

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Grantham Sandon School

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

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

The Grantham Sandon School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's warm and welcoming environment is one where pupils thrive. Pupils' well-being and development are at the centre of everything staff do. Pupils are happy and look forward to attending each day. They feel that they belong and are very proud of their school. Pupils say they feel safe. The relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils respect each other and say everyone is kind.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils to achieve their very best. This happens through the personalised approach to teaching and learning. Staff model the school's mission to make every second a chance 'to be valuable, inspiring and personalised'.

The environment is calm and very well ordered. Pupils are eager to learn. They have excellent attitudes. When pupils struggle to manage their behaviours, staff use their in-depth knowledge of each pupil to respond extremely well. Staff help pupils to manage and regulate their own emotions. These strategies are highly effective. Bullying is very rare. If it does happen, staff deal with it effectively.

Parents and carers are delighted with the care and attention their children receive. They typically say that staff go above and beyond for their children. They recommend this school highly to others.

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

The well-designed curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. A choice of three pathways means that pupils follow personalised programmes. They gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

Teachers know the pupils exceptionally well and are experts in meeting their individual needs. Staff provide high-quality support in lessons. No matter what the pupils' needs are, staff find a way of communicating with them. This ensures that all pupils access the full curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and present information clearly to pupils. This helps pupils understand what they are learning. All pupils have individual goals which link to their education, health and care (EHC) plans. These goals are ambitious, given pupils' starting points. Teachers skilfully check what pupils know. They use this information very effectively to inform pupils' next steps. Pupils frequently revisit any knowledge they are not sure about to reinforce their learning. They confidently recall what they have learned about sex education or about how to add and simplify fractions.

Reading is an essential part of school life. Leaders check each pupil's communication needs carefully when they join the school. Pupils with complex needs enjoy repeating the sounds they hear in the environment using musical instruments. When pupils are ready, teachers help them to identify different letters and sounds accurately. Teachers' detailed knowledge of phonics means that any pupils who fall behind quickly catch up. Pupils love reading books that match their phonic knowledge. They enjoy taking part in stories that develop their senses. A wide range of texts help promote pupils' love of reading.

Well-thought-out vocational pathways prepare sixth-form students exceptionally well for their next steps. Students achieve suitably ambitious accreditations and qualifications, including in mathematics and English. They relish opportunities to experience the world of work. Time spent applying to work at local businesses or at a nearby stately home helps them learn important life skills. Volunteering at the school's community café provides students with the opportunity to socialise with other people. Students enjoy running the school's German café. This service makes a positive contribution to the life of the whole school. It promotes pupils' understanding of different cultures. Focused careers guidance helps students make decisions about their futures. All students move on to suitable placements, including further education, and voluntary and paid employment.

Personal development is a high priority. Pupils know they are all unique and celebrate each other's differences. Pupils talk confidently about important values such as mutual respect. Visits to places of worship reinforce pupils' understanding of different religions. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in school, including being head boys and girls and members of the pupil council. These roles help pupils to realise the value of being an active member of society.

The vast enrichment programme, which includes horse riding, cycling, forest school, orienteering and climbing, helps to build pupils' character and resilience. The opportunity to take part in an annual German exchange trip allows pupils to see beyond their local context and offers invaluable life experiences.

Leaders, governors and the trust invest heavily in their staff team. There is a culture of everyone being a learner. Leaders support staff to fulfil their own ambitions to be a specialist, to teach or to lead. Staff receive highly effective professional development. They are extremely proud to work at this school. They feel valued and listened to.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The approach to safeguarding is rigorous. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training. Leaders share weekly updates with all staff. This ensures that staff are always up to date with the latest information. Records are thorough and show leaders' quick responses to any concerns. Staff remain extra vigilant due to pupils' vulnerabilities. Staff know what signs to look out for to help keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The pastoral support available provides for pupils' emotional health and well-being. Pupils know whom to talk to if they have any worries.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in February 2013.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141254
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10254968
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Hopkins
Headteacher	Stela Plamenova
Website	www.ganf-cit.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Grantham Sandon School is a specialist school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, physical disabilities, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Pupils study one of three different curriculum pathways.
- All pupils have EHC plans.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. She also met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the chairs of the trust and local school boards.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: reading; mathematics; communication; and personal, social and health education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including the single central record and child protection and safeguarding policies. She met with the designated lead for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff gathered through meetings with groups of staff and through responses to Ofsted's online survey for school staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils during formal and informal meetings and through responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The lead inspector visited the community café run by students in the sixth-form provision.
- Inspectors looked at documents relating to self-evaluation, school improvement, attendance and behaviour, the curriculum and governance.

Inspection team

Anita Denman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ellenor Beighton

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023