

The Grantham Sandon School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120748
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339764
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Ashe
Headteacher	Janet Roddis
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. About one third of her time was spent looking at learning in classes, and additional time was spent looking at and discussing records of learning and progress. Nine lessons taken by six teachers, including two regular supply teachers, were observed, and meetings held with governors, staff, the school improvement partner and the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at various documents including the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, analyses of progress, systems for tracking and improving teaching and learning, minutes of governors and staff meetings, and a wide range of other school documents. Thirteen parents' and carers' questionnaires together with additional comments were read, and the analysis of staff and pupil questionnaires evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how the partnership with Ambergate Sports College contributes to the school's capacity for further sustained improvement
- how effectively the governing body fulfils its duties and contributes to the strategic direction of the school
- the quality of provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and profound and multiple learning difficulties, and the pupils' outcomes
- how effectively pupils' attainment and progress is tracked, and how this information is used to support teaching and learning.

Information about the school

The Grantham Sandon school (Sandon school) is smaller than the average special school. It provides for pupils with complex needs in four age-based classes and a sixth form. Approximately half the pupils have severe learning difficulties (SLD), a quarter have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and a quarter have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Small numbers have additional difficulties such as visual impairment and physical difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational needs, or are undergoing assessment to this end. There is one child of Reception age in the Early Years Foundation Stage and 14 students in the sixth form. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Five pupils are looked after and there are fewer girls than boys which is typical of schools of this type.

The headteacher has been on sick leave since October 2009. The headteacher of Ambergate Sports College, a nearby special school, was appointed as interim executive headteacher over the two schools in September 2009. He is currently responsible for the day-to-day running of Sandon school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Sandon school has undergone a difficult time since the last inspection. This resulted in the need for intervention from the local authority to support improvement. The appointment of the interim executive headteacher, the resulting close partnership with Ambergate Sports College and a much strengthened governing body have been very successful in achieving this. The interim executive headteacher is very effectively supporting the management of the school and the drive for improvement in provision and pupils' outcomes. The partnership with Ambergate has improved the provision, learning opportunities for pupils and the school's scope for joint, professional development. The governing body is providing a very good steer through its knowledgeable and professional membership. It has put many effective structures in place to monitor the work of the school, assure its improvement and hold the senior leaders firmly to account for pupils' outcomes. It is following these through rigorously. Much has been achieved in a short space of time. The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory, with strengths in the use of assessment to inform planning and the support, care and guidance offered to pupils. Pupils make satisfactory academic progress overall, and many individuals make good progress in the core subjects and areas such as communication and mathematics. The difference identified in progress made by pupils with ASD and PMLD is reducing significantly. Behaviour, attendance and many areas of pupils' personal development are good, although some aspects are limited by the curriculum offered.

Rigorous self-evaluation identified a wide range of necessary improvements. A week-by-week improvement plan was set and is rigorously followed by a new senior leadership team and the governing body. For example, the following weaknesses are now being effectively addressed with a good result: the management of staff and the responsibilities of middle managers; the assessment of pupils' performance and the use of the data; the quality of teaching; the provision and use of new technology and the presentation of the school. Data show that pupils are already making significantly better progress and that teaching, which is now satisfactory overall, has improved. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and recognises further improvements required in a number of areas. Those confirmed by the inspection include: the curriculum, which is not adapted well enough to fully meet the needs of specific groups of pupils such as those with ASD and PMLD; the sixth form, which is not sufficiently outward-looking or imaginative its provision; and the Early Years Foundation Stage which, although all requirements for the children are met, is not an entity in its own right.

