

Sandfield Park School

Sandfield Walk, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L12 1LH

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2014

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

- The new headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders have been clarified and there is a shared vision to raise standards in all settings.
- Teaching is good and an increasing amount is outstanding. The teaching of English is strong across the school and action has been taken to improve the teaching of mathematics so that results are now equally good in both subjects.
- The vast majority of students make at least the good progress expected of them and there are increasing proportions of students who exceed their targets. Their progress is checked and analysed frequently by senior and middle leaders.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding in all settings. Students thoroughly enjoy school and participate as fully as they are able to in all lessons. They particularly enjoy the huge range of lunchtime and after-school clubs which staff provide for them.
- Partnerships with parents and with outside agencies, especially health services, are outstanding and ensure students' physical, emotional and mental health needs are extremely well met. Parents are extremely enthusiastic about the education and care provided and about the improvements they have seen in the way the school meets their children's needs.
- The sixth form is good. Following a review, the curriculum is ensuring students are being very well prepared for their future lives.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, ensure the off-site settings are recognised as important parts of the total school provision. The younger pupils and students attending these settings make just as good progress from their starting points as students in the main school.
- This is an improving school with an extremely good capacity to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes the progress of the most able students slows when they are not challenged enough.
- Opportunities for teaching assistants are sometimes missed, to deliver more personalised teaching to enable individual students to make the best possible progress they can.
- At Key Stages 3 and 4 in the main school, activities and tasks are occasionally not well matched to students' actual age to support their personal development towards life in the sixth form and after school, despite being well matched to their developmental age.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons or parts of lessons in the school and off-site settings. Three of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, including the lead teachers in the hospital school, ACE (the Alder Centre for Education) and the Dewi Jones Unit. Additionally, discussions took place with therapists and other health professionals and a group of parents. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a group of Key Stage 3 pupils, the learning mentor and the school's improvement partner. Telephone conversations took place with a representative of the local authority and with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspection team considered the 11 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire and the analysis of the school's own surveys of parents, students and staff.
- Inspectors observed aspects of the work undertaken with students in the four settings. They looked at documents relating to safeguarding, curriculum review and planning, records of students' progress and arrangements to manage behaviour and improve attendance. They sampled examples of students' work in their books. They looked at leaders' management of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspectors took into account responses and comments on the 65 staff questionnaires returned from the four settings.
- The majority of sixth-form students were out of school at the local college for a Christmas lunch on the first day of the inspection and were taking an external examination on the second day.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sandfield Park School caters for students in a number of different settings. On the main school site, students at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the post-16 or sixth form have a range of complex needs including physical disabilities and autism spectrum conditions with additional learning difficulties, severe and moderate learning difficulties and a small number of students have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school also provides education for students of primary and secondary age on hospital sites. These students may be in the hospital for medical or surgical treatment or attending the Alder Centre for Education (ACE) and the Dewi Jones Unit for medical and/or mental health reasons. Many of these students will attend for relatively short periods of time.
- All students on the main school site have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of students in the school are of White British heritage and only a small number have English as an additional language.
- More than half of students in the school are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or for those who are looked after by the local authority. This proportion is over twice the national average.
- The school is currently making use of alternative provision at Hugh Baird College for sixth-form students.
- There has been a change of headteacher since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in January 2014.
- At the time of the inspection, building work was underway on the school site to provide linked accommodation for pupils attending the Alder Centre for Education. This is due to open during the spring term 2015. The hospital school will move into new accommodation in the new Alder Hey Children's Hospital, which is due for completion later in 2015. The Dewi Jones Unit is situated in hospital accommodation some five miles from the main school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching to raise students' achievement further in all settings by:
 - ensuring work is well matched to the needs and abilities of all students in a class or group, especially the most able, so that they can make more rapid progress
 - using teaching assistants more effectively to provide more personalised teaching to support the progress of individual students in all parts of a lesson
 - planning activities and tasks which are well matched to the students' actual age as well as to their developmental age at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the school in order to prepare them for their move into the sixth form and for their future lives.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff morale is high because staff across all settings recognise they are working in a happy and improving environment where all staff and students are valued and respected.
- The outstanding leadership of the new headteacher has raised standards. Senior and middle leaders in the off-site provision as well as those in the main school are accountable for their areas of responsibility and committed to contributing to school improvement. Staff are very proud of the work they do and of the successes which students enjoy.
- The curriculum has been recently revised and is extremely well matched to the complex needs of the different groups of students. Literacy and numeracy are practised in all subjects where appropriate. There is a rich choice of clubs which students enjoy at lunchtime and after school, such as football and basketball, singing, dancing and, currently, Christmas crafts. Staff willingly give their time to running the clubs. Students are encouraged to understand the community in which they live and to adopt British values through the various activities which staff plan for them in the extended curriculum. This ensures their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Leaders ensure the use of alternative provision for sixth-form students is checked carefully. This has led to a change in the choice of college to ensure the range of subjects matches the needs, interests and abilities of the students. Staff ensure students are safe, attend regularly and behave well when they are in college or on work experience placements. There are plans to extend the partnership with Hugh Baird College to make even better arrangements to provide students with the skills they need for their future lives.
- The school's leaders check on the quality of teaching and learning in all settings on a regular basis. Action has been taken to deal with teaching which is less than good through coaching and professional development so that teaching which requires improvement is now rare.
- Performance management of teachers is very well linked to students' achievements and to the identified priorities in school development planning as well as to the individual professional development needs of staff.
- Close checks on students' progress ensure equal opportunities for all. There are no gaps in the progress of different groups and disadvantaged students do just as well, and sometimes better than, other students.
- The local authority provided support to the headteacher after he took up post, particularly in the area of curriculum development, and now offers suitably light-touch support as and when required.
- Partnerships with parents are extremely strong. Parents feel well informed about what their children are learning through home-school books and telephone calls. They know they can always ask for help, support and advice for issues they have in managing their children at home.
- Similarly, strong partnerships with other agencies ensure students are kept safe and that their personal, emotional and medical needs are recognised and met exceptionally well. This is particularly important in the hospital and mental health settings, where positive relationships with health staff are vital to the well-being of students to enable learning to take place.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very active, with members making frequent visits to the school and off-site settings to gain information at first hand. As a result, they are able to ask questions about students' progress and the performance management of staff. They provide extremely good challenge and support to senior leaders in their planning for the future.
 - Governors have sought funding from the local authority to develop the environment for students who attend ACE to move to much better accommodation on site with the main school. Governors have developed their knowledge and understanding of the work of the teachers in the health provisions and have a very good understanding of the effectiveness of links across the different settings.
 - Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding well and ensure there are no gaps in performance of different groups of students. They undertake their safeguarding duties conscientiously to be sure the school is meeting statutory requirements. They check that leavers are given appropriate careers' advice and that education, health and social care plans are undertaken thoroughly so that students move on to successful placements.

