

Gosberton House School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120749
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380095
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Lewis

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jamie Gordon
Headteacher	Louise Stanton
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2008
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Age group	2–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Lewis

Additional inspector

Aune Turkson-Jones

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons led by nine different teachers for a total of seven hours. Inspectors held meetings with senior staff, subject coordinators and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the school's outreach coordinator and a member of the governing body. They heard pupils read and talked with them about their work and views of the school. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including: the data the school holds about pupils' progress; its self-evaluation; school development planning; and safeguarding documents and practices. They scrutinised 42 parental questionnaires and 104 returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Gosberton House School is an average-sized special school in the village of Gosberton in Lincolnshire. It caters mainly for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions and social, communication and language difficulties, although most have additional needs such as moderate or severe learning difficulties or medical needs. Pupils enter the school at varying times during their primary education, many transferring from mainstream schools. Some enter the school as late as Year 6. The school has an assessment facility in its Early Years Foundation Stage class and some of these children transfer when they are five years old to mainstream schools or other special schools. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are many more boys than girls and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The majority of pupils are from a White British background. A very few speak English as an additional language or are looked after by the local authority.

The school has an outreach role providing over 60 schools with advice about pupils with autistic spectrum and social, communication and language difficulties. The school has numerous prestigious awards, including Autism Accreditation through the National Autistic Society.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Gosberton House is an outstanding school. All groups of pupils, including boys and girls and those who have the most complex learning needs, achieve extremely well from their starting points on entering the school. This is because the teaching is outstanding overall.
- Teachers are expert at helping pupils who have autistic spectrum conditions to learn and to self-manage their behaviour. As a result, pupils’ behaviour and their understanding of how to keep themselves safe are excellent. Pupils make significant strides in their willingness to be flexible and in the ways in which they are aware of and take account of others needs.
- Teachers know each pupil’s needs and challenges very well indeed and plan lessons that are extremely well targeted on next steps in learning for each pupil. Very occasionally the pace and challenge of a lesson is too easy for a few, for example when everyone in a class is being taught together.
- Partnership working with families and other agencies is a real strength of the school. Families say that they have total confidence in the way that the school provides for their children and keeps them safe and used many superlatives such as ‘brilliant’ and ‘wonderful’ to describe the teaching, the care and the leadership team.
- Leadership and management at all levels are excellent, including that of the Early Years Foundation Stage and outreach service. Excellent leadership of teaching includes highly accurate evaluation of the performance of staff. Leaders analyse the school’s data rigorously to make sure that every pupil has the opportunity to succeed, that their talents are nurtured and their well being secured. They ensure that an excellent range of experiences promote pupils’ spiritual moral social and cultural development and their personal development exceptionally well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding teaching further by ensuring that all pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged in every part of lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve outstandingly well, irrespective of the level or complexity of their special educational needs. Parents and carers say that their children are achieving things they never thought possible. They are unanimous in their praise of how well the school helps their child to learn. The school's detailed data demonstrates the small but highly significant steps each child makes from their very low starting points. This was confirmed by observations made during the inspection. The excellent provision made for the youngest children develops their communication and social skills and interest in the world exceptionally so that they are very well set up for next steps, wherever that placement is. Children quickly learn to trust the adults around them. They feel safe to learn because staff are so skilled at setting the challenge at just the right level to help children become more flexible learners, more ready to wait and take turns and interact with others.

At Key Stages 1 and 2, the expert knowledge and skills each class team holds about the communication and behavioural needs of their pupils enables staff to plan lessons that excite pupils' interest and engage them very well. The use of creative themes, such as in a Year 1 class lesson about Noah's Ark, supports pupils' understanding of more abstract words and ideas and their concentration very well indeed. Pupils' pride in, and understanding of, their work is evident as they share it with others at excellent end of day assemblies. Although pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain lower than others of their age, the gap is narrowed because pupils' progress is so strongly promoted.

Pupils make rapid and sustained development because the school assesses them carefully on entry and plans their next steps carefully with their families. They make outstanding progress in their early reading, writing and mathematical skills, including in their phonics work, because teachers and support assistants provide systematic support for these skills. Visual and sensory lessons enable the youngest and those with the most complex needs to make small but highly significant steps of progress. Technology is also used very well indeed to support pupils' communicative attempts and their recording of their experiences. For example, Year 2 pupils made an excellent DVD about the hungry caterpillar. Older pupils use 'talkers' to record their views or an email exchange to suggest healthy meals.

Excellent feedback from teachers makes it clear to pupils how they are doing and keeps them focused on their work and their targets. Pupils say: 'I like reading,' and 'I'm getting good at writing.' They settle down to writing and mathematics work readily, and try hard to remember what they need to do. Skills for independent learning are very well supported. In almost all lessons observed, teachers and support staff gave pupils just enough help to enable them to have a go and succeed, but stepped back to ensure the pupil had to think for themselves.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is outstanding because teachers plan relevant, challenging and exciting lessons that are, nonetheless, structured in such a way that they support the engagement of pupils. Excellent use of symbols and other communicative devices ensures that pupils are clear about what they will learn and how their day will progress. These create a framework in which each pupil feels safe and will 'have a go', even where this might be a difficult area for them because of their learning needs. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the progress pupils make in managing their behaviour and in becoming more sociable. This is because respect for interest in each others' views is so well modelled and responded to by staff. Staff have very high skills in behaviour management and know just how to encourage each individual to continue to join in and achieve. They work seamlessly together, and their calm encouragement is rewarded as pupils show very high levels of perseverance and respect for staff and for each other.

