

# Sandon Junior Mixed and Infant School

Rushden Road, Sandon, Hertfordshire, SG9 0QS

**Inspection dates** 2–3 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Teaching is now consistently good or outstanding in all four classes at the school.
- Leaders have focused strongly on improving teaching and learning through rigorous monitoring and strong actions.
- As a result, pupils are now making much improved progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the support from well-trained staff.
- Attendance rates have been consistently above national averages for the last five years.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good and they, and their parents, agree that they feel safe and cared for well.
- The headteacher has created a strong 'team' within the school and, consequently, staff work effectively together.
- Recent changes to the governing body, including the Chair and chairs of committees, have strengthened governance so that governors are now much more effective at holding the school to account for the pupils' attainment and progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in English and mathematics is not yet consistently above national averages.
- Teachers do not always plan enough opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Twelve lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed by the inspector, of which ten were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, all the teaching staff, and the school's Hertfordshire Improvement Partner.
- There were 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Parents' views were also sought through discussions at the start and end of the school day.
- The inspector also took account of the 13 questionnaires completed by members of the school staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and the minutes of various meetings.

## Inspection team

Nigel Grimshaw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the additional funding provided for children in the care of the local authority, from service families, and those children known to be eligible for free school meals (the pupil premium) is below average. There are currently no children who are looked after by the local authority and no pupils from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2012 to measure the national test results against the government's floor standards.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics so that it is consistently well above the national average by
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects through their topic work
  - making sure that the marking guidance given to pupils is followed up and checked regularly
  - making sure that the pupils' work is consistently well presented
  - sharing the outstanding practice within the school, particularly in the teaching of phonics, reading and mathematics, so that staff can learn from each other.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good.

- As a result of recent significant improvements in the quality of teaching and new approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, progress improved last academic year and has accelerated significantly in the current year across the whole school.
- Over the last three years, attainment when the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 has fluctuated between significantly above national averages and in line with national averages, mainly because of the small-sized cohorts, where the test results of each pupil represents a large percentage of the year group.
- Children join the school with a wide range of skills and knowledge but overall the majority of them are just below expected levels. The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good and so the children settle well into school life and make good progress.
- The pupils continue to make good, and often exceptional, progress through the school in the current year because the quality of teaching in all four classes is consistently good or outstanding. The percentages of pupils making better than expected progress were above national averages last year and have improved still further in the current year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support from the well-trained staff who know them very well indeed and make sure that the work is set at an appropriate level for them.
- The challenge for the more-able pupils has improved since the last inspection, especially in mathematics where the open-ended problem solving activities stretch their thinking in initiatives such as 'The Morning Maths Meeting' across the school. The pupils respond extremely well to these challenges and produce some exceptional outcomes in Years 5 and 6.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. The school's records show that eligible pupils are closing the gap this year as standards rise.
- The progress made by the pupils in their reading has improved considerably, mainly because of the good and better teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) but also because the pupils are highly motivated by the new approach to reading within the school. As one parent said, 'My child is really fired up by his reading'.
- Teachers regularly and consistently set targets for the individual pupils in their class in English and mathematics. The pupils enjoy having these targets for improvement and find them helpful.
- All staff check the progress being made by the pupils in their class on a regular basis and hold meetings with the headteacher to identify any pupils who appear to be slipping behind. Prompt action is taken to give an extra boost to their learning with additional adult support, usually in small groups or at an individual level.
- The large majority of parents are pleased with the progress being made by their child.