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

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Where there are any problems with behaviour, it is as a result of students' individual conditions which have led to their admission to the different settings. Staff are exceptionally well trained to manage behaviour in a positive way, which enables students to return to learning as quickly as possible.
- Behaviour plans are shared with other staff, students and parents and are included in the information available in all classrooms. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding because teachers make lessons so enjoyable.
- Around the school and in the off-site settings, students are polite, courteous and respectful to staff and each other.
- Planning for students in the mental health and medical settings is carried out meticulously to ensure transfers in and out are as successful as possible so that students are provided with very positive experiences.
- Students in the main school in particular have a wealth of opportunities to take on responsibility. Some, for example, volunteer at the hospital with DaDa (Deaf and Disabled Arts) or have advised the council on access in the city. Following a visit to the school from a group of disabled people from Cambodia, the school council is now considering how to raise funds to buy them a wheelchair. Students also lead many of the lunchtime and after-school clubs.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Staff provide the highest quality care and support for students and ensure their safety in all settings, including in the alternative provision and on work placements. The very strong partnerships with other agencies ensure support for individual students' safety and well-being in all settings.
- Sixth-form students are prepared extremely well to keep themselves safe when they live more independently on leaving school, including through a course on road safety and awareness.
- Students said they feel safe and know there is always an adult they can speak to if they need reassurance.
- The school has gone to great lengths to provide students with an understanding of different forms of bullying and students have developed this further by producing a range of DVDs around different aspects of bullying and staying safe.
- Attendance has improved because students enjoy coming to school. Absences are mainly due to students' medical, emotional or mental health difficulties.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good at both key stages, in the sixth form in the main school and in the off-site settings. Teachers use the assessment information they collect on students when they arrive at the school or settings extremely well and build on it, checking regularly on the progress their students are making.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because work is not always planned to take sufficient account of the different learning needs of the very varied abilities within the class. As a result, the progress of the most able is sometimes held back during whole-class teaching sessions.
- A lack of resources in ACE restricts the teaching and range of subjects which can be offered, particularly to the most able, older students. Teaching of groups and restrictions on the amount of available teaching time do not always ensure students can make the rapid progress necessary to achieve the GCSE grades of which they are capable. Nevertheless, considering the gaps in their learning caused by missed schooling, the teaching provided to ACE students ensures that the majority make remarkable progress during their time there.
- Planning in the hospital school and in the Dewi Jones Unit is very personalised to meet individual needs and abilities and to engage students back into learning. Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make good progress with their reading, writing and mathematics through very sensitive approaches which match work to each individual's emotional or medical needs. Students, especially those who are working towards external examinations, are taught in collaboration with their home schools and this supports extremely well their return wherever this is possible.
- A good marking policy has been introduced recently and students now receive regular written and verbal feedback, which lets them know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

