



Sandhill View School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108867
Local Authority Sunderland
Inspection number 288214
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Hancock HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Grindon Lane
School category	Community		Thorney Close, Sunderland
Age range of pupils	11–16		Tyne and Wear, SR3 4EN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5536060
Number on roll (school)	1009	Fax number	0191 5536063
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Garry Urwin
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Bain
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	13–14 February 2007	288214

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sandhill View is a community school and a specialist arts college serving an area with high levels of social deprivation. It is situated in a community learning centre which was opened in 2002. The school shares the site with a youth centre, community library, sports and leisure centre and health facilities. There are far more students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than normally found, partly because the school is the local authority centre for hearing and visually impaired learners. Nearly all the students have English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sandhill View is a good school which is developing quickly as an arts college. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own evaluation that it is moving in the right direction and at a quick pace. The school is working very well to make further improvements.

All students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The achievement of students at Key Stage 4 is excellent. This is reflected in the above average GCSE results in 2006 which, for many students, was from a very low starting point. Behaviour is good and students enjoy learning. Personal development is good because the school has the well-being of students at the centre of its work.

The school has improved the curriculum, which is good and the provision of relevant vocational courses is a strong feature. The quality of teaching and learning has improved in the last two years and there are examples of outstanding practice. The school is aware that sharing this excellent practice is the key to further improvement. Assessment systems are working effectively and students make good progress.

It is too early to measure the impact of specialist college status on achievement because it only started five months ago. Nonetheless, the school has local scriptwriters working with Year 10 students and the curriculum enrichment activities are well attended. The specialist college plan is innovative and challenging. It aims to support the key subjects and provide high quality creative experiences.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior managers is highly effective and is steering the school well. The governing body closely monitors what is happening and they make sure the school continues to move forward. Resources are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money and the school is right to think capacity to improve is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 3.
- Set homework consistently in all subjects and for every year group.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school rightly evaluates achievement and standards to be good. The attainment and skills of a high proportion of students are significantly below average when they start at the school. They make good progress as do all different groups of learners across the ability range. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support and make exceptionally good progress, including those with visual and hearing difficulties. The achievement of students at Key Stage 4 is excellent. This is reflected in the above average GCSE results in 2006 which, for many students, was from a very low starting point when they joined the school.

The improvement in GCSE results is outstanding. The number of students gaining higher GCSE grades was 70% in 2006 compared with 30% three years ago. Inspection evidence confirms the rapidly improving trend in achievement and standards. Results in English, mathematics and science in national tests at Key Stage 3 fell significantly between 2003 and 2005. This was an issue identified by the school which is being addressed and the 2006 results have significantly improved. The school is not complacent and is taking the right action to improve standards even more, particularly in science, mathematics, and numerical skills. It is too early to see any significant impact of specialist college status on achievement and standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good because the school is very effective at raising students' confidence and self-esteem. Students show an increasing awareness of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and the school has achieved Healthy School status. Citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are developed well, often through drama activities and assemblies.

Attitudes and behaviour are good because teachers maintain a consistent approach and expect high standards. Students are nearly always well behaved and considerate in and around the building. The small minority who demonstrate inappropriate behaviour receive very good support. Most students say they feel safe at school and incidents of bullying in school are becoming rare. Students feel confident approaching staff when they have concerns. The school handles concerns well but there are a few examples where parents, carers and students are not informed quickly enough about how incidents are being dealt with. Many students say they enjoy school and comment on the good support they receive. Attendance has significantly improved and is now average but unauthorised absence is above the national average.

The school council helps students understand their growing responsibilities as young citizens and provides a good forum to play a positive and significant role in the school community. Students make a good contribution to the local and wider community. For example, a group of Year 7 students recently competed in a choir competition at The Sage concert hall in Gateshead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. The pace of lessons is usually brisk and teachers use challenging questions to extend learning. In many lessons, students show they can learn for themselves. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to model, clarify and demonstrate abstract concepts. For example, in an English lesson students were shown a series of emotive

pictures in order to decide which would be effective for an advertising campaign. In another lesson on poetry, the teacher was able to build up a picture of bereavement drawing from the students' own ideas.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully supported and they make very good progress. Parents and carers appreciate the way staff ensure they are successfully included in all aspects of the school's work. One parent captured the view of many when saying 'The staff have worked exceptionally hard to help my daughter integrate into the school and support her needs'.

