

The Grantham Sandon School

Sandon Close, Sandon Road, Grantham, NG31 9AX

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The vast majority of pupils make outstanding progress in communication and personal development. This means that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next step in their education or training.
- All pupils make good and the majority make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy. They apply what they have learned in these subjects in all lessons and throughout the school day. This enables some pupils to make remarkable achievements in life skills.
- Teaching has moved from satisfactory to outstanding since the last inspection. Teachers are meticulous in checking how well pupils are progressing throughout the lesson. This means that nearly all pupils learn very well all of the time because they are always involved with activities at just the right level of difficulty. Just occasionally, the checks made on the progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are not as precise as those for other pupils.
- Pupils try exceptionally hard and succeed in living up to the very high expectations of behaviour set for them by the staff. They are able to do this because they feel very safe and secure as a result of the warm and caring relationships that exist between everyone.
- The sixth form is outstanding and students make exceptionally good progress here because they spend an increasing amount of time applying their skills in real-life and adult situations.
- Partnerships with the other schools in the federation, local colleges and businesses, health professionals and other schools locally, regionally and internationally impact very well on achievement.
- The plans made for pupils are very well organised and contribute very effectively to their rapid progress because they meet the needs of each individual exceptionally closely. Very occasionally, opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual understanding not fully developed.
- The executive headteacher is highly ambitious for the achievement of the pupils. The management of teaching is highly effective. This has resulted in pupils learning at an ever faster rate since the last inspection.
- The governing body has asked searching questions of its leaders to make rapid progress in improving issues from the previous inspection. They know exactly what they want pupils to achieve and how improving teaching will bring this about.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, ten jointly with members of the leadership team. The inspectors listened to pupils read in lessons and examined pupils' work in books. They held discussions with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the school's procedures for safeguarding and gaining an accurate view of its performance. They looked at the headteacher's reports to the governing body, the development plan, records of lesson observations, targets set for teachers, and documents that track pupils' progress.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and took account of 20 responses from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Pauline Hilling-Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joan McPhail

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Grantham Sandon School is part of the Grantham Additional Needs Federation along with Ambergate Sports College. There is an executive headteacher in overall charge and a Senior Principal for each site. There is a Principal with responsibility for pastoral care across the federation and a number of staff work in both schools.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have severe learning difficulties and a small minority have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The majority of this population also have autism spectrum disorders.
- Most pupils are White British and the majority of pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and children from service families, is well above average.
- Some pupils, mainly the sixth form, attend part-time courses at Grantham College and a few join lessons at the Ambergate site.
- The school entered into a hard federation with Ambergate Sports College six months after the previous inspection. A new Chair of the Federated Governing Body was elected in November 2010
- The executive headteacher was supporting the school prior to the previous inspection and was confirmed in post in December 2010. Since the last inspection, there have been many changes in the membership of the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the checking of how well pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are progressing so that actions are taken more swiftly to ensure their outstanding progress.
- Ensure that opportunities to develop pupils' spirituality are not missed by ensuring that teachers consistently identify such opportunities in their planning

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- As a result of their special educational needs and disabilities, all pupils are working well below national expectations when they start the school. All pupils make good and the majority make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy when compared with the progress of pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- The vast majority of pupils make outstanding progress in communication skills as a result of the special techniques staff use to help pupils develop their skills. For example, staff use signs and gestures at all times as well as speaking or use pictures to illustrate the words they are using. Pupils apply these skills at every opportunity and become very proficient in communicating their needs and wishes.
- Most pupils make rapid progress in life skills, such as making wise choices and good decisions. This is because they have many opportunities to practise these skills. For example, after testing the flavours of a small selection of foods, pupils chose which filling they preferred for the sandwich they made.
- The talents and interests of each individual pupil are nurtured carefully and they reach their potential when they achieve from a wide range of awards, including Riding for the Disabled and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at Silver level
- Teachers keep a very close eye on how well pupils are doing on a weekly basis and anyone at risk of not doing well enough is identified and arrangements are made to ensure that this does not happen. However, the assessment of the progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is not always as clear as it is for other pupils and, as a result, opportunities to assure outstanding progress may sometimes be missed.
- Students in the sixth form make excellent progress. They begin to make choices about what they want to do when they leave the school from Key Stage 3 onwards. Plans made at this stage enable pupils to begin work towards the relevant qualifications and to attend courses at college or on the Ambergate site to prepare them very well for their chosen destination.
- The teaching of reading is effective because it is well organised and each pupil receives the individual attention needed to make good progress.
- Pupils with autism make outstanding progress in understanding what is happening in the world around them. Staff are patient and spend time ensuring that pupils are comfortable with the explanations given to them about, for example, why an event has changed.
- Pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding, including those eligible for free school meals, make similar progress to others and any gaps in their achievement are rapidly closed. This is because teachers make sure that additional funds are spent on exactly the right activities that make the most impact on their achievement.
- All parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) agreed that pupils made good progress.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The high quality teaching and learning seen during the inspection confirms the judgements of the school's senior leaders. The percentage of outstanding teaching has increased each year since the last inspection.
- Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils will do and achieve in lessons. This is reflected in the detailed high quality planning documents which specify activities at just the right level for every pupil. However, opportunities to develop spirituality are occasionally missed because opportunities to develop spirituality are not always specified in planning.
- Teachers expertly observe how well each individual is learning and use questioning very effectively to systematically check pupils' understanding as the lesson proceeds. They modify their plans skilfully in line with this information to ensure that each pupil is achieving as well as possible at all times. For example, in a literacy lesson some pupils read a short text about bullying and then considered if there was any kind of bullying in this school. This was accomplished because the teacher knew exactly how to question the pupils in order to extend their understanding.
- Teachers and other adults give pupils detailed information throughout the lesson about how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. Photographs are often taken to show what pupils have achieved. These are accompanied by detailed notes to explain what the pupil has achieved as well as was happening at the time. Written comments specify clearly what the pupil needs to do next to improve.
- Pupils very much enjoy lessons because they are inspired by their own success in learning. They know that they have done well because staff make sure they praise every step to success. Everyone takes part in the success of others and 'high five' celebrations are exuberant.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from specialist teaching in vocational subjects at college. Here they are able to learn in kitchens and workshops equipped for commercial purposes.
- Typically, all lessons include pupils applying their communication, reading and personal and social skills at their highest level. As a result, pupils often work without direct supervision from the teacher and concentrate for long periods. This means that they make rapid progress at all times.
- All parents who responded to agreed that their child was well taught. The school provides good information and works well in partnership with parents to give information about what pupils could do at home to contribute to achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school offers a caring, supportive environment where all pupils feel safe and behave well as they can at all times. Their excellent behaviour and attitudes help to sustain the school's respectful and dignified atmosphere. Pupils' relationships with one another and with staff are excellent.
 - Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe. For example they have special days when they come to school wearing brightly coloured clothes to help them understand how well they can be seen if they wear certain colours when they are out on the road. They show they feel
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very safe in school and know that there is always someone to turn to if necessary. More often, the staff turn to the pupils first because they immediately see if there is a problem.