**The quality of teaching is good.**

- Through rigorous monitoring of classroom practice, and recent staff changes, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and, during the inspection, all the teaching observed was either good or outstanding.
- The pupils are highly motivated by the work planned for them by the teachers. They say that they enjoy their learning. This was very obvious in a history lesson in Years 3 and 4 where the pupils were learning about Henry VIII and his six wives. The use of 'hot seating' where one of the pupils pretends to be Henry VIII and answers questions from the rest of the class was particularly effective.
- Teachers have high expectations and the quality of questioning they employ is extremely good and results in good progress in lessons. In an outstanding science lesson in Years 5 and 6 the pupils were totally engaged in discussing whether an inflated balloon was heavier than one that was not inflated. The teamwork shown by the teacher and the teaching assistant in that lesson was extremely good and typical of the effective role of teaching assistants across the school.
- The teachers make effective use of resources, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT). The resources are linked directly to maximising learning for the pupils.
- The enthusiastic staff are keen to try new approaches in their teaching. The introduction of a new reading scheme has had a very positive impact. In a Years 1 and 2 lesson, the children were clearly enthused by their reading and also by the comprehension exercises that followed when their book was completed. The fact that the scheme is interactive also has the impact of developing the pupils' ICT skills.
- The introduction of 'Big Write' is improving the grammar, punctuation and spelling in pupils' writing. However, some pupils do not take sufficient pride in the presentation of their work in general, as evidenced by the differences in handwriting quality in their handwriting books and in their other books.
- The consistent approach to lesson planning is very good and the planning clearly identifies those pupils who have special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding and ensures that their needs are met.
- Teachers provide good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work when they mark the pupils' books. However, the guidance is not always checked by the teachers to ensure that the pupils have followed it up.
- The teaching effectively promotes pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils work together well in lessons and value and respect the thoughts of other, such as when they work with their 'talk partners'. They show respect for each other, as evidenced by their pleasure for others when they achieved awards in the celebration assembly. Parents value this. As one commented, 'Every child is treated as special and the school caters for their needs.'

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good.**

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and want to do well. They get on well with each other and with the adults in school.

- The pupils are motivated and enjoy their learning. Consequently, they behave well in lessons and there is no evidence of lessons being disrupted by poor behaviour. Around school they are considerate and polite and play together harmoniously.
- Pupils understand about various forms of bullying from their 'anti-bullying weeks' and the messages relayed in assemblies. They do not see bullying as a concern and said that they were confident that adults would deal with any incidents promptly and effectively. They also have a good knowledge of the safe use of the internet.
- The parents spoken to during the inspection also had confidence that behaviour is good and that bullying is not an issue.
- Attendance has been consistently above the national average for the last five years, and this year's current figures show that this is expected to remain the case.

### **The leadership and management** are good.

- The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher and the governing body, has focused strongly on improving teaching and learning through strong actions and the rigorous monitoring of classroom practice.
- The headteacher has created a very strong team where all staff work together very closely and very effectively. New approaches to teaching English and mathematics are encouraged but monitored carefully to ensure that they are having the desired effect. The team spirit within the school was particularly noticeable in discussions with staff when they spoke very positively about their roles in school.
- Staff value highly the professional development at an individual and team level that is encouraged so strongly by school leaders. Consequently, attainment and progress have improved over recent times, and particularly this current year, now that the new staff have settled into the school. However, teachers do not have enough opportunities to share and learn from the best practice in the school, particularly in the teaching of phonics and mathematics.
- The range of subjects and activities for the pupils is outstanding, especially for a small school. The use of specialist teaching in physical education and music has led to national recognition and many local successes. The topic work is developing well but teachers have not ensured that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- The school works closely with the parents and relationships between school staff and parents is clearly evident at the start and end of the school day.
- The school also works closely with other locality schools to improve opportunities for staff and pupils to work together.
- The local authority has provided good support over time and the school leadership has appreciated this.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The appointment of a new Chair of the Governing Body and new chairs of committees has strengthened the governing body. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement because they are taking a much more active role in monitoring the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the attainment and

progress of the pupils and how the school compares to other schools in that respect. They recognise the improvements in the quality of teaching and have been supportive over changes made to the teaching staff. Systems are in place for the approval of pay rises so that they are linked to how well staff are performing. Governors have a firm grasp of financial management, including specific items such as the impact of the pupil premium funding. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and staff are fully compliant with statutory requirements. Governors work closely with staff to ensure that all pupils are treated equally and that there is no discrimination. Governors have attended a range of professional training provided by the local authority to improve their practice further.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117147
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412876

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	85
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rosie Fiducia
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Gilbert
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01763 287238
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