

Sandfield Park School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 130961 |
| Local Authority | Liverpool |
| Inspection number | 328536 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 June 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael McDowell |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 202 |
| Sixth form | 40 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Miss M Coghlan |
| Headteacher | Mr J Hudson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 March 2006 |
| School address | Sandfield Walk Liverpool Merseyside L12 1LH |
| Telephone number | 0151 228 0324 |
| Fax number | 0151 252 1273 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Sandfield Park is a school for pupils who have statements of special educational need because of physical and associated learning difficulties. In addition, it provides teaching for pupils who are patients at Alder Hey Children's Hospital and home tuition for children who have emotional and psychological difficulties that prevent them from attending school. Most of the 202 pupils on the school roll are also registered at schools elsewhere. Sixty seven pupils are registered only at Sandfield Park, 40 of whom are in the sixth form. They are drawn from the local authority area. More than half are eligible for free school meals. Of these, the great majority are White British. There are a few of mixed or of Asian heritage and a handful from other White backgrounds. A very small number are at an early stage in acquiring English. The local authority looks after a small number of pupils. The school has the National Healthy Schools Award and has achieved Fair Trade status. It has the Green Flag Award for Eco-schools. The school has Established Quality in Study Support status in recognition of the extended activities it provides.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has improved in many ways since the last inspection. Parents are as one in their praise of the opportunities, care and support it provides. They say it makes a positive difference to the quality of their children's lives. Pupils state that they are very proud of their school and the part they play in helping to improve it. They enjoy coming to school very much.

Pupils' standards are frequently well below those of their peers in mainstream schools because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities or interruptions to their education for medical or psychological reasons. Despite this, they make good progress from their low starting points and achieve standards that are high in relation to their capabilities. While achievement is good overall, there is some variation in outcomes between subjects. By the end of Year 11, those in the main school successfully complete Entry Level courses in literacy and numeracy. However, standards attained in English and mathematics are surpassed by those achieved in science in which a majority gain grades at GCSE Foundation Level. Pupils taught individually in hospital or through home tuition do well and gain accreditation for their learning at appropriate levels, including gaining passes in GCSE and AS level courses. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are on most occasions well matched to the learning needs of pupils. The positive relationships between teachers and pupils lead to confident learning. On a few occasions, however, teachers do not make best use of resources such as the electronic whiteboard to make learning more active and thus more effective. Personal development is outstanding. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Across the age range, pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. They are outward looking and appreciate learning about the customs and cultures of communities within the United Kingdom and around the world. They are very strongly committed to living healthy lives. They work extremely hard and successfully in their physiotherapy and physical education (PE) sessions because they understand the importance of maintaining the strength and flexibility that will enable them to remain mobile. Attendance is good and most pupils miss school only for pressing medical reasons. Pupils' personal development is strongly supported by the curriculum which is outstanding overall. It provides very good opportunities for academic and exceptional opportunities for social learning.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school prioritises the health, safety and welfare of its pupils. Pupils greatly benefit from the excellent relationship the school has built with the health authority. Very close liaison with other agencies including social services and Connexions helps to ensure that pupils are safe, extremely well cared for and well prepared for life after school.

The leadership of the school is good and it is managed well. The headteacher is exceptionally hard working and over time has successfully unified the three elements of school, hospital teaching service and home tuition into the flourishing institution that is Sandfield Park today. He is strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior staff. The school carefully tracks the progress of its pupils. It reviews its performance well and is accurate in its evaluation of outcomes. The school recognises, for example, that the impact of middle leadership could be sharper and this is a current development priority. Resources are used efficiently overall, but greater use could be made of information and communication technology (ICT) resources in the classroom. The supportive governing body provides the school with a fund of expertise and acts as a 'critical friend'. The school is well placed to continue to improve. It gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good and it is well led and managed. Students are very proud of their membership of the sixth form and strongly committed to making the most of the opportunities it offers them. They are well taught and the courses and activities provided are an excellent match for their capabilities and learning requirements. They make good progress in their academic work and achieve well. They successfully complete externally accredited courses that boost their community awareness, extend their independent living skills and prepare them well for working life. Their personal development is excellent because they receive outstanding care, support and guidance. The very positive relationships between students and staff help students to become confident that they can be successful learners. Resources are used well, particularly to enable students to engage with the community outside of school, where they have become effective advocates for people who have disabilities, especially the young.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' attainment in English and mathematics to the levels already achieved in science.
- Further improve teaching by making fuller use of the potential of ICT, especially electronic whiteboards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils in all areas of the school, including those taught in hospital or receiving home tuition, meet the challenging targets that are set for them. School records show that most pupils make consistent gains from starting points that are well below those expected of pupils in mainstream schools. In relation to their capabilities their achievement is good. By the end of Key Stage 4 most are successful at Entry Level in adult literacy and numeracy and have gained certification for units of work in several subjects, including ICT, geography and art. They also complete successfully the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Transitional Challenge. While neurological damage associated with their disabilities has a negative impact on pupils' reading and writing, this does not fully explain why their achievement in science is consistently higher than that in English and mathematics; other factors including the quality of teaching play a part. In 2008, five pupils completed the GCSE Foundation Level science course and were awarded certificates with grades ranging from C to F. Pupils also achieved particularly well in art and in PE. Pupils taught in hospital or who are receiving home tuition have a range of starting points and capabilities but these are generally much higher than those of the pupils in the main school. These pupils benefit from effective teaching and make good progress. They are helped to overcome the significant disruption to their education that they have experienced and successfully complete courses started elsewhere including at GCSE and AS level. There are no significant variations in achievement between girls and boys, majority and minority ethnic groups or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children looked after by the local authority achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' confidence, sociability and friendliness testify to the effectiveness of the excellent guidance and support that they receive. They show personal qualities that equip them well for work and life after school. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils enjoy coming to school very much. They say that they feel very safe and that, if they are worried, there is always a staff member they can talk to. Pupils are sure that their ideas to improve the school are listened to. For example, because of their extremely strong commitment to healthy lifestyles they have discussed healthy meal options with the school cook. They have also successfully pressed for the introduction of more water fountains. They understand fully the need for physical activity to preserve and extend their mobility. The extent of their engagement in sports of all kinds is exceptional. They are eager to be involved in the world beyond school. They promote community cohesion very successfully, particularly the rights and interests of the disabled, in forums such as the local school parliament. They support both local and international charitable causes. They are concerned for the environment and are hugely proud of the recent award to the school of a Green Eco-Flag. Through its home tuition service the school is successful in getting pupils with poor attendance because of emotional and psychological reasons to return to school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well prepared and capture the interest of pupils. Teachers understand the nature of their pupils' disabilities and learning difficulties and take these into account when planning work. Where teachers have excellent subject knowledge, as for example in PE, science or art lessons in the main school or in the teaching of literacy at the hospital, teaching is at its most confident and fluent. In all subjects teachers emphasise the development of literacy and communication skills. A variety of methods are used to make learning enjoyable and teaching assistants are carefully deployed to ensure that pupils get the support that they need. Sound use is made of electronic whiteboards and other ICT resources. However, the full interactive potential of these to promote pupils' participation and to lessen the negative affects that weak literacy skills have on learning is not always sufficiently explored. Teachers encourage their pupils very well. They keep them well informed about how they are getting on and what they should do to improve. Pupils try very hard in their lessons and have very positive attitudes to work. It is clear that they like their teachers very much.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provides excellent learning opportunities for all pupils. It meets their individual needs very well and prepares them for the future. There is good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT and high quality provision in science, art and PE. The curriculum for pupils in hospital and for those receiving home tuition takes full account of their educational history and capabilities. It is carefully matched to their current learning priorities. The major strength of the curriculum is the highly successful provision made for pupils' personal development. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay fit, healthy and safe and for becoming active contributing members of society. Where it is a priority, pupils are helped to heighten