The systems to monitor students' progress and identify specific areas for improvement are a particularly strong feature. Students are formally given this information and this is reported to parents once a term. As a result, nearly all students know their current level or grade and are clear about how to improve. The school knows there are a few learners who are uncertain about what they must do to reach the next stage in their learning.

Homework reinforces and develops the work done in class but it is not set consistently across all areas of the curriculum or year groups. This is a concern voiced by parents, carers and students. The school is aware of this and a new homework policy is being developed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum which is tailored to meet the needs of all students. It has made a positive impact on attendance, particularly at Key Stage 4. The curriculum is supported well by learning mentors and primary trained teachers who work with the more vulnerable students. A transition class in Year 7 and two inclusion units provide further support. The school acts as the local authority centre for students with sensory impairment. These students are fully included in the curriculum and the life of the school. The school has identified literacy and numeracy as a priority, particularly at Key Stage 3, and strategies are helping to improve provision.

There is a good balance of academic and vocational courses, and personalised learning programmes. This has helped to improve the school's performance. Vocational facilities are very good and are used to support other schools in the area. A new vocational centre is planned to open in September 2007 which should allow students to access a wider range of national vocational qualifications. A key strength is the variety of the extra activities which are available at lunchtimes and out-of-school hours. They include sporting activities and the performing arts as well as providing additional lessons to complement the academic curriculum.

The recent specialist college status is already making a positive contribution to the curriculum. A good example is a video produced by a Year 8 science class about flying a glider. It was used to demonstrate the forces involved in flight and students found it an extremely valuable learning experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe, caring and supportive environment. Students are encouraged to work hard and try their best. Most parents and carers speak highly of the school and one, representing the views of many said, 'My children feel safe and secure in the school.' The inclusion of all students is a strong feature and students who require additional support are quickly identified. Some students have difficulty learning in the classroom environment. High priority is given to helping these students integrate more easily through close supervision and appropriate support. The good links with outside agencies safeguard the interests of the most vulnerable students. Provision for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good.

Academic guidance and support is good and parents are kept informed about students' progress. A few students and parents feel the support is not consistently high for students of all abilities. Health and safety procedures are effective, and risk assessments are secure. Child protection procedures for the safeguarding of children are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, confirming the school's own evaluation.

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have established a calm and productive climate for learning. The recently introduced mission statement has set high expectations for staff and students alike. The school has improved quickly over the past two years and continues to move forward at a rapid pace. The drive to take the school forward is fully supported by staff. This can be seen in standards which continue to rise and in developments such as the new vocational centre.

Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school are rigorous and accurate. As a result, the school knows itself well and identifies the right areas for improvement. All departments are involved in monitoring and evaluating their own provision.

Links with other schools, colleges, businesses and the community are good, and have been recently strengthened through the school's specialist performing arts college status. The school is inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity. There is a clear focus on raising students' self-esteem.

Accommodation and facilities are excellent. Financial management is sound and supports improvement priorities. Value for money is good. Governors provide good challenge and support to the school. They work effectively in monitoring the work of the school within various sub-committees and they are well supported in their work by senior staff.

Staffing has been strengthened through the recruitment of specialist staff. Systems for staff restructuring in relation to government initiatives are robust and help to ensure the quality of care, guidance and teaching. Management has been strengthened through the delegation of leadership at all levels in the school. Investors in People

status, conferred on the school in January 2007, confirms the high commitment made by the leadership of the school to the development of its entire staff.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in most of the areas identified for further development. Leadership and management have a very good capacity to make further improvement and take the school forward. This is largely due to the high quality of the delegated leadership and the rising trends in achievement and standards.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Sandhill View School

Grindon Lane

Thorney Close

Sunderland

Tyne and Wear

SR3 4EN

15 February 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues on 13 and 14 February. The team would also like to thank the students who prepared our lunch as part of their vocational training. It met the highest standards set in catering and would not have been out of place in one of the best hotels in the country!

Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

- Sandhill View is a good school which is rapidly improving.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior managers is highly effective.
- You achieve very well on GCSE courses and results last year were above average.
- The provision of relevant vocational courses is a particularly strong feature.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved a lot in the last two years.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are good and helps keep you safe.

Your teachers and the staff work very hard and want to make the school even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they could:

- continue to raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 3
- set homework more consistently.

I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector