

# Sandon Junior Mixed and Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117147
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312514
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anna Coyle

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<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 on roll</b>	
School (total)	83
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	15
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jeremy Renolds
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Gilbert
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Sandon Buntingford Hertfordshire SG9 0QS

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	312514

**Telephone number**  
**Fax number**

01763287238  
01763287298

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Achievement and standards in writing.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics.
- The use of assessment to challenge the most able children.

The inspectors gathered evidence from observations of lessons, samples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of the governors, and from the parents' questionnaires. The main documents used by the school for monitoring and strategic planning were also examined to ascertain the quality of leadership and management in the school. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as provided in its self evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a small school, which serves the local village community of Sandon near Buntingford. Most children are White British. Attainment on entry is typical for children's age. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that of other schools overall, although it is much higher in some year groups. A significant number join or leave the school at various times of the school year. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award, the Activemark for physical education and sport, information and communication technology (ICT) mark and the Football Association Coaching Award.

The school provides for 15 children from the ages of 4 to 5 years in the Reception class. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is typical to that expected for children's age when they first enter the school. There is an established pre school on the site, which is privately run.

## 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 that provides an effective education for its children. It evaluates its provision carefully and has some outstanding features. The school contributes well to the community it serves and is held in high regard by parents who see it as a 'friendly, welcoming school' in which 'staff know the children well'.

Children make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. They learn and develop successfully in the Reception year and reach the expected early learning goals by the time they move into Year 1. The results of the teacher assessments for Year 2 show that standards have fluctuated since the last inspection. Children do best in reading where standards have been consistently above average over the last three years. However, standards have varied considerably in writing and mathematics in the very small cohorts, with only a few children reaching the higher levels in 2007. The most recent teacher assessments for 2008 show that standards are broadly average in Year 2 and this is borne out by the inspection findings. At Key Stage 2, the national test results for Year 6 show a clear upward trend since 2005, with above average standards in 2007 and 2008 in English, mathematics and science. Although the most able pupils did not do so well at the higher levels in writing. The school has rightly identified the need to focus on improving the achievement of the most able children in writing and mathematics at both key stages. The headteacher and deputy are currently leading the way in teaching and managing English and mathematics to help improve provision and raise standards in both subjects.

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are sometimes outstanding when fun-filled, challenging activities capture children's interest and inspire them to work hard and do their best. For example, they thoroughly enjoy practical activities such as making bread in Years 3 and 4 and taking part in team games in Years 1 and 2. Teachers assess progress regularly, and children are encouraged to do well through the written comments they receive in their books. However, teaching is not effective enough at times and the pace of learning slows when tasks are too easy and the poor behaviour of a few children is not managed effectively. Nevertheless, the work of the teaching assistants has been successfully improved since the previous inspection to ensure that all adults are deployed closely to support small groups of children and those who find learning difficult. Consequently, these children make good progress and do well. The school makes outstanding use of teachers' expertise to benefit children's learning in subjects such as music, ICT and physical education (PE). Classrooms are clean, bright, cheerful places in which to learn. Outstanding displays of children's artwork help to create an excellent colourful environment and set high expectations to which the children can aspire.

The school cares well for its children. It has good procedures for safeguarding and protecting them and maintains good partnerships with parents and external agencies. Arrangements to check on the quality of teaching and assess children's progress are effective, although not yet fully streamlined in sharing the best teaching practice and monitoring its impact on learning and consistently providing enough challenge for the more able children. Nevertheless, staff have developed the systems for tracking children's progress since the last inspection when these were identified as areas to improve. Children now know how well they are doing and have suitable targets to guide their work; those in Years 5 and 6 particularly enjoy keeping a check on their own progress in mathematics and science. All children take an interest in their learning, and their personal development and well-being are good. Children enjoy coming to school and are keen to become involved in their community by taking on responsibilities such as acting as

school councillors. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children understand right from wrong, are tolerant and help each other willingly at work and at play. Most children behave well and attend regularly. They know about the need to stay safe and have a healthy diet, and they understand the importance of taking regular exercise. Children's good achievement in their literacy, numeracy and computer skills helps to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

The school's good curriculum has a strong focus on developing children's skills across all subjects to give them a well-rounded education. Staff are currently enhancing the provision for literacy and numeracy to help drive up standards still further; for instance, a new commercial scheme for mathematics has been purchased recently to aid teaching. Plenty of stimulating experiences include good opportunities for children to learn French and German, as well as participate in special themed days for subjects such as science. In addition, the school provides outstanding opportunities for children to take part in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including a philosophy club and sporting and musical events. For example, children have won awards for football and are the current national champions. They have competed in the national finals for lacrosse and have also represented the school in the county 'cupstacking' championships. A large number of children learn to play a wide variety of musical instruments including brass, woodwind and string. The school's excellent website provides parents with plenty of information, which celebrates these splendid achievements.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher provides clear direction and is well supported by the deputy and staff who all work together closely for the benefit of the children. Governors are proud of the school and are regular visitors. They keep a close check on how well the school is doing and are suitably involved in evaluating the provision. The school's priorities for improvement are accurately identified in its school development plan and it has good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children settle into school happily and enjoy learning. Close links with parents help to ease the transition between home and school, and children learn to relate to others as they become more familiar with their surroundings. They make good progress and achieve well by the time they move up into Year 1. The staff take good care of the children and ensure that their welfare, health and safety take precedence. Teaching effectively focuses on increasing children's communication, language, literacy and numeracy skills, whilst teaching assistants provide good support to small groups of children and individuals who have social needs or speech and language difficulties. Learning and development are soundly based on practical tasks that appeal to the children, and the curriculum includes a suitable mix of adult-led tasks and activities that children can choose from, both indoors and out. All adults promote children's personal skills well and encourage them to share and take turns when playing with the toys and equipment provided, such as magnetic letters and computer games.

Adults check children's progress carefully to make sure that all move on well in their learning, including those who need extra help. Good use of 'learning diaries' to assess children's progress, helps staff to measure how well the children are doing and identify where additional support is needed. As a result, children grow in confidence so that by the time they leave Reception they reach the expected goals for their age, and sometimes exceed them. The EYFS is appropriately led and managed by the new leader who has only recently joined the school and

is currently being guided by the headteacher. She is developing the provision and building on the existing good relationships with the pre-school.

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

- Raise standards of the more able children in writing and mathematics.
- Increase the amount of good teaching by sharing the best practice across whole school and monitoring its impact on learning.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B**

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

16 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Sandon Junior Mixed and Infant School, Buntingford, SG9 0QS

Thank you for welcoming us into your school recently and for talking to us about your school. This letter is to let you know what we found out:

- you go to a good school where all the adults take care of you and make sure that you are safe
- most of you behave well and enjoy all the things you do at school
- the teaching is good and lessons are often fun
- you work hard and make good progress in your learning
- classrooms are clean, bright, colourful places in which to learn with lots of excellent displays of your artwork
- you have plenty of exciting opportunities to take part in sporting and musical activities
- the headteacher is doing a good job in leading and managing the school.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- help you to do even better in writing and mathematics
- encourage the teachers to share their ideas with each other so that all lessons are good.

You can help by behaving well and continuing to work hard.

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector