



# The Grantham Sandon School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 120748  
**Local Authority** LINCOLNSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 291844  
**Inspection date** 15 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Rosemary Eaton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Sandon Close
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Sandon Road, Grantham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2-19		Lincolnshire NG31 9AX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01476 564994
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	44	<b>Fax number</b>	01476 592195
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	11		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Maureen Pearl
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Janet Roddis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 May 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a small school for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are no children of nursery age and only two in the Reception year. The large majority of pupils have severe learning difficulties. A minority of these pupils also have autistic spectrum disorders. The remaining pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A small number of pupils are 'looked after' children. The behaviour of a few pupils is challenging. At the time of the inspection, two of the six teachers had been absent for long periods, owing to ill health.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, providing good value for money. Owing to pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are much lower than those in mainstream schools. However, during their time here, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Progress is uninterrupted as they move up through the school. The children in the Foundation Stage make equally rapid gains as those in each key stage and the sixth form. Pupils' writing skills lag behind the other aspects of English. Their overall good achievement is linked closely to well-developed assessment systems, which enable all teachers to pitch lessons at the right level for each pupil. Detailed lesson plans reflect pupils' individual targets, so all the classroom staff know, for example, exactly what responses they are looking for from every pupil. The pupils themselves are less sure about what they are intended to learn or what they must do in order to improve. They are not involved enough in setting their own targets nor are they consistently reminded about them. This limits the opportunities for those with severe learning difficulties in particular to take some responsibility for their own learning.

In other respects, pupils' increasing independence is a strong feature of their personal development. They are eager to take on responsibilities and show concern for the well-being of their friends, indicating their readiness to be active members of the school community. These attitudes reflect the excellent relationships between staff and pupils, which also make a huge contribution to pupils' outstanding behaviour and complete enjoyment of school. As one sixth form student commented, 'I'm looking forward to college but don't want to leave school'. Staff work hard and sensitively to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Their positive reactions are seen, for instance, in the determined efforts of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, during physical education. Pupils' good academic progress and a fast-growing awareness of the world of work help to prepare them for their lives beyond school. Great care is taken to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils equally well, but the accommodation and resources do not always permit them to learn as independently as possible. For example, there is a shortage of technological resources such as interactive whiteboards. Pupils feel very safe in school, which means they are able to focus entirely on making the most of the activities available. This sense of security stems from the high-quality care and support they receive. Pupils are also encouraged to take some responsibility for their own safety, for instance, learning how to say 'No'.

The headteacher has established a staff team with an excellent team spirit and very high expectations. This commitment makes an important contribution to the school's good capacity for improvement. Each aspect of its work is scrutinised thoroughly, providing an accurate view of what works well and what could be better. Priorities are tackled systematically in order to improve the quality of education and pupils' achievement. Despite the many obstacles faced by its pupils, this is a very happy school, bent on trying to enable each individual to reach their full potential. No wonder that one of the parents said, 'Well done. Keep up the good work'.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form curriculum is well suited to students' present and future needs. They have plenty of chances to learn new skills and apply them in a variety of real-life contexts, for example, assembling items for sale. Work-related learning such as this is a strong and very relevant feature of the sixth form. Students with severe learning difficulties take part in weekly college courses, but similar opportunities are not available locally for students with more profound needs. Students are engaging and sociable, and relish being young adults. For instance, they don overalls before turning up to make the hall ready for lunchtime, doing useful work with verve and pride.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Help pupils to make faster progress in writing. Ensure that their writing tasks in all subjects are matched precisely to their individual needs.
- Find ways to involve pupils more in setting their own learning targets and evaluating their progress towards these.
- Improve the accommodation and resources so that all pupils have increased opportunities to enhance their independent living and learning skills.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Because teachers plan so carefully to meet their individual needs, pupils make good progress, regardless of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties move forward in very small steps, but when their particular starting points are considered, their achievement is just as good as that of other pupils. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders benefit from using a picture exchange system to support their communication. Strong links with carers and social services contribute to ensuring that 'looked after' children also make good progress. Higher attaining pupils, with severe learning difficulties, respond well to challenges to reach higher levels and to work with minimum adult support. The school's analysis of assessment information shows that boys and girls make equally good progress. Overall, pupils have similar success in English, mathematics and science although assessments show that progress in writing is slower than in other aspects of English. Children in the Reception year achieve well, stimulated by the older pupils in their class, and thrive in the school's lively but supportive atmosphere. In Key Stage 4, all pupils are successful in the Transition Challenge award, with varying degrees of support. In the sixth form, each student's work is accredited through the Towards Independence course.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Their attitudes to school are exceptionally good, mirroring the quality of relationships. As one pupil remarked, 'When we work hard, our teachers are pleased, and we like that.' Attendance rates are higher than in similar schools. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties become increasingly aware of their classmates and willing to accept support from adults with whom they are less familiar. The sixth form students are strikingly mature, rising to the demands made of them. For example, they run a weekly coffee shop for paying customers, demonstrating their awareness of health, safety and economic well-being. 'If the kitchen isn't clean, there'll be complaints, and we'll get the sack!' Students do not yet have the chance to tackle the challenge of regular work experience outside the school. Very aware of the needs of others, they frequently raise funds, for instance, for victims of the Asian tsunami. The most recently formed school council has not had time to make much impact on the school community. Despite a few pupils having challenging behaviour, learning is seldom interrupted by outbursts, because staff respond expertly to defuse situations quickly and consistently encourage good behaviour.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils say that lessons are interesting. Teachers take full account of pupils' ages when choosing activities. For instance, older pupils often have reading books compiled especially for them, reflecting interests such as 'Bart Simpson'. These encourage them to try hard and are contributing to recently accelerated progress in reading. This attention to each pupil's needs is a key feature of teaching. Lesson plans are referenced to individual education plans and learning is evaluated to show at a glance whether targets have been met. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to be involved in these checks or to help identify what they need to work on next.