As it stands, the school is well placed to continue its rapid path of improvement. However, the sustainability of the partnership arrangement has yet to be established

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and is currently under review. Consequently, although strong governance now appears to be assured, leadership and management are much improved, and continued partnership working is the stated ambition of all, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is currently satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision and students' outcomes in the sixth form by
 - improving the curriculum to offer a wider range of accreditation and opportunities to learn collaboratively within the community
 - personalising the provision to meet each individual's needs and interests
 - improving the quality of teaching so that learning is the focus throughout lessons, and teaching ensures that pupils always understand what is expected of them.
- Improve the curriculum and provision for pupils in Key Stages 1 to 4 so that it reflects current practice and consistently meets the needs of pupils with ASD and PMLD.
- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by establishing it as an entity in its own right with a clearly defined curriculum and resources that support children's learning and development, and policies that underpin the welfare requirements.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is always well below that expected for their age due to their complex needs, and, understandably, remains low. Learning in lessons is affected by the quality of teaching, although pupils' behaviour is consistently good in all lessons. In the best lessons, learning is clearly evidenced by pupils' enjoyment, positive attitudes and immediate new learning. This was demonstrated very effectively in an English lesson in Key Stage 3. Pupils worked happily and independently at various activities related to letter sounds and the alphabet. Pupils with challenging behaviour are usually calm and attentive because of good behaviour management. In the few lessons where teaching is weak, pupils lose interest and are not sufficiently engaged to learn effectively.

Pupils' questionnaire returns show they enjoy school. They say they feel safe, that the school helps them stay healthy and that they are respected and supported.

Relationships with staff are good and often outstanding, and the pupils show kindness and consideration for one another. Pupils enjoy participating in the developing range of physical activities, as seen in a joint session with pupils from Ambergate Sports College. They take advantage of healthy food choices when these are offered, although healthy

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choices are not embedded across all curriculum areas. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their self-confidence and self-esteem grow and they take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and show concern and consideration for those less fortunate than themselves, for example by involvement in fund-raising for charities. Pupils' cultural development is supported through curricular and enrichment activities such as the performing 'Live Music Now' group, and the school's celebrations for Diwali and Chinese New Year.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is variable. Most teaching includes many good elements such as: detailed planning which takes good account of pupils' targets, needs and prior attainment; clear expectations of what pupils will learn, supported by symbols to aid

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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understanding; and good on-going assessment for learning by adults who adjust their support and the activity to ensure that pupils learn well. However, at times, lessons which start well and include these good features lose their way, for example, when pupils are given free choice that goes on for too long or that interferes with others' learning, or because the focus on learning tails off. Signing and other communication aids are not used enough to support pupils' communication and understanding, and sometimes pupils with more complex needs are inadequately supported. These weaknesses limit learning.

The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on core subjects and pupils' key skills in communication and personal development. However, until recently, there was insufficient focus on how well the curriculum captured pupils' interests and provided for their differing needs. Development work has begun to improve this and the organisation and content of the curriculum for specific groups, such as those with ASD and PMLD. Insufficient use of new technology has been addressed and new interactive whiteboards are shortly to be installed in every classroom. Good opportunities are now given for pupils to be included in a wide range of activities with Ambergate Sports College, which complements opportunities for some to be included in mainstream school.

The school makes good provision for the care, safety and well-being of pupils. Clear individual education plans inform all teaching plans, and good partnerships with a wide range of external professionals mean that pupils' health and well-being are effectively supported. The school has effective health and safety practices, supported well by the governing body. Partnership with parents is given high priority, and their satisfaction is evident in their response to the inspection questionnaire.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of leadership and management has improved considerably in a very short time. There is now a good, clear, well-articulated vision for the school that is shared by staff. Individuals and parents report a renewed energy and strong drive for school improvement and better outcomes for pupils. Procedures to safeguard pupils are satisfactory. Child protection procedures are robust in practice but not always fully reflected in the school's policies. The management and evaluation of teaching is effective and having a positive, demonstrable impact on its quality. New systems have been implemented to assess and track pupils' progress. Differences in the progress of

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certain groups of pupils are being effectively addressed by professional development, collaborative working, and improvements to the curriculum, resources and environment. The school's work to promote equality and community cohesion and to tackle discrimination is satisfactory. An equality and diversity policy underpins its work to broaden pupils' horizons and develop inclusive practice. Pupils' differences are valued and celebrated and the school endeavours to introduce pupils to various other cultures through celebrations and the curriculum. Finances are now well managed and the school is currently gathering the evidence it needs to achieve the Financial Management Standard by the end of the year.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

There have been very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage for some years. Children are included in the class for the youngest pupils which incorporates many of the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage in its planning and practice. The welfare requirements are met through the school's general procedures and practices. Consequently, children's needs are adequately met. However, the Early Years Foundation Stage is not an entity in its own right with leadership that is focused on developing provision for the age group. This has limited its horizons.

