

Inspection of a good school: Sandgate School

Sandylands Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 6JG

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

Sandgate School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone receives a friendly welcome when they arrive at Sandgate school. Pupils, including children in the early years, develop and grow in the happy and nurturing environment that leaders have created. Pupils form positive relationships with caring staff. This helps pupils to feel safe in school. Pupils' smiles show how much they enjoy playing and learning with their friends. Parents and carers appreciate the many opportunities and support that leaders provide for their children.

Pupils' talents are nurtured and celebrated. Over time they gain the knowledge and skills that they need to become successful learners. Pupils respond positively to leaders' high expectations of their conduct and achievement. Pupils work hard and try their best. This helps them to achieve well over time. Pupils behave well. If bullying should occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff.

Pupils' personal development is promoted positively by skilled staff. Pupils' confidence and independence grows during residential trips and through participation in the many clubs they can join at lunchtimes. Pupils particularly enjoy planning trips using public transport and preparing meals for their friends. Students in the sixth form are ambitious for the future. They are prepared well for life after school, for example by working in the school's onsite café and on work placements with businesses in the local area.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum to meet the wide-ranging and often complex special educational needs of pupils, including children in the early years and students in the sixth form. Leaders have looked carefully at the academic knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which it is taught. Across all subjects, they have identified where new learning links to what pupils already know. The curriculum is delivered through well-thought-out activities which are appropriate for each pupil's needs. Pupils frequently revisit what they have been taught. This helps to remember what they have learned over time.

Leaders have also designed a complementary curriculum which identifies three clear pathways to support the development of pupils' physical, cognitive, communication and sensory needs. They use the information in each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan to indicate which pathway each pupil will follow. These curriculums form a golden thread that weaves together a well-thought-out curriculum for each pupil across the school.

Staff use a range of effective strategies to support pupils with more complex needs to be able to communicate with those around them. This includes using pictures, symbols, technology and other communication aids. This helps pupils to successfully communicate with both adults and other pupils. Pupils improve their communication and interaction skills over time. This helps them to access everything that the school has to offer.

A broad range of assessment strategies are used to identify what pupils know and can do. This helps teachers to accurately identify any changes in pupils' needs and to shape future learning to meet them. Staff work with a range of specialists to gather further assessment information when required. Over time, pupils achieve well from their individual starting points.

A love of stories and books permeates the school. Teachers use familiar songs and rhymes expertly to engage pupils at the early stages of learning how to communicate. Beautifully illustrated books successfully capture pupils' attention and imagination. Older pupils recommend their favourite books to others. Students in the sixth form enthusiastically discuss the books that they have read across a range of genres and subjects.

A new phonic programme helps pupils to identify the sounds that letters represent. Pupils read books that match their knowledge and understanding well. Typically, pupils practise the sounds that they know in well-thought-out activities. Leaders are at the early stages of reviewing the impact of these changes to see how well they are supporting pupils to become confident, accurate readers.

Many pupils struggle to manage their emotions and behaviour. When this happens, staff act quickly and calmly to help them. This reduces disruption to learning. Staff follow well-established daily routines. This help to reduce pupils' anxiety. Staff positively support pupils to develop the vocabulary that they need to express their feelings. This helps pupils to build confidence and self-esteem. Over time, pupils learn to manage their own emotions with increasing success.

Pupils' personal development is fostered extremely well. They play an active role in the life of the school as members of committees. Pupils are passionate about the environment. During a National Citizen Service project they successfully cleaned up a local area through a litter picking event. Pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves, for example by climbing a mountain to see a waterfall. Older pupils have joined with pupils in the mainstream secondary school on the same site. They have worked together to promote and value the differences that exist between people and to promote an inclusive approach towards diversity. Pupils across the school share their many talents with friends and family when performing on stage in the annual end-of-year production.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge and understanding that they need to effectively support pupils' learning and development. They provide suitable training alongside opportunities for all staff to work together. This helps experienced staff to share ideas and expertise with staff that are new to teaching.

Governors use their considerable knowledge effectively to hold leaders to account for the quality of education that the school provides. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload when making decisions. Staff appreciate the importance that leaders place on their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant and know pupils and their families well. The training undertaken by staff helps them to quickly identify any changes in pupils' demeanour and know how to recognise any signs of neglect or abuse. Staff quickly follow the school procedures to report any worries about a pupil's welfare. Leaders refer these concerns to other agencies when required. Leaders work with charities and professionals to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help and support that they need swiftly.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They know who to talk with if they have any worries. Older pupils are taught about how to use mobile phones to help to keep themselves safe when out in the community. They are also taught about how to report any situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not checked how well the new reading curriculum helps pupils to learn what they want them to know. Leaders should ensure that they gather the information they need. This will enable them to shape future learning so that pupils are supported appropriately to achieve as well as they should.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2012.

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

Unique reference number	112465
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10256222
Type of school	All-through Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Johnson
Headteacher	Daniel Hinton
Website	www.sandgateschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils aged three to 19. The school caters for children with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities: specific learning difficulty, profound and multiple disabilities, hearing impairment, speech, language and communication and physical disability as well as issues with social, emotional and mental health. The highest proportion of pupils has autism spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulty.
- The school is on two sites a short drive apart. The main site is predominately for primary-age pupils. Older pupils and sixth-form students attend the school on Appleby Road LA9 6PJ. They share this site with the Queen Katherine School.
- All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The admission route for the school is via the local authority.
- Leaders make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and staff and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with the headteacher and members of the leadership team. They spoke to staff to discuss their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the curriculum and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and communication and language, computing and personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons and spoke to staff.
- They also spoke to pupils about their learning and their experiences of the school. The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered the response to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to both the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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