

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr M Hilton
Headteacher
Sandfield Park School
South Drive
Sandfield Park
West Derby
Liverpool
Merseyside
L12 1LH

Dear Mr Hilton

Short inspection of Sandfield Park School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019 with Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your leadership team have successfully developed a unique school where pupils arrive with a range of different needs and abilities. All pupils are welcomed, respected and treated as individuals. Your motto of 'three sites – one school' lives up to its name. Each of the separate school sites has its own distinctive identity. However, the whole-school ethos and values are shared and embedded across all the sites. The pupils and students are supported to overcome their barriers to learning. They thrive and flourish to grow into independent, confident young people, ready to take their next steps in life. Parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school. A typical comment from parents included: 'Sandfield Park School is a wonderful school with lovely values and incredible pupils and staff.' Parents said that they could not praise the school enough. Another comment from parents was: 'Every member of staff is engaged fully with the children and their commitment shines through.'

You and your leadership team have successfully addressed the actions for improvement identified at the last inspection. Work is now well matched to the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils. An impressive range of planned activities is working to engage pupils, who clearly enjoy their learning. Teachers are skilled in setting clear, precise targets for each pupil. At Sandfield Park, in a tennis lesson each pupil had a personalised target to support them in acquiring racquet and ball skills. In the Alder Centre for Education, pupils in Year 10 were immersed in poetry and working to analyse the writer's intent. In a Year 9 class, pupils were captivated with a book and enthusiastically predicting what would happen next. The detailed planning, skilled delivery and attention to individual needs is securing excellent teaching and learning over time. Consequently, pupils and students make strong progress.

Leaders have implemented an electronic communication system for pupils who are non-verbal. This is having a very strong, positive impact on their individual progress. Pupils are spontaneously initiating conversation and interaction with staff and their peers. Learning support assistants are skilled in supporting this communication model, while continuously encouraging pupils to be independent learners. For example, pupils were able to use the electronic devices to let the staff member know that they had finished the task. Pupils were then able to make an informed choice about the next activity. The new communication system has given non-verbal pupils and students a voice.

Leaders have also widened the curriculum for post-16 students to enable them to develop vocational, work and employability skills. The school has access to a community café owned by a trust. This provision is used specifically for students to gain work experience. They learn the skills to be able to prepare food, serve customers, handle money and keep the premises clean. Supported internships have been developed in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions. This has created opportunities for students to gain beneficial work experience. They work in a reputable hotel chain as well as in the local maritime museum. Students' personal skills have developed during their work experience and supported internships. Students have grown in confidence and developed new skills in a 'real work' setting. This has been very successful for two students in particular, who have now secured paid employment. The students are very proud of their achievements. Typical comments from them included: 'I can do things independently' and 'School has helped me to get to the level where I can do the internship and feel safe.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding and welfare of pupils are given a high priority. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The safeguarding leads have clear oversight of the different sites. They work seamlessly together to ensure that all pupils are safe. The lead teachers in the hospital provision work in collaboration with hospital professionals and the child and adolescent mental health services. This ensures that pupils are safe at all times.

Referrals to the local authority and other agencies are timely. Leaders are strong advocates for the children and their families. Leaders are determined and do not give up until they have secured effective support where it is needed.

Daily briefings, especially in the hospital provision, keep all staff up to date and informed about the welfare of the pupils. As a result, staff are quick to respond to the individual needs of every pupil, so that pupils feel safe, secure, understood and supported.

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry I explored with you was the school's curriculum and how it supports the particular needs of each cohort of pupils within the school. There is a different curriculum model for each sector of the school. Within Sandfield Park School, the focus is on communication, independence and work skills. In the Alder Centre for Education, pupils may have significant gaps in their education on entry. They are supported to re-engage in learning. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are taught alongside other national curriculum subjects, including history, French and information and communication technology (ICT). In the hospital school, the aim is to provide a continuity of education through close liaison with pupils' mainstream schools. In the Dewi-Jones unit, the focus is on building relationships and using topics and interests to engage pupils in learning. The varied curriculums have been expertly designed to specifically meet the needs of the pupils and students within each separate sector of the school.
- I also looked at how teachers assess and monitor the progress of pupils across the school. Detailed assessments of pupils are done on entry to school. The education, health and care (EHC) plan is also used to allow teachers to set appropriate, yet challenging, targets. Pupils' progress is recorded by staff and regularly monitored by middle and senior leaders. Leaders have an accurate picture of the progress of pupils. They are quick to intervene to support any pupils whose progress is dipping. The school's own assessment system shows that gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school have closed. Due to their sustained and strong progress, pupils and students are leaving school with outcomes that are enabling them to move successfully onto the next stage of education. Leaders have recently introduced a method of recording progress using technology for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are now able to record progress using a picture or video that can be shared with parents. Parents are able to see the personal, academic, social and physical progress of their children. This system is still in the early stages of development.
- My final line of enquiry looked at the behaviour and safety of pupils in school and whether this has continued to be a strength. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the school. They were particularly keen to talk about how safe they felt in school. Pupils explained that despite them all having different needs and different reasons for attending the school, they all accepted and respected each other. Incidents of bullying are rare because staff intervene quickly to support pupils to understand each other's differences. Pupils know who

to turn to. They have strong relationships with the adults in school. This helps pupils to feel comfortable to share any of their concerns with staff. Pupil voice is valued across the whole school. In the Dewi-Jones unit, pupils asked to have more time outside. Leaders responded by improving the school garden as well as planning weekly visits to local museums and parks. Strong, supportive and respectful relationships between staff, pupils and students are evident across all areas of the school. Staff lead by example. This strong culture permeates through the school. As a result, behaviour and safety continue to be great strengths of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further strengthen and embed the systems for monitoring the personal and academic progress of pupils with SEND.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and senior leaders. They held a meeting with five members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors also met with the safeguarding leads. Inspectors scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the record of checks completed on staff. Joint learning walks with leaders were completed. Pupils' and students' books and learning records were scrutinised. There were 23 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted parent questionnaire. Inspectors spoke with two parents via telephone. There were 44 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. Inspectors spoke with staff during the day and also met formally with six members of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the day and met formally with 13 pupils. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' attendance and information relating to the work of the governing body.