

Sandbach Primary Academy

Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4NS

Inspection dates

25–26 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors of the academy trust have created a happy, caring school where staff and pupils thrive and everyone feels valued.
- The headteacher, very well supported by the deputy headteacher, provides ambitious and determined leadership. This is characterised by a concern that every pupil should have the chance to be successful.
- Leaders from the trust provide a high level of expertise and support that has a beneficial impact on improving the quality of teaching and the pupils' rate of progress.
- The pastoral support pupils receive is excellent and contributes strongly to their good personal development and well-being.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is very carefully planned and monitored. As a result, these pupils make strong progress from their starting points, especially as they move through key stage 2.
- Pupils are making good progress in mathematics because of the strong focus leaders have placed on developing pupils' ability to reason and evaluate their work.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They grow in confidence and make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour in school is good. They are courteous and respectful to each other and to staff. They are proud to belong to the school.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and act upon them quickly.
- Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and skilfully ask questions to help drive forward pupils' learning. However, this is not consistent in all classes.
- The well-developed skills the most able pupils demonstrate in English and mathematics are not replicated in some other subjects, such as history. This is because the level of challenge is too low.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning in English and mathematics helps teachers reflect on their classroom practice and improve it. However, the monitoring of pupils' progress in some subjects other than English and mathematics is at a very early stage.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and raise pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
 - pupils, including the most able, are challenged appropriately to deepen their skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics
 - the strongest teaching is shared across the school to further develop a consistency in quality across all classes.
- Improve the leadership of many subjects, other than English and mathematics, so that pupils' progress is monitored regularly and expectations of what they can achieve are raised.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong and focused leadership for the school. They are well respected by parents, carers, pupils, governors and staff, who typically comment on the high level of care and attention given to each pupil.
- Leaders ensure the accuracy of assessment information for English and mathematics by checking pupils' work in books and working closely with other schools to endorse the assessments made. They have detailed knowledge of the progress of individual pupils in these subjects and use this information to provide additional support where necessary.
- Leaders have taken action to improve the standards reached by the most able pupils in English and mathematics. Additional staff training was implemented, using evidence-based research from the trust. Consequently, the most able pupils are beginning to reach the higher standards of which they are capable in these subjects.
- Performance management is used effectively to help improve teaching, and staff development has a high profile in the school. Teachers work in partnership with leaders to set high expectations for pupils and to identify their own teaching strengths and the areas of practice they need to improve in order to meet these challenges.
- Staff are very well supported to improve their skills through the school's involvement in the trust. They have access to high-quality training, coaching and mentoring support. This has a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment practice across the school.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective in ensuring that pupils' needs are met. Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. These pupils receive skilled support specifically tailored to them, such as speech and language therapy and emotional and behavioural support.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education and sport funding to provide specialist teaching and training for staff. The school also provides a range of after-school clubs and an extensive menu of lunchtime activities, and has seen positive results in improved health and fitness for pupils.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. The impact of this support is monitored carefully to ensure its effectiveness.
- The school is rightly proud of its work to promote British values. Working closely with organisations such as Stonewall, pupils are encouraged to think carefully about equality and diversity. Using the skills of a member of staff trained as a specialist leader in cultural education, pupils develop their understanding of democracy through the medium of dance. They learn to contribute and share ideas, work cooperatively and reach agreement in the best interest of the group.
- A wide range of exciting activities and extra-curricular opportunities are provided to enrich the curriculum and motivate pupils. Leaders think carefully about experiences that would benefit pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Building

pupils' resilience and independence is a key priority for the school and the residential trips for every year group make a valuable contribution to pupils developing these skills.