Occasionally, in lessons other than English, writing tasks are not matched closely enough to pupils' precise needs. Teaching assistants work very closely with teachers and play a significant part in pupils' progress, for example, by enabling those with complex needs to be fully involved in lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Throughout the school, a relevant emphasis on English, mathematics and personal, social and health education underpins the good quality curriculum. All the necessary subjects are taught, at levels well suited to pupils' needs. Pupils are grouped flexibly, at various times with others of the same age or with broadly similar learning difficulties. This ensures, for example, that those with profound and multiple learning difficulties have good opportunities to learn through sensory experiences but are also stimulated by more articulate and physically able pupils. The curriculum is enriched by visits in the locality and further afield and by visitors, such as musicians. Days where the whole school focuses on a topic, Hinduism for example, also extend pupils' learning and personal development. Full use is not made of lunchtimes in order to help secondary-aged pupils to develop leisure time interests. The accommodation is constantly being improved but weaknesses remain. For instance, the food technology room is not designed for pupils who use wheelchairs and this inhibits their independence.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

This aspect is good. Secure arrangements are in place to ensure pupils' safety, for example, child protection procedures. Staff are well trained, for instance in moving pupils safely from their wheelchairs, and parents are satisfied that their children are looked after carefully. Links with a range of agencies and professionals are strong and support the school's work well. The Connexions service, a national initiative to support young people, helps to ensure that sixth-form students' transition to college is smooth. There are good systems to measure pupils' academic progress and the information collected is used well. In the sixth form, there are good examples of students evaluating their own learning and recording whether targets have been achieved or if more practice is needed.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides thoughtful and clear-sighted leadership and the senior management team members take responsibility for important tasks.

For example, improvements in the arrangements to track pupils' progress have been led successfully. These have enabled senior staff to identify efficiently if individuals or groups are doing as well as expected. The information from such systems is put to

good use in order to plan for developments. As a result, a broader range of opportunities for reading is now provided in Key Stages 3 and 4 and is already helping to raise standards. Not enough account was taken of the latest assessment information when the headteacher made judgements for the inspection about some aspects of the school's work and its overall effectiveness. Her conclusions were rather cautious.

Subject leaders work hard to support colleagues, by providing detailed guidance about modifying the curriculum for different groups of pupils. They are not yet fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning, for example, by scrutinising assessment information. Parents are welcomed enthusiastically as partners in their children's learning and their views of the school are very positive. Governors are supportive and are seeking more ways of finding out at first-hand about the school's performance.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 November 2006

Dear Pupils

The Grantham Sandon School, Sandon Close, Sandon Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 9AX

We know that some of you find reading difficult, so your teachers will tell you about this letter. Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our short time with you and we want to tell you what we think about your school.

You all work hard and learn a lot, because your teachers do a good job. We think you could improve your writing and so we've asked your teachers to make sure you all have work that is just hard enough. Your behaviour is outstanding. This helps everyone to feel safe in school and able to get on with their work. The teachers keep a close eye on how well you are learning. We want them to let you help to set your own targets and talk about your own progress.

There are lots of interesting things to do in school, and these help you to learn and become more grown up. Some parts of the school need improving, so you all can have better chances to do things for yourself. We think the food technology room should be better and you need more computers in classrooms.

Your mums and dads think you go to a good school and we agree with them. All the adults in school work very hard to keep you safe and healthy. Your headteacher leads the school well and has good ideas to help it get even better.

We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Eaton and Mrs Mothersdale (the inspectors)