

# Sandy Hill Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	136318
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	395683
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	John Cavill

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>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	317
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sandra Hodge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Carter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Sandy Hill St Austell PL25 3AT
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	28–29 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	395683



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## Introduction

Inspection team

John Cavill	Additional Inspector
Anne Wesley	Additional Inspector
Claire Plumb	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 26 lessons and observed 10 teachers and a Graduate Teacher Programme trainee. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspectors also made short observations of sessions on the teaching of phonics (pupils learning letter patterns and the sounds they represent to enable them to read). They had discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plans and priorities for development. They analysed recent evidence on pupils' progress and attainment, checked safeguarding procedures and analysed 127 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

## Information about the academy

Sandy Hill is a larger-than-average primary academy. It converted to an academy in November 2010 from the predecessor school on the same site. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in separate Nursery and Reception classes, with some Reception children taught within a Year 1 class. The school meets the current floor standards, the minimum standards expected by the government for pupils' attainment and progress. The school manages a before- and after-school club, which also accommodates some children who do not attend the academy. This is located on the school site and was part of this inspection.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Sandy Hill is a good academy. It is highly regarded by parents, carers, pupils and staff alike who value the education that it provides. It is not outstanding because the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the academy and leave Year 6 with average attainment. Achievement in writing is slightly lower than in mathematics and reading. However, this gap has largely closed due to some very successful teaching strategies supporting pupils' learning well.
- Pupils benefit from good teaching. This is resulting in the good progress being made by the pupils. Teachers ensure that lessons are planned well to meet the needs of all pupils with activities that enable them to enjoy their learning. In some lessons, where the teaching is less than good, the pace is slower with teachers expecting pupils to listen to them talking for too long. This is limiting the challenge for pupils, especially the more able, to develop their independent learning skills and attain higher standards.
- Pupils enjoy being at the academy and they interact well together. Their behaviour and safety around the academy are exceptionally good and they are very respectful. In lessons their attitudes to learning are good.
- The leaders at the academy are focused on securing high standards of achievement and teaching. The headteacher leads a cohesive team that shares a common vision to enhance the lives of all pupils. Academy performance is monitored well by leaders who have secured sustained improvement since conversion to an academy, including a substantial rise in attendance. Performance review and monitoring procedures, supported by some effective professional development, have secured the good quality of teaching.

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## What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and eliminate satisfactory teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress, by:
  - conducting all lessons at a lively pace
  - making sure that pupils do not sit too long listening to teachers talking
  - giving all pupils, particularly the more able, sufficiently challenging work that develops their independent learning skills.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

All pupils achieve well, a view shared by almost all parents and carers who think that their children are making good progress. When pupils leave at the end of Year 6, attainment is average in English and mathematics. Their attainment in reading is better, with an above average proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 by the end of Year 6. However, the more able are not sufficiently challenged enough in a minority of lessons, which limits their chances to work at the higher levels. Attainment in reading in the current Year 2 is above average. Good progress in reading is made because of the regular effective teaching of phonics at the academy. Key Stage 1 pupils used the skills of blending these sounds to 'attack' unknown words, enabling them to read fluently. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least good progress when measured against their starting points. This has been secured through accurate assessment of their needs and well-targeted support being delivered by teachers and teaching assistants.

Children enter the Nursery class with knowledge and skills that are below what would normally be expected for their age. This is more noticeable in their personal, social and emotional development. Effective teaching and interesting learning activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage enable children to make good progress. Their creativity and writing skills are developing well. For example, in the Nursery, some successful emergent writing was being used well in a café where the children were making choices about food.

Good progress continues throughout the academy, where a focus to improve pupils' progress in writing is rapidly closing the gap with progress in reading and mathematics that used to exist. Pupils are now more confident writers who are developing their skills well. For example, Year 2 pupils were developing poems, using sensory experiences from some learning about senses outside. They were able to use nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives with ease to make some outstanding progress during the lesson.

### Quality of teaching

Teaching at the academy enables good learning for all pupils. Almost all of the

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parents and carers who completed the questionnaire stated that their children were well taught and the pupils agree. Examples of outstanding practice were seen at the academy and this was best exemplified by the way that the pupils were encouraged to work independently. In the Years 1/2 class pupils were using the story of Joseph's coat to reflect on the way that this is relevant to life today. They were expected to develop their learning independently, using a variety of tasks suited to their ability, and then to discuss it as a whole class activity. As a result, all pupils made outstanding progress and could fully explain their learning during the lesson.

Teachers plan their lessons well and learning objectives are used effectively to focus the learning for the pupils. Good planning and well-targeted interventions ensure disabled pupils and those with special educational needs progress in line with their peers. Teachers successfully create a positive climate for learning and foster strong relationships. Pupils are grouped together based on their ability and in the better lessons tasks reflect the ability of individual pupils well. A Year 6 numeracy lesson, developing calculation skills, demonstrated the pupils' desire to learn and their enthusiasm for mathematics when the work reflected the cost of a family holiday. However, in the lessons that were less than good, teachers controlled the pace too much and limited the chance for all pupils to make good progress. This was especially the case for the higher ability pupils who, in some lessons, were not challenged enough. Before they moved onto more appropriately matched work, they were expected to undertake tasks that they could do already, limiting their chances to make better progress.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children benefit from effective teaching. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by children. A very well equipped outdoor space provides successfully for all areas of learning, especially their physical development. Children have good opportunities to explore, be creative and learn independently with imaginative role-play areas, such as the café, effectively promoting creativity and language skills.

