

Inspection of an outstanding school: Sandon Primary Academy

Normacot Grange Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 7AW

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 June 2024

Outcome

Sandon Primary Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a rock where pupils build firm foundations for their future. Pupils have an exceptional set of learning opportunities and take full advantage of these. They feel safe and are very appreciative of their school experience. Strong and positive relationships exist between all. These help to ensure that there is an enjoyable, calm and purposeful environment in which all pupils thrive, regardless of their background or additional needs.

Pupils experience an exceptional level of consistency from the staff they work with. The school has clear and very high expectations. Pupils have an ingrained understanding of what is expected of them. They are kind and understand each other's differences. Pupils confidently help each other in lessons. They make use of the strategies that teachers give them to support each other very well.

Pupils are understood as individuals and helped when needed. Their whole development is considered and implemented carefully through the wider offer of the school. There is a huge range of trips, clubs and extra-curricular activities that enriches pupils' lives. Pupils have an array of leadership opportunities to grow into. For example, older pupils can become 'Sandon Saints', library bus monitors and sports leaders. They help to contribute to the buzz of enjoyment throughout break and lunch times.

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

The school has a relentless focus on ensuring that pupils get the very best. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are doing very well across the ambitious curriculum. The school has been relentless in addressing the gaps from the pandemic and aiding those with very low starting points to achieve and catch-up with their peers.

Teachers have a strong understanding of what they want pupils to learn. They routinely check pupils' prior knowledge and support pupils to successfully build on their learning. Teachers also ensure that pupils make links across their learning. For example, in

mathematics, pupils can connect mathematical knowledge well and they use this to help them tackle increasingly difficult problems. As a result, pupils are fully ready for future content. In early years, staff skilfully build on children's knowledge across all areas of learning.

Reading is a top priority from the very beginning in nursery and Reception. Children's language development is thoughtfully and very effectively integrated into their daily experiences. Staff teach phonics consistently well. Teachers help to extend more confident readers and support those who may fall behind extremely well. Where necessary, pupils receive regular and targeted support. This helps to make sure that they quickly catch up with their peers. Teachers across the school promote a love of reading. They have carefully chosen books that interest and inspire pupils. Pupils take advantage of the many spaces where they can read, including the library bus. They take great pride in managing the books and keeping it well-organised.

The school is a wonderful and orderly place where pupils concentrate very well. Pupils enjoy learning across all the subjects they do. They actively work together and are helped to build their understanding through well-chosen activities and a rich environment. This begins in the early years, where children follow routines and instructions. Staff help children to grow in confidence and independence so that they are ready for Year 1.

Pupils are praised at every opportunity and their success is celebrated. They are understood as individuals. The school has taken intelligent action to support all staff and pupils to secure the consistent high standards that exist. Pupils aspire to being 'Sandon Rock' and make great efforts to be able to wear one of the 'Sunday Dinner' praise hats. Clear processes and procedures exist to help secure very positive attendance figures. Staff actively work with parents, pupils, and outside agencies to reduce and remove the barriers to good attendance.

Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. They explore a range of ideas, including stereotypes and other religions. This contributes to pupils being inclusive of all. They are taught how to keep themselves safe. This includes understanding risks they may face online. Pupils' wider development is threaded through the curriculum, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. All are involved in the healthy house competition, jointly led by staff and pupils in Years 4 and 5, which further enrich the life of this special place.

Staff greatly enjoy their work and are rightly proud of what they do for the pupils and wider community. They speak highly of the support they receive from leaders in all aspects of their work. Leaders at all levels share a deep understanding of what it means to improve sustainably. Staff receive timely and highly focused professional development to make sure the pupils get the best out of their education. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the education their children receive. Trustees know their school very well. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in July 2017.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140872
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10290610
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	513
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Bagnall
Principal	Rachel Beckett
Website	www.sandonprimaryacademy.com
Date(s) of previous inspection	11 and 12 July 2017

Information about this school

- The school is a single academy trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the principal, head of school, trustees, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of

lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum plan, spoke with leaders and visited the breakfast club.
- The inspector looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour and bullying.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work.
- The inspector took account of responses to the pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Richard Wakefield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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