

# Sandon Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124010
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stoke-On-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	340473
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eithne Proffitt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Clive Brian
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Rachel Beckett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Normacot Grange Road Meir Stoke-on-Trent ST3 7AW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 319097
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 331573
<b>Email address</b>	grange@sgfl.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observing 10 teachers. Meetings were held with the senior and middle leadership teams, members of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's monitoring and improvement planning, a wide range of school policies, safeguarding procedures, records of all pupils' progress, including individual education plans for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the school's self-evaluation procedures and tools. Inspectors also took account of responses to questionnaires returned by 52 parents and carers, 104 pupils and 11 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The quality of pupils' current learning and progress.
- How the quality of teaching sustains the above average attainment of pupils.
- The extent to which pupils are aware of our culturally diverse society and how well they are prepared for life beyond the community the school serves.
- The structure and teaching of the curriculum and how well it meets the learning needs of pupils.
- How effectively leaders and managers assure the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a few of these are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than usually found nationally and the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the Activemark. There is a children's centre on site that is not managed by the governing body. It is subject to a separate inspection, the report for which will be available on the Ofsted website.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### Main findings

This is a good school. It has a number of significant strengths. The school has exceptionally high expectations of its pupils, knows itself extremely well, is unequivocal in tackling any signs of underachievement and takes exceptional care of its pupils. It has improved considerably since its last inspection and instrumental in this is the single-minded focus that leaders and managers have given to raising pupils' self-esteem, attainment and achievement. Their persistent resolve and diligent work have reaped rewards. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Attainment has risen greatly over the past three years to above average by the time pupils leave Year 6, contributing to their overall outstanding achievement during their time in school. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress show that currently, pupils across the school are on course to achieve challenging targets, similarly above average attainment and outstanding achievement. Impressive, coherent, targeted provision and personalised learning programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities now secure outstanding progress and equality of opportunity for these pupils.

The welcoming, supportive environment helps pupils to thrive. Pupils are respected as individuals and their welfare is paramount. They have an outstanding appreciation of the importance of healthy and safe lifestyle choices and effective safeguarding procedures ensure that pupils are and feel very safe and secure in school. Pupils place their trust in the adults in school and are developing into mature young people who have an admirable sense of pride in the improvements to their school. 'Sandon is a great school – we love it!' is a comment reflecting the many pupils' positive remarks.

Teaching is consistently good, but not yet outstanding. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and work hard at set tasks. However, not all learning time in lessons is maximised and not all teachers are adventurous enough at employing creative, engaging, technology-driven techniques to entice interest and provide opportunities to move pupils' learning even further forward. Perceptive leadership, good quality professional development, focused performance management and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning have assured that, over time, this good quality, targeted teaching has accelerated pupils' learning and progress. However, there is no complacency and astute leaders are ambitious to improve teaching further. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults sometimes fail to provide opportunities for children to explore their world freely and independently. While still in the early stages of development, pupils' enjoyment of their 'creative learning journey' is tangible.

All staff contribute to the cycle of self-evaluation and review and are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Key issues are successfully addressed through well-prioritised school improvement planning and are linked clearly to their

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intended impact on pupils' academic achievement and emotional well-being.

Outstanding partnerships forged with parents and carers and other support agencies assist this learning and welfare most effectively. The shared vision for success and clear understanding of where to target resources and manage performance are key to the school's very good track record in bringing about rapid improvement. Such improvement in leadership at all levels, teaching, pupils' attainment, achievement and personal development and well-being provides great confidence for the school's future performance.