Pupils are now making better progress in writing due to new teaching strategies that focus on better choice of vocabulary, connectives, opening sentences and punctuation. This is helping the pupils to develop their higher-level skills in writing through regular opportunities to practise their extended writing. Reading is taught well and is supported by daily phonics sessions in Key Stage 1. Reading at the academy is a regular and popular feature and pupils enjoy filling out and answering the questions in their reading logs. These provide a strong home-academy link.

The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This is enhanced well through the development of links with other academies globally, and within the United Kingdom, to promote pupils' understanding of their place in a multicultural society.

Pupils and teachers regularly assess the pupils' work. The feedback from teachers that pupils receive is constructive, helps them to progress and move onto the next level. Pupils' work is presented well.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

All pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, feel safe, secure and are well behaved. Their behaviour around the academy and at play is exceptionally good and discussions and analysis of school records show this to be typical. Almost all parents, carers and pupils endorsed these findings and stated that behaviour and safety are good. A few parents and carers indicated concern about some bullying at the academy. However, pupils commented that they thought the behaviour is very good and there is no bullying of any kind, including physical, emotional and cyber bullying. They report that they feel very safe and well looked after and are confident that any problems that they may have will be dealt with quickly by adults at the academy. There have been no exclusions at the academy.

In most lessons, behaviour and the pupils' attitude to their learning are good. In the small number of lessons where the pace is slower and expectations are not high, some pupils lose focus and occasionally come off task. This results in a slowing of their progress. Teachers and teaching assistants identify this and pupils are re-engaged quickly. Pupils are keen to do well and respond to the rewards system at the academy. They are keen to come to the academy and enjoy learning. As one commented, 'Our teacher always makes it fun.' As a result, pupils are punctual arriving at the academy and in lessons. Attendance is average but is improving strongly due to the successful work being done to raise awareness of levels of absence with parents.

## **Leadership and management**

The well-regarded headteacher successfully keeps staff focused on pupils' learning. Leaders at all levels, including governors, work well as a team and are galvanised together with the sole purpose to improve the academic and personal outcomes for all pupils. The academy is a successful learning organisation that is striving for the very best for the pupils.

The academy's assessment and tracking system provides accurate data and allows leaders to analyse performance well. Regular pupil progress meetings allow teachers to discuss the progress of individual pupils. They are very effective in targeting pupils who are not making sufficient progress, with successful interventions that produce good academic outcomes and ensure equality of opportunity.

Teaching is regularly observed by leaders to monitor the quality and to help teachers develop their practice. Performance management through professional development and training are linked well to the academy improvement priorities and sharing excellent practice is embedded well to promote high quality teaching.

The supportive governing body provides challenge and ensures that all of its statutory duties are fulfilled, including equalities legislation to combat discrimination. Governors are fully involved in the self-evaluation and improvement planning

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processes and understand the academy's strengths and weaknesses. All pupils are kept safe with safeguarding procedures that are secure and managed well. The before- and after-academy club provides pupils with a safe and stimulating environment that is highly valued by all who use it.

Leaders and staff provide an interesting curriculum that promotes good outcomes for pupils and is continually under review. The provision for basic skills is effective and strong cross-curricular links are clearly evident. This provides pupils with a wide range of learning opportunities that makes good use of the local environment and effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A fine example of this is where the Year 2 class started their lesson on writing a poem using sensory experiences by sitting outside experiencing sights and sounds to develop their work.

The academy's self-evaluation is largely accurate and improvement planning is focused. Leaders regularly monitor all aspects of the academy and make sure that it continues to move forward in a sustainable way. There has been a sustained trend of improvements made since becoming an academy, with a steady improvement in attendance being the most noticeable. This indicates that the academy has a strong capacity to improve further.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



30 May 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Sandy Hill Academy, St Austell PL25 3AT**

Thank you for welcoming us to your academy recently, talking to us about your work and telling us about your academy and what you like about it. We enjoyed talking to you and would especially like to thank those of you who met with an inspector or completed the questionnaire.

It was good to see you all enjoying your learning and achieving so much. We found that the teaching at your school was good and it was good to hear that you thought that the teachers made learning fun. As you grow up it is important that you remember wonderful moments. It was great to see the way that Year 2 became excited about the sights and sounds around them (including a chatting inspector!) when they were working on writing a poem – don't forget these things.

You told us that your academy is good and we agree with you. Even good academies can carry on improving and I know your teachers want to do just that. We have asked your headteacher and the staff to make sure that all lessons give all of you work that ensures that you do your very best. We have also asked that your teachers make sure that you can get on with your work as quickly as possible in lessons and help you to learn more independently.

We enjoyed coming to your academy. You can help it to improve by continuing to work hard and concentrating on your work in every lesson.

Yours sincerely

John Cavill  
Lead inspector

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