- Questioning in lessons is very careful to help students think more deeply. In an excellent art lesson in ACE, students were linking music to emotions and discussing the colours they saw related to this. Teaching assistants make a strong therapeutic and academic contribution to students' thinking and use questioning well to help them develop their ideas further. Sometimes planning for the use of teaching assistants is not as effective as it could be to provide more personalised teaching that would help some students, especially the most able or the least able in a mixed-ability group, to move on more rapidly.
- Teachers ensure students have good opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in all lessons. For example, in a lively Year 10 lesson, students investigated who had 'broken into' their classroom. They read clues, wrote questions they might ask and discussed who might be the culprit. Sixth-form students are encouraged to develop their mathematical skills by independently costing out their enterprise projects and sending bills to their customers.
- Activities and tasks are planned extremely well to match students' developmental age and their particular interests. Occasionally in Key Stages 3 and 4, planning does not take enough account of students' actual age and the need for them to make progress in their personal development through the school and into adulthood, for example by using resource books which have been adapted for older students with learning difficulties.
- Teachers provide students with highly enjoyable creative and sensory lessons such as music, art, computing and physical education providing many practical experiences, often on trips out of school. A group of Key Stage 3 students with autism spectrum conditions were given spices, herbs and bark to smell and feel before attaching them to their Christmas posters.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress over time in all subjects but especially in their reading, writing and mathematics and all leave with external awards which are well matched to their abilities and future needs.
- Regular checks on students' progress are carried out; last year, these identified that students were making less rapid progress in mathematics than in reading and writing and steps were taken to improve the teaching of mathematics so that students were quickly back on track.
- Students in the hospital school and ACE work towards achieving good GCSE grades in English, mathematics and science in particular, and in other subjects which can be fitted into the restricted teaching time. In view of the amount of schooling most of these students have missed before admission, they do remarkably well and some students achieve grades A* to C in core subjects.
- Younger pupils in the off-site settings are supported to maintain skills and knowledge and, where possible, to make the good or better progress of which they are capable. Work in pupils' books seen in the Dewi Jones Unit provides evidence of pupils' increasing confidence and trust over time and of the at least good and often outstanding progress from their starting points on admission.
- Students in the sixth form now achieve a broader range of external awards, often in vocational subjects which may be of help to them when they leave school.
- There is no gap in the attainment of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who are not because of the very individual approach to tracking and checking their progress regularly. This quickly identifies students who are failing to reach their targets so that action can be taken to catch up with where they should be.
- In a few lessons, the most able students make insufficient progress because they are not given more challenging work. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, the most able can use their reading, writing and mathematical skills efficiently in all subjects but a very small minority of students are not achieving the higher awards they may be capable of reaching by the time they leave school.
- Students make very good progress with their communication. Several students were seen to be using hand-held devices to aid their speaking and listening or to record their work. Staff are skilled in providing signing, symbols and objects to those students who need them to communicate effectively.
- Students make excellent progress in developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through frequent trips out into the community and by welcoming visitors into their lessons. They learn about British values by participating in 'Liverpool Schools' Parliament', taking part in 'Recipe for Scouse' with other schools across Liverpool, and making valuable contributions to the life of the school by being members of the school council. Suggestions which the council makes for improvements have to be researched and costed by the students then presented to the headteacher.

The sixth-form provision**is good**

- Sixth-form provision has improved over the last year through a review of the curriculum and by establishing links with Hugh Baird College. The curriculum now ensures students continue to improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills by learning to use them in everyday life while also enjoying learning about the world of work. The sixth-form students enjoy being in a separate building and report that they feel they have 'moved on' to something new, different and exciting.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Students have been supported to develop enterprise projects such as printing, card-making, garden management and 'art for sale' to help students understand the relevance of their basic skills to their future lives. One ex-student has now set up his own business after being involved in one of the enterprise projects. During the inspection, some students were busy making Christmas cards and Christmas decorations to order, while others were helping to frame pictures for another school.
- Students enjoy developing their physical skills in sessions such as zumba, multi-sports and gym workshop. The good teaching ensures students develop their independence and life skills in practical shopping and cookery sessions. In a food technology lesson, sixth-form students chopped vegetables for a sauce and developed a better understanding of healthy eating and the safe use of equipment in the process.
- When they attend the local college, students are able to join courses which match their needs and interests such as motor vehicle maintenance, floristry, catering and sometimes these lead to employment opportunities when they leave. Wherever possible, activities lead to external awards and the range of awards students have achieved has grown since the previous inspection.
- The majority of students move on to local colleges when they leave school and their experiences at Hugh Baird College prepare them well for this move. Staff ensure students are provided with good careers advice and all students have work experience placements which help to prepare them for their future lives. Ensuring student safety and the monitoring of good attendance and behaviour are paramount in alternative provision and work placements or on trips out of school.
- The sixth form is led and managed very well with staff constantly seeking new opportunities for students to ensure they make good and often outstanding personal and academic progress. They ensure students are prepared as well as possible for their adult lives.

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	130961
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	448015

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	75
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Kerr
Headteacher	Mark Hilton
Date of previous school inspection	29 February 2012
Telephone number	0151 228 0324
Fax number	0151 252 1273
Email address	sandfield-ao@sandfieldpark.liverpool.sch.uk

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