

Inspection of Sandfield Park School

South Drive, Sandfield Park, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside L12 1LH

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive and flourish at this school. They are happy and behave well, showing empathy, courtesy and kindness to one another. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit considerably from the warm and supportive relationships that they have with staff and with each other.

The school has exceptionally high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils rise to meet these aspirations. They have highly positive attitudes to learning and a real commitment to their education. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. They gain the qualifications that they need to move on to the next stage in their education, training or employment.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school and to the wider community. For example, some pupils are members of the school council and NHS cadets. Others attend the school's parliament and volunteer at a local hospital.

Pupils relish the opportunity to visit places of interest, including beaches, museums and a safari park. They partake in trips, such as a narrow boat journey and camping. Some pupils successfully complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These rich experiences help pupils to develop confidence and resilience.

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

The school has designed a highly ambitious and broad curriculum that meets pupils' needs and interests. It prepares pupils, and students in the sixth form, exceptionally well for their future lives.

The curriculum identifies the key knowledge that pupils should gain. This means that teachers know what should be taught to help pupils across each of the different sites learn all that they should.

All pupils who attend the main school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school quickly identifies the additional needs of those pupils with SEND who attend the other settings. Staff are highly skilled at meeting the complex needs of pupils in each provision. For example, staff use an alternative communication system to help some pupils to share their thoughts, views and needs successfully.

Teachers are adept at implementing the curriculum consistently well. They have the subject knowledge and expertise that they need to help pupils to build their knowledge securely over time. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to revisit their prior learning. They also use their deep understanding of any gaps in pupils' knowledge to shape future learning. Learning activities, resources and the environment help pupils to follow the ambitious curriculum extremely well. As a result, pupils succeed in their learning and achieve very well across a range of subjects.

The school has prioritised reading. Classrooms have a diverse range of books that foster a love of reading among pupils. The school checks, and then quickly addresses, the gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge and comprehension. For example, it has established a successful phonics programme for those pupils who are still in the early stages of reading. This helps them to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They have high levels of respect and consideration for each other and for adults. They play a highly positive role in ensuring that the school is a calm and safe place for them to learn and spend time together.

The school has prioritised attendance. It has a clear understanding of the causes of some pupils' previously high levels of absence. It takes swift and effective action to improve the attendance rates. These actions have brought about sustained improvement in reducing absence levels.

The school has designed an extensive programme to enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit greatly from a wide and rich set of experiences. For example, they appreciate the plentiful opportunities that they have to develop their interests in a broad range of sporting activities, such as table cricket, swimming and wheelchair basketball. They take great pride in organising an annual festival, 'Sandfest'. They enjoy music, art, comedy and dance and drama activities at this event.

The school prepares pupils, and students in the sixth form, for adulthood exceptionally well. For example, pupils develop life skills such as budgeting and independent travel. They also complete work placements and supported internships with local businesses and enterprises, including at the Sandy Park Café, hotels, museums and Liverpool Women's Hospital. These varied experiences help pupils to develop independence and confidence.

The school ensures that the high-quality education that it provides has a consistently positive impact on pupils, including those with SEND. Governors provide effective support and challenge. They hold the school to account for the quality of education that it provides. The school has ensured that staff benefit from effective professional development. It has also taken steps to reduce staff's workload so that they can focus on their teaching. This has significantly contributed to the staff's expert implementation of the curriculum. Parents and carers hold the school in extremely high regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 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	130961
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10211972
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Crombie
Headteacher	Mark Hilton
Website	www.sandfieldparkschool.com
Date of previous inspection	19 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sandfield Park School caters for pupils in three different settings. The main school site provides for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 and students in the sixth form. All of these pupils have a range of complex needs, including physical disabilities, medical needs and severe, moderate and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils who are educated on the main site have an EHC plan.
- The school also provides short- and long-term education for pupils of primary and secondary age who cannot attend their own school for social, emotional, mental health and/or medical reasons. Some of these pupils may be in hospital for medical or surgical treatment and attend the Alder Hey Hospital Education provision. Some of these are pupils with SEND and/or an EHC plan.
- Other pupils attend the Alder Centre for Education, on the same site as the main school, for medical and/or mental health reasons. Some of these are pupils with SEND. The number of pupils attending these sites fluctuates over time.

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, heads of school and other leaders of the school. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences in the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, during lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and computing. They met with subject leaders and teachers, and they visited a sample of lessons. They spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They looked at examples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Ofsted Inspector

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