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

- Ensure that all teachers capitalise on learning opportunities in order to maximise progress in lessons, by:
  - using adult support and focused teaching groups in the initial part of lessons to better meet the learning needs of all pupils
  - utilising modern technology to make teaching more enticing and learning more exciting and interactive
  - providing children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with more opportunities to steer their own learning both indoors and in the outdoor area.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Lesson observations show that pupils are keen to learn, work hard, are competent in speaking about their learning and are making consistently good or better progress in lessons. Children start in Reception class with skills that are often well below the levels expected for their age. Despite making good progress, a large number still have below average skills when they begin Year 1. The unstinting drive of school leaders has ensured that, through good teaching and successful nurturing, the attainment gap is narrowing as pupils move through Years 1 and 2. This good progress continues and accelerates through Key Stage 2 ensuring that pupils' overall achievement is outstanding. Their above-average attainment ensures that they are well equipped for their next stage of education. The school is currently exploring appropriate, further business and enterprise links to extend pupils' experiences of employment, education, training and technology. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because the outstanding leadership of the inclusion manager ensures that pupils are identified early, staff are appropriately trained; targets for pupils' progress are ambitious; teaching assistants are effectively deployed and outside agencies are pursued to provide additional support and resources.

Pupils have an outstanding awareness of the benefits of regular exercise and a healthy diet. They speak proudly of their 'homemade' school dinners and their Activemark and Healthy Schools awards. They participate in a wide range of physical activity, with excellent take-up of related extra-curricular activities. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and readily name an adult to whom they would turn if they have a problem.

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They have a keen sense of possible dangerous situations, including internet use and cyber-bullying, claiming confidently that any issues that arise in school are swiftly dealt with and 'so much better than it used to be'.

Pupils readily take up roles of responsibility, for example, in the 'Children's Choice Committee' and are keen that their voice is heard and action taken. They proudly show visitors the electric gates and the speed bumps outside the school that they campaigned for, but point out that they now want speed bumps inside because, 'The problem has just moved'! Pupils show a keen understanding of right and wrong and have a growing awareness of different customs, traditions and faith groups in the world. The school works tirelessly to ensure that pupils understand the contribution these groups make to our culturally diverse society.

Pupils' attendance has improved steadily over recent years and is now in line with the national average. This is due to the relentless efforts of the school in monitoring and improving attendance for all groups of pupils. Its successful strategies ensure no pupils are persistently absent and all attend school regularly.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Relationships are very secure and there is an atmosphere of enthusiasm in lessons as pupils clearly want to do well for their teachers. Pupils are adept at describing what they are learning and teachers use their assessments of this learning to plan group activities that are appropriately pitched to move that learning forward. However, teaching in the initial part of lessons is more often directed towards the whole class rather than towards the specific learning needs of different pupils and here some valuable learning time is wasted. Teaching assistants provide an additional, effective layer of teaching, committed to moving targeted pupils' learning forward. The high-quality support they provide contributes to the outstanding achievement of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, teachers do not plan for, or use, this expertise to maximise learning for all pupils at other key times in lessons, such as in the initial teaching input. Teachers use marking very well to guide pupils in improving their work and towards their next steps and targets. The school has set up thorough systems to check on pupils' progress over time and these are used effectively by teachers to swiftly intervene if any child is in danger of falling behind.

The curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of pupils and very successful in promoting their above average attainment, outstanding achievement and their good and sometimes outstanding personal development. It encourages pupils to be enthusiastic learners. The school has embarked on a new topic-based, skills-led curriculum. The changes are providing pupils with more opportunities to combine their knowledge and skills from different subjects. This work is still in its infancy and, while there is evident excitement about its potential, managers agree that it is a 'work in progress', with areas still to be developed.

Inclusion is at the forefront of the school's mission and a strength of its provision. All adults know pupils well and are committed to providing high levels of care. They respond sensitively to the particular needs of those with more profound challenges. 'If my children have any problems, the staff are always on hand to help – that makes me happy to feel that they are so secure'. This parental comment aptly summarises the inspection findings. This is a truly inclusive school where the care, guidance and support for all pupils are outstanding.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Fundamental to the school's continued success are the visionary leadership of the

