Education'. This organisation provides alternative provision for students requiring additional support.
- In the period of time the school was judged to require improvement, leaders worked with other schools with the same judgement, the local authority and HMI, with the intention to bring about improvement.
- Leaders from the modern foreign languages department are supporting other schools locally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Strengthen the improving picture of students' achievement by:
  - always providing challenge for the most able pupils to do their best
  - ensuring the good system in place to identify strengths, weaknesses and next steps in students' work is applied consistently across the school
  - further closing the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged and other students.
- Strengthen further students' already good attitudes and behaviour by:
  - leaders ensuring, when incidents occur, that the impact of actions taken to bring about improvements are measured and evaluated.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have responded well to the recommendations made at the school's last inspection and by HMI during a subsequent monitoring inspection. Determined actions, including the setting of challenging targets, have brought about improvements in teaching quality. Where good and better practice exists, this is shared throughout the school and externally. Where teaching is less than good teachers do not move up the pay scale.
- Cultivated by the headteacher who has a clear vision for the school, an ethos focused on improvement permeates the school. Staff have responded well to leaders' demands that teachers' marking should lead to students making gains in their learning. Teachers now identify strengths, weaknesses and next steps (known throughout the school as SWANS) in students' work. Increasingly opportunities are given for students to respond to comments and challenges.
- Teachers speak positively about the training and support they have received to improve teaching quality. The strong focus given to improving teachers' questioning in lessons to deepen students' understanding is paying dividends.
- Teachers are also taking on board wider departmental and school improvement initiatives. Such actions are strengthening middle leaders in their roles and responsibilities. For example, the leader for science has a good overview of students' performance and teaching quality through scrutinies of work and lesson observations. Teachers on the upper pay scale are responding to challenges, for example, to enhance students' speaking and listening skills, by setting up a debating society.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. This is evident in the progress made by students with special educational needs and by the sharp closing of the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and other students. The pupil premium funding is being used well.
- Leaders' checking of how well the school is doing has improved since the previous inspection. Checks are now regular and rigorous. Consequently, leaders' evaluations of strengths and areas for improvement are accurate. In one area, though, the measuring of impact, is not as strong. For example, whilst effective steps are taken to address any behaviour that falls below expected standards, leaders are not always measuring the impact of actions taken and whether or not incidents are reducing.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and teachers now make opportunities to promote literacy skills across different subjects. The extra-curricular opportunities are outstanding and include sporting and musical opportunities, along with visits overseas. Taken as a whole, the taught and extra aspects of the curriculum contribute very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students receive good guidance and support for their next steps, as demonstrated by the numbers that go on to the sixth form, further education or find employment.
- The taught curriculum and the extra-curricular activities also prepare students well for life in modern Britain both within and beyond their local community. Students display a mature sense of tolerance and report the programme for PSHE is helping them to challenge discrimination, for example racism and homophobia. As parents who met with inspectors said, students are well rounded and prepared to contribute to the community.
- Leaders have engaged well with the local authority and HMI. The focus on the impact of pupil premium funding, aided by a local authority commissioned report, is keeping leaders attentive to the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders make use of the school's comprehensive website to engage parents as well as asking them to complete Ofsted style questionnaires. The response to Parent View shows the majority of parents are happy with the school.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are carrying out their roles and responsibilities well. As a result, they are holding leaders to account well. Records of their meetings show they ask pertinent questions and expect responses. The reports they receive, for example from the headteacher, the local authority and external consultants, ensure they are well informed.
  - Governors are well informed, and so they are able to help the headteacher and leaders manage resources well. They are, for example, able to report the positive impact additional funding through pupil premium and 'Year 7 catch up' has had on students. Rightly, when making decisions about pay progression, they take into account the progress made by students and how well teachers match up to the requirements of the Teacher Standards. They have ensured only those who perform well receive increases in pay.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students behave well in and around school. They are polite and courteous. As a result, the school is a calm, orderly place. In classes, students are attentive to their teachers, other adults and each other. On occasions when they are not, just a quick word from the teacher gets them back on track.
- Students report behaviour has improved over time. Where behaviour falls below the high expectations of the school and indeed the students themselves, actions are taken. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View are of the view the school makes sure its students are well behaved.
- Students' enjoyment of school and positive attitude to learning is reflected in their above average attendance which continues to rise. It is also evident in their smart appearance and readiness for learning, having the right equipment for lessons for example. Inspectors were united in their view students were excellent ambassadors for their school.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- The majority of parents responding to Parent View expressed confidence their children were kept safe. Inspectors share this view. Students spoken with reported their confidence that should they have a concern there is always someone to talk to. They see adults in the school as approachable.
- Students spoken with reported confidence in the school's ability to keep them safe. If incidents do occur, the rare use of racist or homophobic language for example, these are dealt with the view to restoring good behaviour and attitudes.
- One of the reasons attendance continues to rise is the action taken by year managers to chase up students who are late or absent, because of illness for example.
- The school's partnership with 'Changing Education' is productive. Students attending are making gains in their learning and social development, including behaviour. Records of wider partnership working, with social services for example, show other students are making gains too, in their attendance for example.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching has improved over time. Students' books and files show a good amount of work has been completed. More importantly, it shows students making consistently good progress in their learning across a range of subjects. Furthermore, there is no discernible difference in their books between the learning of disadvantaged students and their peers.
- The expectations of teachers have risen. There has been, for example, a stronger focus on the learning and progress of disadvantaged students. Where students, for whatever reason, show signs of falling behind, interventions are put into place more quickly than in the past. The leader responsible for checking the progress of disadvantaged students does this regularly. As a result of higher expectations and closer checking, gaps between different groups of students have narrowed.
- Leaders have made teachers' use of questions in lessons a priority alongside improving the quality of marking and feedback and these areas have improved. Students are encouraged to respond to questions and written and oral challenges, to think for themselves, reason and solve problems and they make good progress in their learning. A Year 10 student, for example, as a consequence of the teacher's good use of SWANS, was able to improve the quality of his writing. Reflecting sensitively on the tragic circumstances of the events of 9/11, the student wrote thought provoking pieces that captured the interest of the reader instantly. Likewise, Year 9 students studying French are improving their vocabulary by responding to teachers' demands that they use the target language in a range of scenarios.
- Teachers' use of SWANS, while a key contributory factor in the improvements on teaching and students' progress, is not consistently applied across the school. While this is not leading to students regressing in their learning, it is sometimes preventing learning from being good or better. Likewise, because the challenge provided to the most able students is sometimes variable, such students could make even better progress.
- Younger students in the school are benefitting from the support given to them, in reading and mathematics for example from older students. As teachers have received support to improve the overall

