

The Horncastle St Lawrence School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120757
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358836
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts

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

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Snookes
Headteacher	Keith Bruzas
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2009
School address	Bowl Alley Lane Horncastle LN9 5EJ
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Age group	5–16
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
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Boarding provision	St Lawrence House
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC038339
Social care inspector	Dawn Taylor

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seventeen lessons were observed, involving 13 different teachers. Meetings were held with senior members of staff, representatives of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised many documents including the school's improvement plan, curriculum and lesson plans, records and analyses of pupils' progress, 47 responses to the questionnaires from parents and carers, 77 from pupils and 38 from staff.

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

- How effective are arrangements for safeguarding, given that this was the basis of the school being served with a notice to improve in the previous inspection?
- How well do teachers use information gained from the assessment of pupils' progress to plan appropriate work for individuals and groups?
- How effective are senior leaders in monitoring teaching and taking action in response to their findings?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized special school for pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils have statements of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties, but about half also have additional difficulties. These include speech and/or language difficulties, autism and visual impairment. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and all have English as their first language. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. About a third is girls.

The school provides a range of National Proficiency Test Council courses through an animal unit which is also used as a resource by other schools and a college. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status, ArtsMark, ActiveMark and SportsMark. A speech and language unit is managed by the school, although it is housed in a separate building to the main class area. There is boarding provision on the same site, St Lawrence House, which provides 20 places during weekdays in term time. This was subject to a simultaneous social care inspection.

The previous report found the school to be performing less well than it could reasonably be expected to perform in all the circumstances. It was, therefore, given a notice to improve.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a satisfactory school. In lessons, pupils learn satisfactorily and develop their skills soundly, whether in academic subjects, practical ones such as sports and animal care, or in topics that spread across a range of subjects. They develop good personal skills: they are sociable together and learn how to look after themselves and stay safe and healthy.

School leaders satisfactorily evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school following the previous inspection. The initial improvement plan identified the right areas and spelled out the necessary remedial actions. During the past year, school improvement has become considerably more focused and the proposed actions more specific. The school has developed a number of significant strengths as a result. The governing body has been rejuvenated under the charismatic leadership of a new chairperson. New and established members of the governing body have undertaken extensive training and are becoming more actively involved in school matters. With the many improvements in the school's provision, the increasingly accurate self-evaluation and the escalating involvement of the governing body, the school is demonstrating a good capacity to improve further.

Previously inadequate safeguarding, and health and safety issues have been resolved and arrangements are now strong and fully in place. The curriculum is a particular strength of the school that has been further developed recently, especially with strengthened links between subjects, more purposeful use of the animal unit and many more enrichment activities outside school. Welfare systems are strong now that all requirements are met and are well understood by staff. The boarding provision is of good quality and meets all of the National Minimum Standards. Senior leaders have created an effective system of frequent lesson observation and provide feedback to teachers about how well pupils are learning. This has successfully improved assessment, planning and the level of challenge and pace in most lessons. This observation and improvement process is currently focusing on lingering weaknesses such as activities becoming less relevant to the intended focus during a lesson or the slowing of a lesson's pace. In the main, communication with parents and carers is positive and effective, although a very small number of parents commented that homework is rarely set, and sometimes there was a lack of information about the topics and subjects their children were studying each term. The speech and language unit works almost separately from the main school, with too little use being made of staff expertise and communication resources in classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning and raise achievement by:

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- establishing the work of the speech and language unit more firmly in daily classroom practice, including the everyday use of different forms of communication
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to take work home, and information about the curriculum to go with it
 - clearly identifying the remaining weaker areas in teaching and taking steps to remedy them.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Because pupils' moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities are often made more pronounced by their additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities such as autism or speech and language difficulties, it is not appropriate to compare their attainment with mainstream pupils of the same age. Pupils may enter the school at any stage of their educational career and their skills are accurately assessed shortly afterwards.

All groups of pupils make at least sound progress in lessons and achieve satisfactorily. Many pupils gain awards at Entry Level and in work-related subjects that they study during their college link courses. Progress by the very small number of pupils who have visual impairments progress is satisfactory and they achieve soundly. The very small number of pupils of minority ethnic heritage also make satisfactory progress. Similarly, the pupils who have autism or speech and language difficulties achieve soundly.

Where progress is slowest, it is often because the pace of learning drops or the aims are not clearly kept in mind. Pupils in one lesson, for example, were using the internet to conduct research on different kinds of games, but soon began simply to play the games they had found, and were not brought back on task effectively. Pupils make good progress when they are especially well motivated, or the work is practical. For instance, in a mathematics and science lesson in Key Stage 1, pupils were using a wide range of resources, from car tyres to shaving foam, to assess the properties of the various materials and objects. Pupils develop their communication skills satisfactorily. Autistic pupils and those with visual impairments benefit from effective additional help in the form of resources, staff time and/or organisation of suitable activities which enables them to take part successfully in activities in appropriate ways, such as in physical activities, sports and in the animal unit. Occasionally, these arrangements do not work to full effect and a pupil may not have the most fitting activities for a time so that progress slows.