their control of their emotions and overcome their fears. The extent of enrichment activities is truly exceptional and embraces a wide range of sporting opportunities, cultural visits and encounters and residential trips. This has been recognised by a national award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school works very effectively to keep pupils safe. Provision to promote their health and welfare is excellent. Very close relationships with the health authority ensure that the physical and medical needs of pupils are met. For example, a nurse and a team of physiotherapists and physiotherapy assistants are based in the school. All members of staff are familiar with the school's child protection policy and they are given fresh training when the policy is reviewed each year. All potential risks to pupils' health and well-being are carefully assessed. The school is vigilant in its oversight of vulnerable pupils. It takes a lead in marshalling support for them from other agencies. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and with one another. They say that they 'look after each other'. The school tracks the progress of its pupils very well and sets them challenging targets for improvement. Pupils are kept informed about their progress and, through close liaison with Connexions, are very well informed about their future options. Parents hold the school in the highest regard and are sure that it works closely with them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership has succeeded in bringing together the three very different elements that make up the school and imbuing them with a sense of common purpose. The work of the headteacher in achieving this has been exemplary. The school has fully addressed the matters raised at the last inspection and improvement since then is good. The leadership's commitment to equality of opportunity is extremely high and is shared by all staff. This is reflected in the emphasis placed on developing pupils' and students' personal qualities and independence. The school works very effectively with other agencies and parents to promote their welfare and future prospects. The school is well managed and runs smoothly. The school works extremely hard to promote community cohesion. At the school and local level, pupils are very active. Through highly developed links with faith communities and through the curriculum, they explore fully the wider dimensions of customs and cultures of communities within the United Kingdom and around the world. Safeguarding procedures fully meet current government requirements. Governance is good. Governors are supportive; they scrutinise all plans and hold the leadership to account. For example, they are aware that the impact of middle leadership could be sharper and this is a current development priority.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall | 16-19 |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 1 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 2 | 2 |

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 1 |

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No | |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No | |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the help you gave my colleague and me when we inspected your school. You were very polite and helpful and the things that you told us were very useful in enabling us to make up our minds. We agree with you that yours is a good school which helps you a great deal. You are rightly proud of the part you have played in making it even better over time. For example, you told us of your work to help make meals as healthy and enjoyable as possible and how you played a part in having water fountains put in place. You said you are very happy to come to school to enjoy your lessons and meet your friends. You feel there is no bullying and that you can trust the adults in school to help you when necessary.

As a result of our two days with you, we found that you make good progress in your work. In science, art and PE your progress is excellent. We saw that you are taught well and that you behave very well and like to learn. You are offered a wonderful range of interesting lessons and activities to take part in. You have learned to be very well mannered and considerate of others. You are exceptionally well informed about how to stay safe and keep healthy. The adults in school keep you very safe and look after you extremely well. They let you know how you are getting on so that you can improve. The school in all its parts is led and managed well.

To make your school even better we have asked your headteacher and the staff to help you do as well in English and mathematics as you do in science. We have also asked teachers to make more exciting use of electronic whiteboards and other ICT resources so that you can take a more active part in lessons and learn even more.

Thank you once again for your friendliness and we wish you all the best in your future lives.