- Leaders have ensured that the full range of curriculum subjects is timetabled. However, leaders acknowledge that the majority of school time has been devoted to improving pupils' English and mathematics skills. Consequently, opportunities to develop subject-specific skills at greater depth are missed.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is at an early stage. As a result, there is limited information about how well pupils achieve across a range of subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governors are knowledgeable, ambitious and articulate. They share the passion and commitment of the headteacher and senior leaders and have effectively managed recent staffing changes to minimise disruption in school. They have a good strategic overview, as well as a detailed knowledge of assessment information and the quality of teaching.
- Trust leaders provide highly effective support and challenge to drive forward improvements in school. The thorough analysis of data about pupils' performance, backed by rigorous monitoring of pupils' work by members of the trust, supports leaders in setting school improvement and budget priorities.
- Governors, along with the headteacher and senior leaders, have ensured that the school's priorities are intrinsically embedded in the performance management of all staff. Governors have engaged expertise from within the trust to support staff to develop their teaching and leadership skills.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The long-established culture of keeping pupils safe remains very evident. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority for all staff and they leave no stone unturned in their duty to keep pupils safe.
- The leadership team, including governors, has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Systems in place to prevent safeguarding issues are effective.
- The school has a positive and caring ethos which is almost tangible, putting the welfare and well-being of each pupil at the heart of all that it does. Staff are well trained in the different types of child protection and are attentive, particularly regarding pupils' well-being.
- Parents agree that staff are vigilant in keeping children safe. Leaders work effectively with parents and, where necessary, with external agencies to keep pupils safe.
- Owing to the successful preventative work in the school, incidents of bullying, racism or homophobia are rare. Staff monitor pupils' behaviour well and provide a safe haven for the pupils in their care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Actions introduced to further improve teaching, especially for the most able, are starting to have an impact. This is reflected in the strong progress pupils are beginning to make in each year group in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work. They consistently use the school's behaviour policy to good effect. Most pupils pay attention in lessons, behave well and are interested in their learning.
- When writing, pupils are given high-quality texts upon which to base their work, experiencing a model of good practice. In the Years 1 and 2 class, for example, pupils were asked to think about how sounds and smells create atmosphere when describing the Great Fire of London. Older pupils write with flair and imagination and are taught skills to help them draft and redraft their work.
- Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to test out their understanding in a range of mathematical problems. For example, in the Years 5 and 6 class, the teacher presents pupils with a hypothesis and asks 'Am I right?' Pupils' confidence grows as they accept the challenge, calculate their responses and evaluate the reasons for their answers. They are able to formulate explanations using mathematical vocabulary. Pupils' books show their progress is accelerating as a result.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils read fluently and well, developing a love of books as they move through the school. Reading skills are increasingly extended in guided reading sessions. During the inspection, for example, pupils in the Years 3 and 4 class developed a mature grasp of how to find the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases from a text.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well and are skilled at giving timely help and support to individuals and groups. They work well as part of the teaching team, playing an important role in the progress pupils make.
- Pupils, especially the most able, are not routinely given the opportunity to use their skills to the full in several subjects, for example in history. The work in pupils' books shows activities are less demanding and do not match this group of pupils' ability.
- Most teachers use their good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. However, this is not consistent across the school. Occasionally, the questions teachers ask do not provide sufficient challenge or give pupils the opportunity to explain their thinking.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- This inclusive school works hard to promote pupils' good personal development and welfare, encouraging them to uphold the school's values. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and caring. Pupils are developing increasing resilience in lessons and an ability to work with more independence.

- Staff model positive attitudes and perseverance. For example, the headteacher discusses with pupils the new learning opportunities that will open up to her following her impending retirement. She encourages pupils to consider the importance of embracing new challenges.
- The small team of highly dedicated staff focuses relentlessly on the needs of individuals and their families. All possible support is harnessed to make sure that the most vulnerable families have the help they need.
- Pupils demonstrate a sense of pride in their school. They enjoy the positions of responsibility afforded to them, including being anti-bullying ambassadors and play leaders. They describe how they have made a difference to pupils' behaviour at playtimes. Pupils are confident that their work means bullying is no longer a problem in the school.
- Pupils know how to keep safe in different situations, including when online. They understand the dangers presented on the internet and are aware of how to protect themselves. Key visitors to the school, including the police community support officer and a representative of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, reinforce important messages.
- Pupils feel safe at the school and trust the adults who work with them, knowing they can seek help if needed. They appreciate that adults tackle any incidents swiftly and effectively.
- Stereotyping is challenged through the curriculum and in assemblies. For example, pupils learn about homophobic prejudice and are able to explain why racism and sexism are wrong. Pupils say and school records show that incidents of derogatory name-calling are rare.
- Overwhelmingly, parents appreciate the care and attention staff give to their children. All of those who answered Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and who spoke with the inspector would recommend Sandbach Primary Academy to others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, reflecting the high standards set for them. Routinely, staff and pupils greet both visitors and each other with a warm welcome and a friendly smile.
- Pupils respond promptly to adult instructions in their lessons and around school. Low-level disruption is rare. On the playground, pupils are cooperative and older pupils are very supportive of younger children.
- Helping pupils develop an understanding of how to be successful learners is a key priority for the school. Pupils are taught what good learning looks like and how to improve their 'learning power'. Occasionally, pupils are reluctant to volunteer ideas or answer questions but their confidence increases as they move through the school.
- Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy and value the rewards they receive. They hold their teachers and the headteacher in high regard.
- The attendance of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is good and improving. The few pupils who are persistently absent are carefully monitored and well