Pupils' attendance is above average because they enjoy their lessons: in discussions, they recounted all their favourites, covering almost the whole curriculum. Many pupils achieve well in particular subjects, such as physical activities, art or work-related activities. They develop basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) satisfactorily. These, combined with good personal development, strong work-related activities and independent living lessons, enable pupils to prepare well for their future well-being. Pupils further develop their skills for their future through activities such as studying health and safety symbols in the workplace, or learning to manage money in sessions organised by a local bank. Pupils behave well, and many choose to eat

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healthily, to undertake energetic leisure and sports activities, and are aware of potential threats to their safety and health.

Pupils take on many positive roles within their own school community, such as becoming prefects, playground buddies, 'eco warriors' or house captains. Members of the school council are particularly active and take responsibility seriously, for example, helping with interviews for a new deputy headteacher during the inspection. They raise money for charities locally and further afield, and help in the local town and villages, such as by building a cairn for the 'village of the year' celebrations.

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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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.

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because learning sometimes slows down when pupils work at their own pace or the central aim of the lesson becomes lost, or the time on an activity such as physical education is very short because too long is spent getting changed. Nevertheless, in many lessons the learning is good. Assessment of pupils' progress is carried out effectively and the information is used intelligently in the planning of activities that challenge their learning. Teachers use a range of resources well and their support staff are capable and effective. Relationships in lessons are good and

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amicable. The work of the speech and language unit is not sufficiently embedded in routine class activities to make this learning better; different communication systems such as symbol cards are not used as frequently as they might be, for example.

The curriculum is well balanced and meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Much curriculum planning incorporates stimulating themes covering several subjects, such as art, history, geography and design and technology in a topic about treasure maps. English and ICT are often brought into other lessons to reinforce learning in different situations. The animal unit strongly supports learning in social, personal and communication areas, as well as in taking responsibility and looking after the animals. Pupils enjoy many extra clubs, such as street dancing, kick boxing, 'Dr Who' and model vehicle control. They go out on many visits to enhance their learning. Some of these are regular, such as for work-related courses or, occasionally, for accredited courses such as GCSE art and mathematics. Some visits are to other schools and centres, such as for the Junior Sports Leaders awards. Others are less frequent, including a long weekend visit to Paris, enjoying the theatre or going bowling. Many of the visits, as well as in-school lessons, contribute greatly to pupils' awareness of their local community as well as worldwide cultures. Regular liaison with the on-site residential provision is effective with regard to specific activities and long-term planning for the evenings.

Pupils' feelings of safety and security are well justified by the strong procedures for ensuring that the school is a healthy and safe environment. All of the necessary systems are solidly in place, and staff know who is responsible for what. Pupils have the support they need for their learning and their personal welfare. The pastoral system is strong and pupils enjoy the 'house' competition that rewards their points and merits for good attitudes, behaviour and effort. Pupils say that there is little bullying of any kind and are confident that they could approach a member of staff for good advice or action if they had problems. A well-attended breakfast club provides a welcome starter for pupils who have had a long journey to school. It is much enjoyed for its leisure activities as well as the food and drink available. Pupils who attend the on-site residential provision generally have a valuable 'handover' period between staff from the home and the school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders' accurate self-evaluation has led to clear identification of areas for improvement. Subsequent actions have successfully raised standards in many areas of the school's provision. Safeguarding arrangements are now good. Staff and the governing body have had extended training in many health and safety matters. All policies, systems

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and procedures are comprehensive and up to date. All adults have been thoroughly checked for their suitability for working with children. Pupils have a good awareness of health and safety matters in school, at home, in the animal unit and in various work placements. The curriculum is stronger than previously, and the systems for care, guidance and support are robust. Senior leaders have a clear concept of what they want to do, and this is increasingly shared by the governing body. Leaders have initiated effective classroom observations and improved many aspects of assessment, learning and teaching. Some actions are still being pursued with a view to improving them further. Whilst most staff members share leaders' views for how the school should develop, a minority express less positive views. Leaders are taking these into account as they plan for the next phase, including greater involvement of 'team leaders' in order to spread staff responsibilities more widely around the school. Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and dedicated. They have undertaken extensive training and are taking on more responsibility for aspects of the school's leadership, including successfully setting targets for school performance.

The school has strong relationships with parents and carers, who praise the leadership, teaching and what their children are learning. They comment, for instance on the immediate and effective help they have received when personal or educational problems have arisen, or the trouble staff have gone to in order to make college and work-related courses available. They find staff very approachable, friendly and safety-conscious. The curriculum and learning benefit greatly from the strong and varied links that have been built up with other organisations. These include 'Creative Partnerships', five colleges, several other schools, many places of interest, leisure and sports facilities and numerous health and welfare agencies. Leaders ensure that there is no kind of discrimination in school, and that all pupils have equal access to all elements of the curriculum and to varied learning activities. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily and there are many opportunities for pupils to go into the community, to study, have work experience and raise money for charities. However, the school has not yet analysed and evaluated its further role in the community and has not developed effective plans for promoting community cohesion beyond the local area.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding is good with outstanding features and the service meets all of the key national minimum standards. The one recommendation set at the last inspection has been fully addressed.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Boarders benefit from living in a school where the boarding team are committed to providing individualised care and support. Boarding staff fully understand the need to promote social inclusion and to challenge any form of discrimination.

