

# Inspection of Sandon Junior Mixed and Infant School

Sandon, Nr Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 0QS

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Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are respectful, confident, and polite. They enjoy attending school and are keen to learn. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. This contributes to the happy and calm atmosphere in the school.

Pupils understand what bullying means and say that it does not happen. They trust adults to sort out any concerns they may have. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils are well cared for and are safe and happy.

Pupils learn how to become responsible and respectful citizens. They enjoy doing things that help their school and the wider community, such as being a member of the eco and school councils and raising money for charity. Pupils learn that there are different types of families, cultures and religions that make up British society. They learn that everyone is unique and should be treated fairly.

Children in Reception quickly develop a love of reading. Some older pupils are enthusiastic readers and enjoy discussing their favourite authors. However, there are a number of pupils who do not get the support they need to help them learn to read well. These pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of education as they should be.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has experienced a lot of disruption over the last eighteen months. Leaders have started to develop subject leadership and prioritise areas for improvement. However, leaders' actions, for example to improve the teaching of reading and writing, have not been precise enough to ensure rapid improvement. This means that pupils are not yet getting a good enough quality of education.

Leaders have reviewed their curriculum. In some subjects, they have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. In subjects such as mathematics and music, teachers mostly teach the curriculum effectively. However, there is inconsistency in how well teachers do this across the school. For example, some teachers do not consistently check what pupils know and adapt work to what pupils already know and can do. This means that work is sometimes too hard or too easy. Some pupils struggle, while others are not moved on quickly enough.

The teaching of early reading is inconsistent. In some year groups, teachers do not set appropriate tasks that help pupils build on and practise the sounds and words that they know. As a result, pupils struggle, fall behind and do not learn to read quickly enough.

There are also inconsistencies in how well writing is taught. Sometimes, teachers move pupils on to complex writing tasks before they are secure in basic writing

skills. Some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing. Pupils' achievement in writing is patchy.

Although dedicated staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they engage with activities in class, some pupils have not made strong enough progress over time. Leaders have not checked that the support for pupils with SEND is making the difference intended. They have not made the necessary adaptations to learning. This means that some pupils with SEND do not get the support they need to achieve as well as they should.

Children in Reception, including those with SEND, get a good start at school. Leaders plan activities carefully to support learning in all areas of the curriculum. These also help children to develop relationships and learn how to manage their feelings and behaviour. Children follow routines and meet the high expectations that staff model. They achieve well in all areas of learning.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They are enthusiastic about their learning and life in school. Pupils have a strong understanding about different religions and the wider world. They talk maturely about global change, and how they can help their school become eco-friendly. Pupils develop a strong sense of justice and understanding of equality.

Some subject leadership is new. These leaders do not have a clear view of how well pupils are achieving in their subjects. This has hindered improvements. Leaders' actions to improve subjects lack precision because they do not know what is working well and what is not. This means that where leaders have identified that improvements are needed, for example in the teaching of writing, these have not happened quickly.

Governors have maintained their oversight of the school during a period of considerable leadership change. This support has been important in ensuring the continuity of provision and the well-being of staff and pupils. Staff are proud to work in the school and are well supported by leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established effective safeguarding systems. There are secure processes in place to ensure that those pupils who need help get the right support quickly.

Staff know the potential safeguarding risks to pupils in their local community. They know the signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report concerns promptly. Staff are vigilant and well trained to identify any changes in pupils' behaviour. Leaders review all information and concerns carefully. They support pupils effectively where needed.

Leaders and governors carry out all the necessary pre-employment and safeguarding checks on staff and visitors to the school thoroughly.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders do not routinely monitor the impact of the support in place for pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils do not receive the precise support they need to achieve well over time. Leaders must review the provision for all pupils with SEND to ensure that support is precisely matched to meet pupils' needs, so that they make strong progress in their learning and independence.
- The teaching of phonics is not consistent or effective across all year groups. This means that some pupils do not learn to read fluently, quickly enough. Leaders must ensure that the teaching of phonics is implemented effectively, so that all pupils learn to read fluently and accurately.
- Leaders have not identified the necessary actions to address the weaknesses in the quality of writing. Identified weaknesses are not being addressed by teachers. This means that improvements are too slow. Leaders must identify precisely the skills that are needed to improve in writing and provide teachers with guidance and support to ensure that the teaching of writing is consistently effective.
- Some teachers do not carefully check pupils' understanding and then adapt their teaching, so that pupils build on prior skills and knowledge. This means that some pupils struggle with tasks given or are not learning new knowledge when they are ready to do so. Leaders must ensure that teachers use precise checks on pupils' learning and then adapt their teaching well, so that pupils complete work that enables them to secure their understanding of the curriculum.
- Some subject leaders are new in their roles and have not carried out thorough monitoring of their subjects across the school. This means that leaders do not have a clear view of what is working well and what needs improving. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders are given time to monitor their subjects and identify areas for improvement. They must then ensure that subject leaders support teachers to improve teaching across subjects and classes.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117147
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241842
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Purcell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Ellement
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sandon.herts.sch.uk">www.sandon.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been two interim headteachers since the previous inspection. The new substantive headteacher started in January 2023 and is employed as a part-time headteacher at the school.
- There has been a change in the chair of governors since the previous inspection.
- Leaders make use of one unregistered alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and spoke with staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector held a meeting with five members of the governing body and held a telephone meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, music, and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders, looked at pupils' work, visited lessons and spoke with pupils about their work.
- An inspector listened to pupils from across the school read and listened to pupils read to an adult.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including leaders' school development plans, curriculum plans, the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff, school policies and minutes of governor meetings.
- To gather the views of parents, an inspector spoke with several parents at the end of day one of the inspection. The inspectors also took account of the 38 responses, including 25 free-text responses, to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors also took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey for school staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.

### **Inspection team**

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Brenda Watson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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