- Pupils are clear that bullying is not an issue and they reflect carefully on the impact of their actions on themselves and others. They support each other extremely well and are patient when helping pupils less able than themselves to learn.
- Students in the sixth form who attend courses either on the Ambergate site or at college show increasing maturity in their personal development.
- The school council ensures that pupils are treated in accordance with their age by, for example, supporting a new arrangement for assemblies which separates the age groups on some days, and by taking the lead in determining the nature of the rewards for good work and behaviour.
- There are very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour because staff manage behaviour exceptionally well. Any incidents that do occur dealt with in accordance with school policies and recorded in detail. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- An overwhelming number of parents and carers who responded agreed that their child felt safe and happy at school and agreed that behaviour was good. Some parents and carers involve themselves in sessions in school so that they can manage behaviour at home in a consistently with the school.
- Attendance has improved well and is now above average.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher is an exceptional leader. He has been uncompromising in driving the rapid improvement of the school. The vision of ever increasing pupil achievement is shared by all. He is very ably supported by a talented senior leadership team who monitor all aspects of school life consistently and in detail.
 - The school makes full and effective use of the nationally published information showing the progress of pupils with similar starting points and comparing it with that made by pupils in the school.
 - The school's systems for tracking the progress of pupils are meticulous. They ensure that any pupil at risk of underachieving is quickly identified and procedures are put in place to prevent this happening. However, leaders agree that any underachievement of the minority of pupils with profound learning difficulties could be missed because the documents which track the progress of these pupils do not identify the very small steps of progress these pupils make
 - The leadership of teaching and performance is highly effective. Procedures to check the quality of teaching are extensive and thorough. These enable leaders to provide detailed and helpful coaching and feedback to support teachers in improving their practice. There is a close link between teachers' performance and pay.
 - The staff support each other exceptionally well. They share the best ways to ensure that pupils achieve as much as they can by encouraging other staff to observe them at work. Leaders ensure that additional funds, such as the pupil premium, are used to good effect by providing
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special classes and groups. Staff review the progress of pupils who attend these groups to check that their achievement has been accelerated, and it is clear that the way the funding is being used is making a positive difference.

- The school has an accurate view of its own performance. Plans are very effective because they have clear goals and progress towards these is reviewed in detail. The school's priorities reflect the clear vision agreed and promoted by the governing body.
 - The plans made for pupils as they progress through school are at exactly the right level to ensure the best outcomes. They are well organised and capitalise on an increasing number of learning experiences out in the community and in partner schools and colleges. They are enriched by many after school activities and visits and visitors.
 - Cultural development is outstanding because work with international partners makes a very significant contribution to the work of the school.
 - The local authority recognises the outstanding work done by the school and the partnership with the adviser contributes very well to school improvement. This is because the adviser has expert knowledge and knows the school well.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has improved strongly since the last inspection. It contributes very well to the leadership of the school because has much expertise and seeks answers to probing questions. Members gain first-hand evidence by coming and seeing for themselves what is happening in the school. The Chair ensures the effectiveness of the governing body in meeting the needs of the school very well and takes steps to enable governors to perform at the highest level. This means that they are able to support the school well and ask searching questions of its leaders about its work. Governors have a very clear picture about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance compared with all schools nationally. They know why this is now an outstanding school. They manage the budget very effectively and make sure that all safeguarding procedures are rigorous. They are clear about how the pupil premium is being spent and can identify the positive effect that this is having on eligible pupils. They are involved in performance management improving the quality of teaching. They have a firm grasp of how the leadership of the school is driving improvement.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120748
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	401964

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Boucher
Headteacher	Peter Bell (executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2010
Telephone number	01476 564994
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