Boarders gain a good understanding about the benefits of healthy living. There are good arrangements to ensure that medication is safely administered, ensuring boarders' health needs are fully met. None of the young people board full-time at the school, so parents retain overall responsibility for healthcare arrangements. A key strength of this school is its catering arrangements. Boarders are provided with a nutritiously balanced and appealing menu, taking into consideration their likes and dislikes. Most importantly, boarders have plenty of opportunities to fully participate in a variety of cooking activities that are fun and develop their interests, skills and abilities.

Boarding staff have a good focus on safeguarding. They protect boarders from the impact of bullying, anti-social or intimidating behaviour. Staff are sensitive and attuned to individual needs. Detailed planning and close supervision ensures a well-managed environment and supportive responses to concerns. The quality of relationships between staff and boarders is outstanding. Staff create a warm and friendly atmosphere, which enables boarders to feel relaxed.

The opportunities for enjoying and achieving are outstanding. The admission criteria for boarding require a demonstrational educational need for the 24 hour curriculum. Boarders identified needs are actively supported by the residential provision. Boarders explore their

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potential and develop their personal interests. Staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner and help boarders access a variety of in-house and community based activities that enhance self-awareness, develop identity and improve self-esteem in an age-appropriate manner.

Boarders' contribution to boarding is outstanding. Boarders are proactively encouraged, enabled and supported to be involved. Boarders' views are clearly valued and they are given choice wherever possible. There are written plans, which summarise how individuals' needs are to be met. Boarders are continually encouraged to develop their thinking skills and are learning how to express themselves clearly using various aids and communication systems.

Economic well-being is good. The layout of the provision's accommodation and physical maintenance is adequate. For example, the school has just been fitted with new doors and windows but this has not been extended to the boarding house. However, the school and staff team are dedicated to ensuring high standards of décor and furnishing. Therefore boarders benefit from staying in comfortable surroundings.

Staff have good support and guidance through a clear management structure. This structure is successful at meeting its aims to foster social awareness and mutual respect within the boarding community. All staff receive a comprehensive induction, regular supervision and annual appraisals. Staff throughout their employment, receive in-house and external training to ensure their childcare practice remains up to date. All staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3. As a result, staff are able to support and meet the diverse needs of boarders.

This boarding service has substantial strengths and where areas for improvement emerge the management team recognises and manages them well.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- The school meets all national minimum standards.

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and all it does. Everyone who responded was happy with their child's experience at the school, although one commented, 'My child would not be happy at any school.' Far more representative were the positive comments: 'It's a great school,' wrote one parent. 'It's excellent... fantastic... amazing... very helpful and supportive,' wrote others. A very small number asked for better communication, particularly about what topics were being studied and a lack of homework. Inspectors found that little homework is set and the school has agreed to provide it more often. Communication between school and home is already being improved with the school's new bulletins. The school provides regular updates on progress and holds open evenings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Horncastle St Lawrence 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 inspection team received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	62	17	37	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	33	70	13	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	53	19	40	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	51	21	45	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	60	18	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	51	18	38	4	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	53	20	43	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)	24	51	16	34	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	60	17	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	60	17	36	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	62	16	34	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	70	12	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	72	13	28	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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



22 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Horncastle St Lawrence School, Horncastle, LN9 5EJ

I expect that you remember when the inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for talking with us so politely and helpfully, giving us your views and showing us what you do in class.

We found that you go to a satisfactory school where you make satisfactory progress and enjoy your lessons. You make good progress in knowing how to stay healthy, safe and independent. Your school has a lot of strengths such as the animal unit, sports, physical activities, art, music and ICT. These add greatly to the classroom activities, the literacy, mathematics and science, for instance. Some of you told us that you worked 'quite hard' but could work harder if you had to. You told us that you feel safe in school and would be happy to talk to teachers and other staff if you had problems about anything. The people who lead and manage your school do a good job and have managed to improve some things a lot since the last inspection. There is now a better range of subjects, teachers plan their lessons well and there are better ways of making sure you are safe and well-cared for.

We are suggesting a few things to help your learning:

- the speech and language staff could come into lessons more, and staff could use symbols cards more often to help you to understand;
- the school should give you home learning to do a little more often, and tell your parents and carers more about what topics you are doing;
- teachers should speed up some activities and make sure that everyone keeps working on the main point of the lesson.

You can all help the school to improve by carrying on with your work even if there are other things going on around you.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector

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