



# Sandon High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124389  
**LEA** Stoke-On-Trent  
**Inspection number** 281710  
**Inspection dates** 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Michelle Parker HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Sandon Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Meir
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 7DF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 312782
<b>Number on roll</b>	770	<b>Fax number</b>	01782 598197
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Philip Boon
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 September 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Barbara Hall

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	16 November 2005 - 17 November 2005	281710

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Sandon High School Business and Enterprise College is an inner city school which lies on the southern outskirts of Stoke on Trent. It caters for 770 pupils who come from very diverse social and economic backgrounds. One hundred and seventy of these students receive free school meals. Twenty-two pupils are in receipt of a statement and 180 are recorded on the school's SEN register. The school has a very small group of minority ethnic pupils, consisting of 19 students. As a Business and Enterprise College the school has extensive links with local industry and commerce in the region; many of these links have existed for over 15 years. The school's sports teams are well regarded regionally and nationally. This year the school has been awarded European Eco School status on a permanent basis. Other accolades awarded to the school over the past few years have involved a Health Promoting Schools Award, Careers Education and Guidance Quality Award, School Achievement Award and Young Enterprise awards. In recognition of its quality of pedagogy, the school has been designated as an Initial Teacher Training School by the local universities. Six years ago the school was part of the first tranche of schools to be recognised as a Beacon School.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is a satisfactory school with some good and many outstanding features. Inspectors agree that the school has appropriately identified its strengths and weaknesses. The school provides good value for money. It has a strong ethos and works very effectively within its community. Pupils have a strong voice in the school and are rightly proud of their achievements. For example, the outstanding work of the Eco committee has led to the city council building speed bumps on a nearby road and moving a bus stop to a safer position, thus reducing accidents. In the lessons seen most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Pupils are not achieving as well in English and mathematics as in their other subjects. Higher attaining pupils are not achieving enough. Target setting and assessment information does not always help pupils sufficiently so that they can improve. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good and some outstanding lessons. Pupils' personal development and well-being, care and guidance are outstanding. Attendance is good and improving faster than the national rate. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is very good around the school and in most lessons; pupils are courteous to each other and staff.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior team is strong, with a clear vision for the school. However, there are rare instances where middle managers are not ensuring improvements in teaching and learning. Satisfactory steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection. This ensures that the school has the capacity to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching in English and mathematics to ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress, particularly for those in Years 7 to 9.
- Target setting and the use of assessment data should communicate clear targets to all pupils and be appropriately challenging and used continually to monitor pupils' progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils entering Sandon High School have a wide range of ability, with an overall average level of attainment after their primary school education. However, the results of attainment tests taken by Year 9 pupils in 2004 were below average and the standards achieved were below those that could have been expected. Boys and girls results were similar.

In 2004 GCSE examination results for pupils in Year 11 were a little below average, with 49% of pupils gaining five or more good GCSE grades. This was an improvement from the previous year when the corresponding figure was 47%. At GCSE girls' performance is better than that of boys.

For pupils in Years 7 to 9 these results show that progress is slow, with pupils not realising the level of success that can be expected. Their performance is lower in the important subjects of English and mathematics where pupils' standards are well below average. In preparing for the range of external examinations in Year 11, pupils develop more quickly the higher levels of knowledge and skills that are needed for success. Their overall progress is therefore satisfactory. Pupils do particularly well in applied business studies, French, physical education, computer studies and English Literature, where success rates exceed the national average. Their progress is not as strong in English Language, mathematics and music.

The school sets targets for individual pupils in each subject, which inform the statutory targets set by governors. More challenging targets are needed for pupils in their attainment tests in Year 9. Use of targets was formerly not sufficiently rigorous in Years 7 to 9 to ensure the rate of pupils' progress needed. Greater rigour is needed, using regular assessment of current standards, to show if pupils are on track for success and especially to monitor the performance of different groups of pupils. Such practice would complement the many very good and innovative initiatives that the school already employs to support pupils' learning.

In general the progress made by pupils with special needs and those eligible for free school meals is no less than that made by all pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils show good attitudes to work in class and have excellent relationships with staff and each other. Their excellent behaviour is demonstrated by no exclusions issued during the last academic year. Pupils say they feel safe in school and only a small percentage feel bullying is a problem. Pupils are confident that when bullying is suspected staff deal it with effectively. A whole school comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship programme makes an important contribution to pupils' growing levels of maturity. This was evident at break and lunchtimes when pupils happily mixed with each other, without the need for staff supervision. Almost all pupils report that they are happy in school and their very good attendance rates support this. The good take-up by pupils of the wide range of sport and the emphasis on healthy eating ensure that they are developing an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles.

Pupils have excellent opportunities to contribute to school life through a range of committees. Pupil representatives of one of these, 'Building Schools for the Future' (BSF), stress how much they feel involved and listened to. Pupils develop a good awareness of spiritual aspects through the themes covered in assemblies, religious education lessons and the many opportunities there are to celebrate their achievements. Their cultural opportunities are outstanding and another strength of the school's work. Activities include special theme weeks as well as opportunities to engage in video conferencing with other schools in different parts of the world. Pupils collaborated with the youth and community centre to formulate a successful bid to improve local facilities for young people during the evenings and holidays. Through these

opportunities the school makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good and outstanding lessons. This is confirmed by the school's own view. The outstanding lessons observed were vibrant, well paced, challenging and enjoyable. Staff understood the progress of their pupils. In these lessons, planning effectively met all pupils' learning needs. Pupils were respectful and attentive and learnt well. Lower attaining pupils receive good, appropriate, well targeted support in lessons from teaching assistants. The support staff understand pupils' needs and difficulties, build up good relationships with them, and this enables them to find effective ways of explaining, demonstrating and prompting pupils to apply themselves well, and so they make good progress.

