

Inspection of a good school: Sandbach Primary Academy

Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4NS

Inspection date:

15 February 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and children in the early years, at Sandbach Primary Academy described their school as a happy place where everyone is friendly and kind. Staff know pupils and their families well in this small school. They foster a caring learning community where all feel valued. Parents and carers spoke positively about the support that their children receive from staff.

Many pupils understand how to behave well. They want to live up to leaders' high expectations. As a consequence, pupils' behaviour across the school is improving. However, some other pupils do not behave as well as they should. From time to time, these pupils distract their peers from their learning.

Leaders have high expectations of what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can and should achieve. That said, refinements to the curriculum in some subjects are in the early stages. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should over time.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that teachers will listen to their concerns. Staff deal with incidents of bullying effectively.

Pupils participate in a variety of clubs and enrichment activities, including arts and crafts club, archery and basketball. They are keen to take on positions of responsibility, such as school councillors and safety officers.

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

In many subjects, leaders have designed a suitably ambitious curriculum that motivates and inspires pupils, including those with SEND, to do their best. The knowledge and skills

that pupils need to acquire are ordered logically so that pupils can build on what they already know. The early years curriculum provides children with a strong foundation for key stage 1. In the Nursery, staff prioritise developing children's communication. This includes the youngest children in the two-year-old provision.

Leaders have ensured that staff across the school receive suitable training to develop their knowledge and expertise in the subjects that they are delivering. In the main, staff deliver the curriculum increasingly well.

In some subjects, teachers use assessment information well to design learning that builds on what pupils already know. For example, in mathematics, teachers frequently check pupils' understanding and reinforce prior learning. That said, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not check that pupils have retained the key knowledge that they have learned previously. This hampers pupils' ability to see links between prior and current learning.

Leaders have recently changed the school's phonics programme. They have provided suitable training so that staff can deliver this programme well. However, some staff lack the confidence to deliver the phonics programme effectively. For example, some staff do not encourage pupils' independence in sounding and blending words. Some pupils do not read as accurately or as fluently as they could. Despite this, leaders swiftly identify those who are falling behind with their phonics knowledge. They ensure that these pupils receive additional support to help them to catch up with their peers.

Pupils, including children in the early years, enjoy the books that teachers read to them regularly. Teachers have skilfully linked these books to the themes that pupils are learning about in the curriculum. Pupils eagerly recount stories and their favourite characters. They choose books to read for pleasure and spoke about the authors and genres that they enjoy the most.

Leaders identify any SEND as soon as pupils join the school. They liaise swiftly and effectively with external agencies to meet the needs of these pupils. Pupils with SEND enjoy the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how their behaviour impacts on others. Most pupils are keen to have their positive behaviour rewarded. That said, some pupils' misbehaviour persists. On occasion, this disrupts lessons. Leaders have suitable systems in place to support these pupils to behave well.

Some pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school as regularly as they should. This hinders how well these pupils learn. While leaders have put strategies in place to improve pupils' rates of attendance, it is too soon to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders have constructed a comprehensive programme to support pupils' personal development. For example, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe on the roads and how to stay healthy. They learn about showing compassion to others and how to protect

the environment. This prepares pupils well to take their place as responsible citizens in modern Britain.

Governors and trustees work closely with leaders to meet the needs of pupils at the school, including pupils with SEND. They are well informed about leaders' priorities for improving the quality of education that pupils receive. Staff morale is high. They appreciate the efforts of leaders to care for their well-being and the actions that have been taken to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff receive timely and appropriate safeguarding training. They know the signs that might suggest that a pupil or their family needs support. Staff record and report their concerns about a pupil's welfare quickly.

Leaders work successfully with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support that they need. Leaders keep accurate safeguarding records.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about the benefit and dangers of being online. They enjoy swimming lessons and know how to cycle safely on the roads.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not have the confidence to deliver the phonics programme as leaders intend. This means that some pupils do not benefit from a systematic approach to sounding and blending to develop their reading knowledge. This hinders some pupils from becoming confident readers as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff are equipped to deliver the phonics programme consistently well.
- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment information consistently well to check what pupils have learned before. As a result, some pupils struggle to recall key facts and to build on prior learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies well to identify and address any misconceptions or gaps in learning that pupils may have.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they are not accessing the full curriculum. This hinders their achievement. Leaders should support these pupils to improve their rates of attendance.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

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	141809
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10268882
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	132
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Bowen
Principal	Claire Caldwell
Website	www.sandbach-pri.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sandbach Primary Academy is a smaller than average primary school.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in mixed-age classes.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative education providers for pupils.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning. They also observed some pupils reading to members of staff.
- Inspectors also spoke to subject leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.

- Inspectors met with the principal, vice principal, assistant chief education officer of the multi-academy trust and other leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, and minutes of the local academy committee meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. They spoke with the designated safeguarding leader. Inspectors also spoke to staff about their understanding of how to keep pupils safe.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local academy committee and a member of the trust board. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to staff to discuss leaders' support for their well-being and workload.
- Inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their experiences of school.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector also considered the views of parents on Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Niamh Howlett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Deane

Ofsted Inspector

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