

Inspection of Samuel Lucas Junior Mixed and Infant School

Gaping Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 2JQ

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since March 2009.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this vibrant school. They are proud to be part of the Samuel Lucas community and come to school happily every day.

Adults are highly ambitious for every pupil. They expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Adults make these expectations clear with kindness and consistency. Lessons are fun, and this motivates pupils to try their very best. They listen attentively and are eager to learn. Pupils achieve very well. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There are many high-quality activities that enrich pupils' time at school. All pupils learn to play a musical instrument. They take part in rich musical experiences, such as a gala at the Royal Albert Hall. Pupils are encouraged to be as active as possible at breaktimes. The sports leaders lead a popular weekly dance session on the playground.

Pupils celebrate difference and treat others with respect. They know the many ways in which people are different. They learn important values of kindness, perseverance, and resilience, which they show in their everyday lives. Adults encourage them to have high aspirations. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their future lives.

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

Everyone in the school community, including the governing body, is determined to give every pupil the best chance to succeed. To this end, the school's curriculum is meticulously planned. It is highly ambitious. The curriculum sets out the essential knowledge and skills pupils need to learn at each stage of their education. It is carefully sequenced so that pupils build their learning over time. Consequently, pupils learn exceptionally well.

The school regularly reviews the curriculum. Swift action is taken when areas for improvement are identified. Similarly, teachers check pupils' learning frequently in lessons. They deal effectively with any misconceptions that arise. They adjust their teaching or put support in place if they spot pupils who are struggling or do not understand.

Pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. The school puts precise plans in place to support them. Staff, parents and pupils regularly review these plans to ensure they are meeting pupils' needs. Teachers are adept at adapting the learning for pupils with SEND so that they can succeed.

Children in the early years get off to a great start. During a thoughtfully planned transition period, they build trusting relationships with adults and with each other. As

a result, children feel happy and safe. They quickly become confident, curious learners, keen to explore the stimulating early years environment.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They present new information clearly and devise engaging tasks that enthuse pupils. Pupils have highly positive attitudes. They love to talk about their learning. Pupils from the Reception class to Year 6 are encouraged to think critically. Many can describe the progress they make from one lesson to another.

Reading is a high priority. Highly skilled adults teach early reading effectively. They ensure that those pupils who require extra help get the support they need. Pupils quickly become confident, fluent readers. Teachers promote a love of reading by sharing high-quality texts with all pupils. Reading lessons in key stage 2 enable pupils to explore authors' intentions, deepen their understanding of texts and extend their vocabulary.

Pupils' conduct around the school is exemplary. The calm, purposeful atmosphere in classrooms is highly conducive to learning. In the playground, pupils mix happily. Pupils support each other. They enjoy celebrating one another's achievements.

The school develops pupils into well-rounded young people who are ready for life in modern Britain. From the early years onwards, pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and positive relationships in an age-appropriate way. In religious education, pupils learn about tolerance by exploring the differences and similarities between major faiths. They grow as active citizens by fundraising for local and national charities. Older pupils have leadership roles. These include reading ambassadors, sports leaders and school councillors. They form part of the school's excellent education programme for building pupils' character.

Throughout the school, there is a culture of high expectations and ambition for all. Senior leaders drive this. They are supported, and challenged, by an experienced and knowledgeable governing body. The extent to which staff share leaders' vision is remarkable. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued and know that their well-being is taken seriously. They are offered an extensive range of professional development opportunities. These are purposefully planned so that pupils get the best possible educational experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117337
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10267841
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ben Fuller
Headteacher	Helen Brind
Website	www.samlucas.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 March 2009

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has doubled in size.
- There have been recent changes in the leadership team. The deputy headteacher joined the school in June 2022, and the headteacher joined in April 2023.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including senior leaders, the inclusion coordinator, and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector met with the school effectiveness adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, physical education and religious education. An inspector looked at documents and a sample of pupils' work from art, computing, design and technology, and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent and staff questionnaires. They also spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Finch

His Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Walker

Ofsted Inspector

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