

# Inspection of Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College

Middlewich Road, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 3NT

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

The judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils and students in the sixth form are proud of their school. They told inspectors that they are happy and that they can be themselves. They said that everyone is accepted and welcomed. Pupils and students know that their teachers expect the best from their academic achievement and their behaviour. The majority of pupils rise to this challenge. They achieve well as a result.

Leaders have created a community for pupils, students and staff based on kindness and respect. In the main, pupils and students study without disruption to their learning. The atmosphere around the school is calm and productive. Pupils said that they feel safe. They explained that bullying is not tolerated, and if it does occur, it is challenged and dealt with effectively.

Sixth-form students act as role models for younger pupils. They dedicate time to mentoring pupils, for example by reading with them. Students also act as anti-bullying ambassadors.

Students and pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Through these activities, they are empowered by staff to develop their character and voice their opinions. A recent example is the school feminist group. They have launched a campaign to stop the sexualisation of children and to challenge the unwanted sexual behaviour that young girls and women may face in society.

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

Leaders, including trustees, have a clear vision for the quality of education that the school provides. They have realised this vision by ensuring that the curriculum is ambitious and that it meets the needs and interests of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum in the sixth form is equally successful in meeting the learning needs of students.

At key stage 3, pupils gain a broad and well-rounded understanding of subjects. Leaders have thought carefully about the content in the key stage 3 curriculum to ensure that pupils are fully prepared for the demands of key stage 4. Added to this, those pupils who progress into the sixth form are equally well prepared to achieve well. Overall, pupils and students achieve highly. They progress to positive destinations.

Across subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge that they want pupils and students to know. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. In the classroom, teachers have been well trained to identify and address pupils' and students' misconceptions as they arise. Leaders' systems for tackling pupils' misunderstandings are embedded across the school. They are particularly strong in the sixth form. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders do not use assessment strategies well enough to track pupils'

knowledge and understanding over time. This means that in some cases, pupils do not build upon what they already know as well as they could. This is particularly the case in key stage 3.

In recent years, leaders, supported by trustees, have significantly improved the provision that they offer to pupils with SEND. Pupils' and students' needs are identified in a detailed and systematic way. Staff receive helpful information and training regarding any barriers to pupils' learning. Consequently, they provide appropriate support, and pupils and students with SEND achieve well.

Leaders prioritise reading effectively. For example, all teachers have received training in the explicit teaching of subject-specific vocabulary. They have also been trained in the use of phonics to support pupils' reading development in every classroom. Furthermore, a range of programmes are in place to encourage pupils to develop a love of reading and to ensure that they develop fluency in reading. For example, pupils in key stage 3 receive regular library sessions, where staff and sixth-form students listen to them read.

Leaders are increasing the support that they offer to pupils who struggle with their reading. Recently appointed leaders, with strong expertise in reading, have started to identify and put into place additional help for those pupils who are behind with their reading knowledge. Pupils are finding this support helpful, but it is too soon to see the full impact of leaders' work.

Most pupils are committed to their learning. Lessons are rarely disrupted. The majority of pupils say that leaders' new systems for dealing with poor behaviour are clear and effective. Students in the sixth form are supportive of each other in lessons. They work together, with their student union representatives, to ensure a calm and productive atmosphere in their study areas.

It is a strength of the school that leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils and students to develop as active citizens, with a strong understanding of society and moral viewpoints. In key stages 3 and 4, a comprehensive programme of personal development is in place. In key stage 5, students are taught helpful information such as financial management and driving awareness. Pupils and students also benefit from effective careers information, advice and guidance.

Trustees are well informed about leaders' actions to improve the quality of education that pupils and students receive. They provide appropriate support and challenge regarding key issues such as safeguarding and the curriculum. Staff are appreciative of leaders' actions to support their well-being and consider their workload when making decisions.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure there is strong capacity and expertise in the dedicated team of staff that lead safeguarding. They effectively identify and address any concerns that arise about pupils' and students' safety. Leaders know pupils and students well and regularly seek ways to engage with families to offer early support and advice. This includes the use of external agencies and specialist help services when needed.

Staff receive regular training so that they are confident identifying and reporting any concerns. They are proactive in working with pupils and students to identify any potential risk of harm. Leaders support pupil-led groups to raise awareness of these issues, such as female genital mutilation, through initiatives and campaigns in both the school and the local community.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a small number of subjects in key stage 3, leaders' systems for assessing pupils' learning are not sufficiently well developed. As a result, a small number of pupils do not learn all that they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers know exactly how well pupils are building up knowledge across all subjects.
- For a minority of pupils, the support that leaders provide to help them to catch up with their reading knowledge requires development. This means that some pupils are not catching up with their reading as quickly as they should. Leaders should continue to develop their systems to support those pupils who are behind in their reading knowledge.

## **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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136340
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226365
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,476
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	242
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Caty Reid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ellen Walton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sandbachhigh.co.uk">www.sandbachhigh.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a single academy trust.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19

pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and a range of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust board, including the chair of the trust.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, science, modern foreign languages and health and social care. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' and students' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and students from all year groups. Inspectors observed pupils' and students' behaviour at social times.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation documents and attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors checked on the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and trustees to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. An inspector checked the arrangements for those pupils who attend the alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.

## Inspection team

Amanda Downing, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Phil Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
David Woolley	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Rix	His Majesty's Inspector

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