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headteacher and her relentless pursuit of only the very best for the pupils. She has established a highly effective system of fully involving all staff in helping to achieve this vision. The governing body, senior leaders, middle managers, class teachers and support staff are all actively involved in the school's self-evaluation, action planning and accountability; their contributions are impressive, trusted, tried and tested. Comments such as, 'My continuing professional development since joining this school has been effective in ensuring that I am a key part in this school's continued and rapid improvement', reflect the views of many of the staff. This has resulted in significant improvements in teaching and learning, attainment, achievement and pupils' well-being since the previous inspection. It is evidence of the school's leaders' high degree of success in driving improvement. Targeted recruitment, well-thought-out training and support and very effective deployment of staff have ensured that the successful management of teaching and learning is at the forefront of the leaders' agenda. The school involves parents and carers outstandingly well in their children's learning and personal development. Parents and carers are impressed with the school's considerable improvement over the past few years. Outstanding partnerships with external agencies and providers ensure an extended range of provision and services that have a striking impact on pupils' learning and increase pupils' enjoyment, confidence and self-esteem. Effective safeguarding procedures ensure that pupils feel very safe and secure. Systems are firmly in place and policy and procedures strictly adhered to. The school is a harmonious community where discrimination is not tolerated. Equal opportunities for every pupil are at the core of all its work and all pupils are helped to succeed. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good and its work to embrace the local community that it serves is remarkable in its determination, persistence and resilience. The school works unstintingly to forge effective and supportive links beyond the immediate area that are beginning to develop pupils' awareness of their place in our diverse society.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. When children come to Reception, many have skills that are well below those expected for this age, especially in their speech, language, social, emotional and creative development. School data show that the majority of children make good progress towards the early learning goals in the Reception class. Despite this, when they move to Year 1, a considerable number of children have not yet attained the expected age-related skills in all the areas of learning. Key workers support children well and form warm and trusting relationships with them and their parents and carers. A high level of attention is paid to ensuring that children are safe and welfare requirements are met. Children enjoy their learning and behave well. These youngest pupils are keen and excited learners. Their planned curriculum covers all the required areas of learning, providing them with structured, progressive activities that meet their needs and ensure good progress. However, these activities are sometimes directed too much by adults. As a result, the children sometimes lack opportunities to explore their world for themselves or to think imaginatively and creatively. The outdoor provision is not immediately accessible but is timetabled to ensure that all children have access. The school has ambitious proposals for extensive improvements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the meantime, however, while the outdoor area is incorporated into provision, the planned activities for the children do not fully extend or enhance those provided indoors on a larger scale, across all the areas of learning. The manager provides good leadership and recognises that there is scope for further development in capitalising fully on children's interests and providing sufficient opportunities for them to enjoy learning through experimentation both indoors and out.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the school. In particular, there were a significant number of positive

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comments about the improvements since the last inspection and the quality of the care, support and encouragement that pupils are given. Comments include: 'The change has been remarkable'; 'this school is getting better all the time' and 'a good school where the children are looked after and learn a lot'. Inspection findings support the positive views expressed by parents and carers.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandon Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 272 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	63	19	37	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	62	20	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	63	16	31	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	67	16	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	69	16	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	54	19	37	3	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	52	25	48	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	58	20	38	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	56	20	38	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	58	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	50	20	38	3	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	37	71	15	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	58	21	40	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



23 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sandon Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 7AW

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and listening to what you had to say. We agree with you when you say yours is a good school but we also think that it has some outstanding features too! These are some of the best things we found.

- Your school has worked hard to make sure that you are taught well, can talk about what you are learning, make good progress throughout the school and reach above average standards by the time you leave
- We were very impressed with your school's outstanding success in making sure that each and every one of you feels special, valued and supported
- It is good to know you are very happy with the way all the adults look after you, care for you and help you to keep healthy and feel so safe in school
- We were really impressed to see how much you respect and care for each other, you behave very well indeed and you are so polite and welcoming to visitors
- All the adults who work with your headteacher are determined to make sure your school keeps getting better and better.

To help your school to improve even further, we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to:

- make sure that you have more opportunities in your lessons to learn at your own pace
- make teaching and learning more exciting and fun by using the whiteboard and other technology more creatively and interactively in lessons
- provide lots of opportunities for the children in Reception class to explore their own interests in their classrooms and the outdoor area.

You too can help your school by continuing to be the best that you can be! Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly – we really enjoyed seeing you at work and play!

Yours sincerely

Eithne Proffitt

Lead Inspector

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