Children make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in some areas such as personal, social, emotional development and communication. The curriculum takes regard of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements although there are currently insufficient opportunities for children to play and explore through active, creative

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activities such as role play. Children have immediate access to the outside area, and often make this a deliberate choice, but the small space is not well enough resourced for their maximum benefit. Teacher-led activities are good. Expectations are clearly outlined and include symbols to support understanding, although signing is not used as much as it might be. Individuals' needs are carefully planned for, and progress is rigorously monitored and recorded. Interesting resources are prepared that engage children, such as glittery dough and a selection of differently sized model elephants to support number work. High quality support is given by teaching assistants, for example, 'Good squidging!' clearly encouraged one child to continue to explore dough. Children are kept safe and have trusting relationships with the staff which support their well-being. Good partnerships are established with parents which endure as their children move on through the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Sixth form

The sixth form has its own facilities on the upper floor which signals an important transition from the rest of the school. The curriculum supports students' developing maturity and independence, for example through residential journeys and the weekly preparations for the coffee shop that is open to the community. Until recently, leadership has been insufficiently outward-looking in seeking to develop the provision and improve students' outcomes. However, there is a current focus on improving the curricular, accreditation and community-based opportunities for students. For example, the Duke of Edinburgh award and some Entry Level qualifications have already been introduced. Students' opportunities to participate in healthy physical activities have also improved. Partnership with Ambergate Sports College has been very influential in this improvement. Some learning is already taking place in conjunction with pupils in Key Stage 4, in readiness for the implementation of a 14-19 curriculum in September which is in line with national developments.

Work-related learning forms a significant part of the curriculum. However, it is too school-based and opportunities for external work experience and college links are limited. In general, provision is not sufficiently tailored through personalised timetables, activities and courses to suit the individual needs of these diverse young adults. Some teaching is good and provides very well for each individual student, but some teaching is weak. At times it does not meet the needs of students with more complex needs or

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explain clearly enough to students what is expected of them. The students are well cared for. They make satisfactory academic progress, and often good progress in their personal development. The students are well behaved, friendly and polite. They are caring and supportive of one another, and accept each others' differences very well which stands them in good stead for their future inclusion and well-being.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over one quarter of the parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. All were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. Additional comments praised the school in general, for example saying 'a very good school that meets all our needs. Well done and thank you'. A small number indicated that they are impressed with the changes that have taken place in the last six months, while an equally small number expressed concern about them. The inspection findings support the parents' and carers' positive comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Grantham Sandon School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspector received 13 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 49 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	62	5	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	46	7	54	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	69	4	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	54	6	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	69	4	31	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	77	2	15	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	54	5	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	62	4	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Grantham Sandon School, Grantham, NG31 9AX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school earlier this week. I enjoyed talking to you and visiting some of your lessons. I was pleased with what I saw because the school is improving well. It gives you a satisfactory quality of education. Your questionnaire returns tell me that you are very happy at school, and all those who returned the parents' and carers' questionnaire agree.

These are the best points about your school:

- you make satisfactory progress, and many of you make good progress in some areas and subjects
- you behave very well and act in a safe way
- you are kind to one another and considerate of other people in difficulties
- you attend school regularly and enjoy school very much
- the staff keep a close check on how well you are learning and use this information well to plan what you should learn next
- the staff look after you very well and give you good support
- the school is improving very well under its new leadership arrangements.

I have asked the school to improve these things, so that you all make as much progress as you can:

- improve the sixth form to give the students better teaching and more exciting and personalised opportunities for learning
- improve the curriculum for pupils age five to 16 so all pupils make as much progress as each other
- develop the provision for the children under five years old so that it is more specifically tailored for their needs.

I wish you all the best for your futures

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth

Lead inspector

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