

Sandhill View Academy

Grindon Lane, Thorney Close, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 4EN

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite a slight improvement in 2017, over time pupils have made less progress than other pupils nationally from the same starting points, across a range of subjects. Progress for disadvantaged pupils has been particularly weak.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. As a result, the progress of pupils currently in the school is inconsistent within and between subjects.
- Leaders have taken action to improve outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, but the impact is yet to be fully seen.
- Some teachers' expectations are not high enough and therefore they do not pitch work at the right level. Consequently, teaching does not sufficiently challenge pupils in a number of subject areas across the school and, as a result, their progress is too slow. Not enough is demanded of pupils.
- Teachers' use of pupil information to plan lessons that develop pupils' deeper thinking skills is inconsistent, so pupils do not move on as rapidly as they could.
- Pupils are largely positive about how much teachers help them in their lessons, but they also said that some teachers do not help them as much as others do. There are inconsistencies in the extent to which all staff follow the school's behaviour management processes and so a few pupils are allowed to spoil the learning of others at times.
- Plans for the spending of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils do not yet have clear checkpoints along the way to enable leaders to monitor and evaluate the effect of particular actions.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders are determined that the school will continue to improve. They have an unshakeable belief in the potential of the pupils who attend the school.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, middle leaders and teachers are enthusiastic, energetic and up for the challenge of improving the school further.
- Behaviour has improved. Morale among staff and pupils is high. There is a well-founded optimism and belief that things are getting better and will continue to do so.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are a strength of the school. Pupils are well supported, and have trust in the school to help them to succeed in life.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make consistently good progress by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, through the effective use of pupil information to plan lessons which engage and stimulate learners
 - further developing teachers' use of questioning to enable pupils to think more deeply and express their understanding of more complex knowledge and ideas
 - ensuring that opportunities to write extended pieces of work enable pupils to use appropriately challenging subject skills and knowledge
 - making sure that all teachers consistently follow the school's policy for behaviour management.
- Further strengthen the effectiveness of plans for the use of additional funding to support pupils who are disadvantaged by:
 - setting clear, measurable milestones at appropriate points in the year for each action in the plan, so that leaders and governors can monitor and evaluate the effect on pupils of each action.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since joining Southmoor Academy Trust in July 2015, the school has undergone significant change. The senior leaders, most subject leaders and a large proportion of teachers all joined the school after this date. Leaders have used the momentum of these changes to create an aspirational and ambitious culture for the school. This led to a slight improvement in outcomes in 2017, which leaders are confident and determined will continue. They have the capacity to achieve this aim.
- Led by the trust's chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer and the head of school, morale is high among staff. Teachers, subject leaders and staff are enthusiastic and positive about the school's current position and its ability to improve further. Pupils agree that the school is getting better.
- Leaders' plans correctly identify the areas which need to be improved. As a result of actions taken, inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Although the overall quality of teaching is inconsistent, there are convincing signs of improvement.
- Leaders have taken firm action to improve the quality of subject leadership across the school, with the result that there is now a strong team with clarity about the areas that they need to improve further. These subject leaders are now taking the necessary steps. For example, they do not shy away from monitoring the performance of teachers in their teams and taking action when required. Together with the decisive action of senior leaders, this is leading to stronger teaching.
- To further develop the quality of teaching to be at least consistently good, leaders have introduced a fit-for-purpose programme of professional development. Teachers now share and develop existing good practice between them, based on the needs of individual teachers. Teachers understand that they are accountable for the performance of pupils in their classes. Although the quality of teaching is inconsistent and variable, this has led to emerging areas of strength.
- Leaders have introduced a new and more robust system for tracking how pupils are doing and the progress they are making. This is enabling leaders to more closely monitor the achievement of pupils and to take action where intervention is required. As a result, for example, disadvantaged pupils are doing better than previous published data shows.
- Pupils in the school are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They told inspectors that the school is a tolerant community. Pupils are taught about life beyond the school gates through assemblies and their tutorial programme. An extensive extra-curricular programme is available to pupils one afternoon a week.
- Leaders are making increasingly effective use of the additional funding available to them. Funding aimed at helping Year 7 pupils who have the weakest literacy skills is supporting them to become better readers and spellers. There is still work to be done to address low levels of literacy higher up the school as a result of the legacy of previous weaker teaching and lack of appropriate intervention.
- Funding to support disadvantaged pupils is clearly identified in leaders' plans, and there is evidence that the performance of these pupils is improving. Although plans are

detailed and contain a wide range of sensible actions to further boost the outcomes of these pupils, they do not currently enable leaders to easily monitor which of the actions over time are having the best impact.

