

# Samuel Lucas Junior Mixed and Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117337
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326579
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Paull

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)	228
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	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Ann Kibby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sarah Anderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2006
<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>	Gaping Lane Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 2JQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 456737

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 March 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326579

**Fax number**

01462 457360

**Age group** 4-11

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**Inspection date** 24 March 2009

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**Inspection number** 326579

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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:

- whether the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievements are compatible with senior leaders' and governors' views of the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage; and whether leadership and management are outstanding
- whether spiritual and multicultural opportunities provided for pupils support a judgement of excellence strongly enough and how far this matches arrangements for building community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, chair of governors, staff, parents and pupils, observations of teachers and pupils at work and scrutinising documents, including records that track pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Samuel Lucas is an average sized primary school. Most of its pupils are of White British heritage, although a small number are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties. A few have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry covers a wide range but is mostly above average.

The school holds nationally recognised information and communication technology (ICT), Healthy Schools and Active Mark accreditations, as well as an award for the thoroughness of its self-evaluation procedures. It also holds a local authority award for quality in the early years and basic skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Samuel Lucas is an outstanding school. A large number of parents recognise this, as indicated in the very positive responses to questionnaires. A typical comment states, 'Samuel Lucas is an excellent school in all respects'. Quality and standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage, while good, are not quite as high as in the rest of the school. The main reason is that the small outside area limits resources available to children.

Throughout the school, excellent leadership and management have brought about many improvements since the last inspection. The most important is that teaching and learning are now outstanding. As a result, a very high proportion of pupils consistently make progress at a fast rate. This ensures that pupils' achievement is outstanding. Standards are nearly always well above average and sometimes very high indeed. This is seen in the results of Year 6 tests in English, mathematics and science, as well as in assessments at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. It is also reflected in work seen on display around the school and in pupils' books. Pupils' knowledge and skills in a number of subjects across the curriculum including, for example, ICT, art and design, and history exceed normally expected levels. Often a range of subjects is explored in a theme, so pupils learn how ideas and skills are applicable in various contexts. This has had a strong impact on their writing, including that of boys - previously identified as not as good as that of girls. In a theme on 'Light and Dark', for example, scientific ideas about shadows were used to heighten believability and effect in pupils' scary stories. Pupils who experience any kind of difficulty with learning are quickly identified, help is sought to meet their needs and support given accordingly. As a result, a high proportion of these pupils also progress at very fast rates and meet their individualised targets. Able pupils also flourish. They are catered for very effectively, often in partnership with local secondary schools or other relevant agencies. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds similarly do well.

As well as ensuring cross-curricular strengths, subject leaders work very effectively as a team to build enrichment through visits and visitors. A residential journey to the Isle of Wight is also provided. The result is an excellent curriculum. Very good opportunities for personal, social, health and citizenship education are also evident. This includes a range of very good opportunities to acquire knowledge about world religions and cultures other than their own. Links with Nigeria and India enhance this further, as well as offering opportunities for celebrating minority ethnic festivals. A link with the Italian consulate provides opportunities for pupils to learn Italian. All this contributes much to their personal development and well-being which are exceptionally good, as are pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is excellent. Pupils move about very sensibly and observe the school's overriding motto 'care, cooperate and contribute'. As a result, they accept responsibility for keeping safety rules in school. They also know much about how to keep safe outside. They know how to adopt healthy lifestyles well and take good advantage of the many sports activities that are offered in physical education and in after school clubs. They are clear that the things they learn frequently excite and amaze them and that their school is a very enjoyable place to be. Their above average attendance reflects this. Pupils make very strong contributions to the community, raising funds for charity, singing in a local home for the elderly and inviting the community to their shows and concerts. In school, they are very helpful towards each other, with spontaneous acts of kindness, as well as formally through playleaders, a 'buddy' system and an active school council. These very apparent social skills, linked to the strengths in literacy, mathematics and ICT mean that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the future.

Leadership, management and governance are excellent. Governors accept the responsibility to forge links with each class. This provides them with information both to support and to challenge senior leaders, should the need arise. They monitor the school's budget highly effectively, helping to ensure excellent value for money. Links with parents are good, although a significant minority feel that communication is not as good as they would like. Senior leaders are working towards improving the use of the school's website and email as a means to improving this aspect. Leaders at all levels check, evaluate and develop the areas for which they hold responsibilities in considerable detail. This ensures that pupils are cared for pastorally exceptionally well. Pupils say that they feel very secure in school and could talk to anyone about anything troubling them. Statutory requirements for child protection and safeguarding are met. Tracking of pupils' progress and assessment are also carried out very carefully and the resulting information is used to set challenging targets and to decide what needs to be done to reach them. Regular reviews of each pupil's work ensure that all have equal opportunities to progress as well as they can. Senior leaders observe teaching and inform staff of their findings, picking up points for improvement accurately. The school's track record of exceptional performance suggests an excellent capacity to maintain its high standards.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness of the Reception classes is good. While provision is managed outstandingly well, this strength is not quite matched in performance. This is because the outside area is too small to provide children with constant opportunities to acquire skills across all areas of learning. Conversely, provision indoors is of much higher quality. It is partly due to the excellence of leadership that this has already been recognised and planning permission sought to enlarge and improve resources outdoors. Nevertheless, currently, this drawback means that learning and development are good, rather than outstanding, as might otherwise be the case. This is reflected in rates of progress that, while good, are not fully consistent in all areas. For example, by the time they enter Year 1, children's personal, social and emotional development are outstanding. They behave very well indeed and settle to activities quickly. Reading skills are similarly high for the children's ages, while their recognition and use of numbers is not as advanced. All staff ensure that children's welfare is promoted excellently well at all times and they check and assess their progress effectively.

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

- Bring forward and implement plans to improve the outside area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage as quickly as possible.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### 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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

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

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

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

25 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Samuel Lucas Junior Mixed and Infant School, Hitchin, SG5 2JQ

Thank you for being so helpful, willing to talk to us and show us your work when Ms. Rogers and I inspected your school. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour throughout the day. This helped us to enjoy sharing the day with you, especially as you told us that you enjoy school all the time. We agree fully with your school councillors, playground buddies and playleaders who told us that it is an excellent school. We think your teachers look after you all exceptionally well and that what is planned for you to learn is very interesting and helps you to achieve exceedingly well. What is provided for children in the Reception classes is good, although the small size of the outdoor area sometimes limits what it can be used for.

Here are some more important things that are exceptionally good in your school.

- The standard of your work is well above average in several subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Because your teachers teach outstandingly well, you make rapid progress.
- You know a lot about how to keep safe.
- Because you cooperate so well with other people and have excellent skills in literacy, mathematics and ICT, you are very well prepared for the future.
- All the adults in school care for you greatly and you respond with excellent cooperation and are very helpful towards them.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors have very good ideas about how to improve things even more.

Here is something that we think will make your school even better.

- Put into place the plans that your headteacher and governors have drawn up to increase the space outside and improve resources there for the Reception classes.

I hope that you will continue to enjoy your days at school as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W. Paull

Lead inspector