Teaching is well extended in sessions when pupils are withdrawn for activities. These focus clearly on particular areas of need such as reading or language skills, and pupils' learning is often good.

A minority of pupils are less attentive, and teachers' efforts to motivate them and manage their behaviour are not always fully effective. This affects the learning by other, more willing, pupils, as it distracts them, and takes up a lot of the teachers' time and attention.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It is broad, with a good balance. The school's 'Business and Enterprise' status is testimony to the school's drive to create a high quality curriculum that meets their pupils' needs. There are particularly good new courses in personal and social education and citizenship. Many teachers make very good efforts to incorporate aspects of other subjects in their lessons. These include developing pupils' skills in computing, numeracy and literacy, as well as helping pupils' personal development, sense of responsibility and willingness to use their initiative. These cross-curricular links are well planned, and are very supportive of pupils' overall learning.

In Years 9 to 11 the vocational subjects become more developed, with extremely good support from agencies outside the school. Good and varied work-related experiences are available to all pupils. These include work placements for Year 10 pupils, ranging from a pet beautician to a funeral director. These help pupils to think more ambitiously about what they want to do when they leave school. The numerous links with local schools and colleges help to broaden the range of subjects open to pupils. An appropriate range of additional subjects are offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11; for example Italian, economics, expressive arts and hospitality and catering. So the interests and aptitudes of all pupils are well catered for.

The range and quality of after school activities are outstanding. Over 150 pupils regularly attend clubs as varied as Spanish, computing, chess and a choir. In addition, there are many sports related activities such as cricket, gymnastics, table tennis and squash, which are equally well attended, and which greatly enrich pupils' learning and overall experiences. A rich and varied range of equally valuable experiences includes, for example, an annual visit to Italy and many visits to art galleries and museums.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Staff provide an outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. They skilfully remove obstacles to learning. There are very effective systems in place to improve attendance, prevent exclusions and to support all pupils' learning. The school is particularly effective in supporting vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. A significant strength of this provision is the use of learning mentors. One pupil commented that his mentor was fantastic and she had really helped him overcome his difficulties. The school's work with other partners in providing support and guidance is very effective. A particularly successful example is the work of the Youth Café where large numbers of pupils are benefiting from work related opportunities. Pupils from Sandon High School were very active in setting up this project. Clear guidance is given on pupils' future options during sessions, which the pupils clearly appreciate, as attendance is very high. There is valuable support given to the more able and talented pupils, especially in raising their aspirations. The school is rightly proud of the high quality care, guidance and support it provides. It is appropriately preparing for assessment against the Challenge Award Standards.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Her vision and drive encourage students and staff to strive for high standards. She is effectively supported by a strong senior team. There are rare instances where middle managers do not promote sufficiently high standards of teaching and learning in their subjects. The school knows itself well and it has a satisfactory capacity for improvement. Effective middle managers ensure that their staff share their best methods. They improve good teaching further through school based research. These projects have advanced teachers' understanding of how pupils learn in their subject. The school has detailed monitoring procedures. Staff are effectively helped to plan their lessons and to evaluate their teaching. This gives them an accurate picture of their teaching and pupils' learning and indicates clearly what to do to improve performance further.

Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted. Discrimination is appropriately challenged. All pupils feel safe and secure.

The school is fully staffed by appropriately qualified teachers and learning support assistants. The school is an Initial Teacher Training provider and this programme is used well to recruit new staff.

The school provides good value for money. The new school buildings are designed to provide a high quality environment to promote pupil and adult learning and learners' physical health.

Very effective links are made with a wide range of other organisations. These include business mentors and the Meir Learning Community as well as sporting and cultural links to a wider global community through the British Council and Commenius projects in France, Poland, and China. They widen pupils' understanding of the world and effectively raise their awareness of issues outside of their city.

The governance of the school is outstanding. The governing body acts as a very effective critical friend to the senior team and through the work of its committees effectively calls staff to account. All middle managers are required to report on pupils' progress. They rigorously analyse their examination results and explain how they are going to improve them further.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the very polite and friendly welcome you gave to the team when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. We were very interested in watching you work and speaking to your teachers about your progress.

We were impressed by how smart you looked in your uniforms and how mature you were in your discussions with us. We were very impressed with the work of your pupils' committees and the impact these have had in your community and the school. We think you go to a satisfactory school, which has some good and many outstanding features. All the staff work hard to support you and help you to learn well. The personal development, well-being, care, support and guidance offered to you by the school are outstanding. The school is led extremely well by your headteacher, Miss Hall. She is helped a lot in this by all senior staff; all the teachers are trying hard to make the school an even better place for you to come to and learn. Your teachers care for you and work hard. You generally work hard in lessons, behave well and take care over your work. Teachers provide a great many opportunities for you to take part in activities other than lessons and many of you enjoy participating in them. While we know that teachers do their best to help you to learn, we think that improvements in the teaching of English and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 3, will help you to improve further. You were clear what the targets were that you were working towards, but we want your teachers to monitor your progress in achieving these more closely.

We wish you well for the future and hope you are successful in whatever you want to do.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker Her Majesty's Inspector