- To further strengthen the aspiration and ambition of pupils, leaders have made changes to the curriculum. Until recently, only the most able pupils were able to access a key stage 4 curriculum which would lead to an aspirational next step at post-16. Now, leaders have made sure that pupils of different abilities have access to an aspirational curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governors share the high aspirations and determination of leaders. They are clear in their understanding of their responsibilities in holding leaders to account. Governors acknowledge that prior to the current leadership, 'the school was in a bad place', but that now it is improving.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the priorities facing the school. They have a handle on how additional funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is being used, and that which is to support disadvantaged pupils. In part, this is because they are more actively involved in the life of the school and in holding leaders to account. They are, as they put it, more 'positive, intense and urgent' in their challenge to leaders and participate in meetings with senior leaders where performance information is discussed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have received recent and relevant training in the signs of abuse to look out for. They know who to speak to and what to do should they be concerned that a child is at risk of harm. Those entrusted with liaising with external agencies in child protection are thorough in their work. Records are appropriately kept and show a tenacity in following up with the local authority as required.
- Checks on ensuring that the adults in the school are suitable to work with children are in place.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they know who to speak to if they are worried. There is a strong culture of safeguarding vigilance throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is showing signs of improvement and there is now some very effective teaching in the school, to the benefit of many pupils. However, the quality of teaching is variable and inconsistent across and within subjects. This means that, for some pupils, the work is insufficiently challenging and does not engage them enough in their own learning. Consequently, pupils are compliant and often passive because the demands placed on them are sometimes not high enough.

- Pupils told inspectors that teaching has improved, and that ‘teachers are here for us’. However, they also said that there are still some teachers who do not give them the help they need in order to learn from their mistakes and get better and that, as a result, they do not feel they make as much progress in these lessons as elsewhere.
- Pupils also said that their learning and progress are affected in a small number of lessons where there is repeated low-level disruption and where teachers do not follow the school’s behaviour management system.
- While there is stronger learning in each of English, mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages, the level of challenge placed on pupils by teachers is sometimes variable in these subjects. This inconsistent level of expectation is evident in both spoken and written responses. Teachers miss opportunities to stretch and deepen pupils’ knowledge, including when pupils ask questions which open the door to a more challenging discussion. While there are ample opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills, sometimes tasks do not require them to think more deeply or apply more demanding skills and knowledge.
- In other subjects, such as science, computing, art and physical education, pupils are more active and enthusiastic learners because teachers’ planning is more closely matched to their needs. This level of pupil participation and commitment stands in contrast to the pedestrian pace and more passive learning seen in some other areas.
- In books and in lessons, disadvantaged pupils generally make similar progress to that of their peers. Teachers have the same expectations of these pupils as of all pupils. In science, for example, teachers planned group activities in such a way as to stretch and challenge disadvantaged pupils.
- The quality of teachers’ questioning of pupils is mixed. On occasions, it enables pupils to respond with eagerness and depth, but on others it is too shallow and superficial to get underneath the topic in hand. In Year 8 English, for example, pupils were ready to take on new and more challenging learning, but the opportunity was not taken.
- The extent to which teachers follow the school’s assessment policy to help pupils improve is variable. This has allowed gaps in knowledge to develop as a result. Errors in literacy are often corrected in line with the school’s policy, but, even when they are, errors persist in some books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff have worked hard to build and maintain a tolerant community at the school, through pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils explore the nature of what it means to be human, while studying the novel *Frankenstein*, for example.
- Pupils have opportunities to grow into confident young people, such as developing leadership skills as science ambassadors and anti-bullying ambassadors. They are

required to reflect during their tutorial programme on their responsibilities as citizens in modern Britain.