supported to encourage better attendance. Some of these pupils have special medical needs that prevent them from arriving in school on time every day. The positive relationships staff build with parents help to improve the attendance and punctuality for pupils experiencing difficulties.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Caution needs to be taken when interpreting published data for Sandbach Primary Academy, owing to the small numbers of pupils in some year groups. In 2017 for example, one pupil represented 8% of the group. This has a significant impact when comparing the school to others. For example, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2016 for the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, leaders had strong evidence to demonstrate the good progress of pupils in that cohort and across the school. Consequently, the inspector took a greater account of the school's own information when considering pupils' outcomes.
- School records and work in pupils' books show that, from their different starting points, the majority of pupils make good progress and this accelerates as they move through key stage 2. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to that of other pupils nationally.
- In 2017, no pupils reached the higher standards of work at greater depth in Year 2 in reading, writing or mathematics. However, leaders have been quick to address this and have raised the expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. Current data shows a significant increase in the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in these subjects across the school.
- From starting points often well below that expected for their age, children in the early years make good progress. Children enjoy learning how to use phonics to read and spell, doing so with confidence and accuracy. By the time they leave the Reception class, children are ready for the challenges of Year 1. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development in the early years increased in 2017, and is slightly above that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been improving and is in line with the national average. Consequently, pupils use and apply their phonics skills increasingly well in their reading and writing.
- Pupils who are known to be disadvantaged make good progress in English and mathematics across the school, particularly in key stage 2. This is partly because pupil premium funding has been used wisely to provide personalised support for this group of pupils to enable them to make accelerated progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Staff work closely with external agencies to make sure that pupils have the support they need. Staff are well trained to deliver any special programmes to help pupils catch up.
- Pupils' skills develop well in science and music. All pupils learn a brass musical instrument in Years 5 and 6 and, through the strong links with a local high school, they

have a pathway to showcase their talents in a brass band.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start the early years with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. As a result of strong teaching and effective leadership, children make good progress from their starting points.
- Children arrive in school in the morning with a spring in their step and an eagerness to explore the many different activities set out for them. They know the routines, understand what is expected of them and enjoy taking responsibility for their personal belongings. They quickly settle to their tasks and play.
- In the Reception class, no time is wasted and children eagerly engage in 'table-top' activities, helping to develop manipulation skills with their hands, as well as enjoying counting.
- Children, including those who are disadvantaged or who have SEN and/or disabilities, experience a good start to life in school. This is because adults assess children's needs carefully and provide tailored experiences for them.
- Consistent reinforcement of daily routines in a nurturing environment establishes a firm base for the children's very good behaviour.
- Children's progress in their personal, social and emotional development is strong and results from the high expectations of all adults. This accounts for the strengths seen in children's behaviour and in their relationships with adults and each other. They are encouraged to be considerate and to take turns, which they do successfully.
- All children feel safe and are well supported by a team of skilled staff. The provision is well organised to allow Nursery and Reception children to work and play together and to have separate activities to cater for their stage of development.
- Generous levels of adult supervision allow staff to work with the Nursery children individually and in small groups. Children are well supported to explore and experiment when engaged in a wide range of activities, both indoors and in the stimulating outdoor environment.
- Adults are adept at talking with and questioning children and developing children's understanding and their confidence in speaking and listening. This was demonstrated when a very young child asked if anyone has three eyes. The teacher sensitively agreed that, although this would be useful, she was sure that nobody does have three eyes.
- Leaders rightly place a strong emphasis on developing children's communication skills, speech and language. Even the very young children learn to associate actions with letters and sounds as they build a repertoire of songs, joining in with enthusiasm. Sign language is routinely used during carpet sessions.
- The most able children in the Reception class enjoy the challenges of learning to read, spell and write short sentences, preparing them well for the demands of Year 1.
- Parents are very positive about the provision in the early years and staff work extremely hard to encourage parents to play an active part in school life.

School details

Unique reference number	141809
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10042454

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

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	113
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Michelle Coppenhall
Principal	Lynn Treadway
Telephone number	01270 685 222
Website	www.sandbach-pri.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@sandbach-pri.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became part of the Aspire Educational Trust in March 2015, following the closure of the predecessor school.
- The trust has seven members, all of which are local schools in Cheshire East and Cheshire West. The headteachers sit on the executive board of the trust.
- Sandbach Primary Academy is smaller than the average primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school offers Nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds, as well as a Reception class.

- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and representatives of the local governing body. The inspector also spoke with three members of the academy trust, including the chief executive.
- The inspector made visits to all classrooms. Some of these visits were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide selection of pupils' books with school leaders.
- Pupils were spoken with both formally and informally. The responses of 20 pupils in Years 5 and 6 who completed the Ofsted questionnaire were considered. The inspector heard pupils read and observed behaviour in classrooms, corridors and outside on the playgrounds.
- Ten responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, as well as discussions with parents over both days of the inspection and five free-text comments from parents.
- The inspector noted and analysed six responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, monitoring records and anonymised information about managing teachers' performance. Minutes of the statement of action committee's meetings and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed and discussed with leaders.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, as was published information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Cathy Parkinson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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