Teachers keep detailed assessments as to pupils' cognitive, behavioural and communication needs and plan carefully with these in mind. This ensures lessons provide realistic but challenging activities, with good opportunities to revise and consolidate skills. A high proportion of outstanding teaching was seen because of this, and teaching was never judged less than good. Occasionally, and particularly in the whole-class part of a lesson, opportunities were missed for extending learning further if a pupil showed that they could cope easily with the ideas being explored.

Visits, visitors and a host of practical and sensory experiences enrich the curriculum. These underpin pupils' learning very well and help them to build up tolerance of different experiences and settings, and of working with different people. These activities, alongside excellent thematic work, musical, personal social and health education programmes and assemblies, provide outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The Early Years Foundation Stage setting sets children up very well indeed for later learning. It focuses extremely well on securing children's confidence in themselves and others, and developing their cooperation and communication with others. Parents comment on the often remarkable strides their children make in a relatively short time in these areas and are thrilled at seeing them become more social. Excellent work with families, including sharing of the excellent developmental records kept, ensures consistency between home and school so that progress is maximised. Excellent work with therapists throughout the school ensures that pupils' communicative progress is a particular strength.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is outstanding. Although some pupils may display challenging behaviour associated with their learning difficulties and disabilities, incidents are extremely well managed so that they rarely disrupt lessons. The school's positive behaviour policy ensures that good behaviour is recognised and promoted extremely well. For example, pupils have 'good manners cards' and progress in relation to these behaviours is celebrated in class and assemblies, reinforcing them for everyone.

Excellent attention is paid to developing pupils' understanding of risks to themselves and also to their reflection on the consequences of their actions. Pupils know that they should be careful in how they carry things and how they move about the school if everyone is to be kept safe. Older pupils know that if they can manage their own behaviour when feeling cross or upset this keeps everyone safer. Pupils have many opportunities to work together, particularly in their creative work, and this encourages them to share and take turns and cement friendships. They say that bullying very rarely occurs and are confident that staff will sort out any incidents or any squabbles.

Parents and carers are confident that their children are happy, safe and that behaviour is managed extremely well. Such enjoyment and parental confidence is clearly reflected in the rapid improvements in the attendance of almost all pupils once they settle into school. Attendance is good overall. Excellent attention to health and safety and welfare issues is evident in the meticulous record keeping.

Leadership and management

This is a school which constantly reflects on how it might do even better. It knows its strengths very well and is rightfully proud of its achievements. Class teams and middle managers praise the leadership and the ways in which it enables them to develop in their areas of responsibility. Members of the governing body and senior leaders have ensured that the school keeps at the cutting edge of new developments and uses the many awards and quality marks it gains to enhance provision and pupils' achievement even further. The skills and expertise of the staff are recognised by the local authority and in the ways in which the school's outreach service has developed and been received. Feedback from receiving schools indicates that their staff skills and pupils' progress have been significantly advanced as a result of the training and support they have received. The governing body makes a strong contribution to the success of the school, advocating for it within the local authority, holding it to account when it requests money for new initiatives, and checking on its performance very well.

Excellent systems are in place for monitoring pupils' progress. Data are analysed rigorously by the leadership team so that learning programmes and behaviour plans are adapted to ensure each pupil, whatever their background or need, has the support they need. The outstanding curriculum is constantly being reviewed and new initiatives taken on board, such as the ways the creative curriculum is challenging pupils to be more imaginative and to apply their skills in different contexts. The sensory circuits, breakfast clubs and the use of calming rooms ensure that everyone starts the day in the right mood for learning, and the learning of others is rarely interrupted. Although boys significantly outnumber girls, the individualised approach enables all to achieve exceptionally well.

The school's arrangements to secure equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination and for safeguarding pupils, meet requirements. Excellent work with parents and with other professionals, including those from health and social care, enhances the quality of care and of the curriculum. Excellent arrangements for transition are in place both into and out of the school, which ensure that pupils settle very quickly and no time for learning is lost.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gosberton House School, Gosberton, Spalding, PE11 4EW

Thank you so much for making us very welcome when we visited your school recently. We did so much enjoy watching you learn in lessons and hearing about all the different things that you do. Thank you to those of you who read to us or talked with us about your work. You told us that you really loved your school and think you have lots of interesting things to do. We think that Gosberton House is an excellent school where everyone works very hard to make sure that you make the best possible progress. We particularly liked the ways in which the school helps you to behave very well and to develop your speaking and listening skills.

We were extremely impressed with your behaviour, even though we know that at times this is hard for you to manage. We liked the ways in which you quickly settled down in your lessons, and that you were encouraged all the time to express your views and to think for yourselves. You are making excellent progress in your number work and your English skills and in your use of ICT. Your art work is also excellent. You make outstanding progress because the teaching is excellent and everyone in your class teaching team works so well together. Just occasionally, we feel they could challenge you to think even harder.

All the excellent aspects of your school are there because it is so well led and managed by the senior leaders. In order to make your school even better we have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to improve the teaching even more by making sure that the work in every part of your lessons is always challenging.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis
Lead inspector

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