- Pupils appreciate the programme of assemblies and tutorials, which support them in their growth as young people, such as by adopting tolerant and non-discriminatory attitudes and language.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities such as music, visits to venues out of school, sport and a school-based youth club provide additional personal development.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online through work about e-safety and cyber-bullying. Partnership work with external agencies, including the police, educates pupils about being safe in their community.
- Leaders have made effective careers advice and guidance, including a work experience placement, a high priority. Leaders support pupils with impartial and independent guidance. As a result, a greater proportion of pupils than the national average now progress to sustained and suitable courses at the end of key stage 4, including A levels where appropriate.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and conduct themselves in an orderly and calm manner around the school. Pupils wear their uniform smartly. They told inspectors that behaviour has improved a lot in the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful; this view is confirmed by what pupils told inspectors.
- Inspectors did not see any disruptive behaviour in lessons. The school's own analysis of behaviour logs shows that instances of poor behaviour incidents are falling. Fixed-term exclusions have also fallen and are currently well below the national average.
- However, despite a big improvement, pupils said that a small number of lessons are regularly disrupted by the same few pupils and that teachers do not all apply the school's behaviour system consistently.
- Pupils reported that bullying in school is rare, but that if it happens they are confident that there are adults in school who would deal with it effectively. The school's records show that incidents of bullying are reducing.
- As a result of decisive action by leaders, rates of attendance have improved substantially since 2015/2016, and the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen. The attendance and persistent absence rates are currently in line with the national averages.
- Leaders monitor closely the attendance and progress of pupils attending the six alternative providers of education used by the school, working together with the leaders in these provisions. As a consequence of the carefully considered placements, rates of attendance have improved through appropriately engaging programmes. Where placements are intended to support pupils with improving their challenging behaviour, fixed-term exclusions have fallen as a result.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Typically, pupils enter the school with an attainment level below the national average. The Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2016 and 2017 made less progress across a broad range of subjects than other pupils nationally from the same starting points. Disadvantaged pupils in particular made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally.
- Leaders acknowledge that outcomes in English, mathematics, science, languages and humanities have not been good enough for two years and especially so for disadvantaged and middle-attaining pupils. In fact, outcomes in these subjects are in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for pupils with the same starting points. Outcomes have also been below the national average for two years in the wider subjects of the curriculum.
- The school's own progress information for current pupils paints a more positive picture. According to this data, leaders expect most pupils to achieve outcomes matched to their ability in the public examinations in 2018. In other year groups, leaders' tracking of pupil progress indicates that large proportions of pupils are achieving in line with expectations across a range of subjects.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are, according to the school's tracking information, making more variable progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. In most year groups, these pupils are substantially further away from their targets than other pupils in school. Leaders have implemented strategies across the school to improve the outcomes of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, but the full effect of these is still to be seen because they are not yet fully embedded.
- The assessment information for disadvantaged pupils indicates that their progress is now close to that of other pupils in school, pointing to a better deal for these pupils. In books and in lessons, inspectors saw evidence of better standards from disadvantaged pupils than in recent outcomes.
- Across and within subjects, there is variable progress. It is evident that some pupils are learning well and making good progress, such as in English, mathematics, science, humanities, modern foreign languages, computing, art and physical education. However, also in English, mathematics, humanities, modern foreign languages and design technology, pupils sometimes make slower progress. This is because the work is not challenging enough, or because teachers' use of questions does not enable pupils to move forward quickly enough in their thinking.
- Leaders are now making better use of additional funding for Year 7 literacy for those pupils who need extra help with their reading, so that reading ability is now gaining pace. When inspectors listened to Year 7 pupils read, they could do so with some fluency and were able to 'read between the lines'. However, the rate of improvement for pupils who are behind in their reading skills slows from Year 8, and low reading ages persist into key stage 4.
- Leaders carefully monitor the attendance, progress and safety of the pupils attending the six alternative providers of education. The school's data indicates improved or appropriate attendance and progress as a result of the pupils' participation at these providers.

- The pupils who attend the local authority hearing impaired resource are making good progress. Their needs are well met by the provision. Pupils told us that they feel well supported by the appropriately qualified staff, and that the involvement of former pupils of the resource is a positive and helpful means of encouraging them to aim high.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality and aspiration of impartial careers guidance. Although the proportion of pupils progressing to 'next steps' after Year 11 has been at least in line with the national average in recent years, the number is now above the national figure. Additionally, pupils progress to a 'next step' which is appropriately aspirational for them. More pupils are now making the transition to A-level courses than was the case previously.

School details

Unique reference number	141986
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10042404

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	772
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dr John Brown
Headteacher	Dr Phil Ingram
Telephone number	01915 949992
Website	www.sandhillview.com
Email address	pam.davison@southmoormat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Sandhill View Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 July 2015. When its predecessor school, Sandhill View School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- Since the inspection of the predecessor school, the chief executive officer of the trust became headteacher, and a head of school was appointed in January 2015. Several other senior leaders were subsequently appointed along with a substantial number of middle leaders. A large proportion of the teaching staff joined the school in the last two years.
- The school is a member of Southmoor Academy Trust. The trust's leadership structure consists of the members' board, the trust board of directors, the local governing body and the trust-wide finance and general purposes committee and the standards committee, on which sit all of the board directors. There is a chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer.

- The school hosts a local authority-resourced provision for hearing-impaired pupils. Currently, there are nine pupils attending the provision, across Years 9, 10 and 11.
- The school uses six alternative providers: the Beacon of Light, the Link School, the Young Mums' Unit, Springboard Sunderland, the Returners' Unit and the Home and Hospital Unit.
- The school is in receipt of some teaching capacity support from the trust.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and year groups. On occasions, inspectors were accompanied by school leaders.
- Examples of pupils' work were scrutinised, both in lessons and as part of a book sampling. Inspectors conducted this activity jointly with school leaders, and separately.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils both formally in discussion groups and informally around the school, in lessons and at social times. Inspectors listened to some pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the head of school, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), a group of middle leaders, a group of teachers at different career points and a group of non-teachers. The lead inspector also met with the trust chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer, and the chair of the board of directors.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to five of the six alternative providers used by the school.
- An inspector met with the lead teacher for the hearing-impaired resourced provision.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, school plans, minutes of meetings, records of behaviour incidents, documents related to the monitoring of teaching and learning and documents that relate to safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors took into account the 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including nine free-text responses. Inspectors also took into account the 22 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the 40 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

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Geoffrey Lumsdon	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Crossley	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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