quality of teaching, those older students involved in such work have also received an element of training.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- The achievement of students has improved well since the previous inspection. Inspectors' scrutiny of students' work since September 2014 shows students are making good progress in their learning. Now that progress is consistently good, leaders are more confident than in the past that challenging targets for all groups of pupils can be realised. Leaders' and teachers' assessments of students' abilities are accurate because teaching, including marking and feedback, has improved.
- The result of urgent actions being taken following the previous inspection has been the rise in standards. While just 52 percent of students gained five grade A\*-C at GCSE, including English and mathematics in 2012, a figure below national averages, provisional results show 65% did so in 2014. This improved figure is above the national average.
- These standards represent at least expected progress compared with national averages. Rates of progress are better in mathematics than they are in English. In mathematics, the proportion of Year 11 students making better than expected progress based on their starting points was close to the national average.
- While celebrating the improvements over time, the headteacher, leaders and governors are not satisfied. They have rightly identified that, even with the gap closing markedly, both in school and with peers nationally, disadvantaged students attain an average GCSE grade one grade lower than other students in the school. Likewise, leaders and governors have identified that greater levels of challenge, particularly for the most able, are required. Leaders rightly see such actions as having the potential of ensuring students achieve higher standards based on better than expected progress across all subjects given the favourable starting points with which they enter the school.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The promotion of literacy has improved. Teachers more commonly identify errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and expect students to make corrections and learn from mistakes. The result is improving standards in writing.
- Published data for 2013 shows the progress of students with special educational needs to be better than their peers. In lessons and work in books, inspectors found no discernible difference between the progress of these pupils and their peers. This is because they are supported well in their learning.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding helped the majority of the small number of students who entered the school in September 2013 with weak literacy and number skills to make gains in their learning. The literacy support programme, for example, enabled nearly all to at least reach Level 4 (the standard expected by the time students leave primary school). The number support programme enabled over two-thirds of eligible students to do the same.
- Students who attend the 'Changing Education' make strides in their learning and development and go on to secure apprenticeships or employment.

### **The sixth form provision** is good

- The sixth form, judged to be a strength in the previous inspection report, continues to flourish. Outcomes for students are consistently good whether they choose academic or vocational courses. It is increasingly popular and growing in size. A very small number of female students are enrolled.
- The leadership of the sixth form remains strong. Leaders check regularly the progress of students to make sure they are on track and provide clear guidance about courses students will find most suitable. Students spoken with were most positive about the support and guidance they receive. As a result of this close checking, support and the routinely good teaching, students achieve well and go on to employment or higher education.
- The small number of disadvantaged students performed as well as other students in the sixth form. Likewise, the few female students are making as good progress as the male students. On occasions, though, there are opportunities missed for them to work and collaborate with the other students.
- Students in the sixth form are strong ambassadors for the school, they attend and behave well. They benefit from the excellent extra-curricular opportunities. Sixth form students play an important part in the life of the school and in the learning and well-being of younger students-their contribution is outstanding. As well as providing support to help younger students achieve well in English and mathematics, as 'sum

Buddies' for example, they act as peer-mentors. Sixth form students also play an important role in ensuring the student voice is heard, leading the school senate for example. Further responsibilities include leading some assemblies.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137491
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	442431

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1275
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	247
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Tyler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Burns
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 January 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 758870
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	sburns@sandbachschool.org

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