

St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120587
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	363924
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Pearson
Headteacher	Susan Belton
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed. All five teachers were seen teaching, all of them at least twice. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its methods for tracking pupils' progress, at a range of school documents, including its policies, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring records, an extensive sample of pupils' work, and reports from the School Improvement Partner. Seventy-nine responses from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire were received and considered, along with questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the curriculum is planned appropriately to avoid repetition in mixed-age classes.
- The accuracy and reliability of the school's self-evaluation, since no areas for improvement were identified in either provision or leadership and management.
- The effectiveness of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the school's work, to see how aware it is of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Information about the school

This small school serves a small village and the surrounding rural community. About one third of the pupils travel several miles to attend. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well below average. All pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. All Years except Year 6 work together in mixed-age classes. The school holds several awards including the intermediate International Schools Award and the Artsmark Gold. A pre-school breakfast club is run by the 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all of its pupils. Its excellent engagement with parents and carers underpins highly effective promotion of community cohesion. Its meticulous attention to detail ensures that safeguarding and child protection procedures are of the highest order. All of these strong features lead directly to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, their contribution to the school and wider community excellent, and they report that they feel completely safe and very well looked after in school. The major responsibility for this rests on the shoulders of the determined, compassionate and highly competent headteacher, whose significant influence and impact on children's lives are recognised and respected by pupils, parents and carers, and staff alike.

The quality of teaching is good, and this accounts for pupils' good progress in all age groups as they move through the school. Some outstanding lessons were seen in which pupils worked independently on challenging tasks. Learning sometimes slowed when all pupils in a class were given the same instructions. On these occasions, the individual learning needs of the pupils are not met accurately enough, particularly in mixed-age classes, and their progress is slower. Pupils find the good curriculum interesting and exciting. It is well planned to avoid repeating work from one year to the next. It includes high quality art, sport and music, and French for pupils in Key Stage 2. Many visits and visitors add richness to pupils' experiences. The range and uptake of extra-curricular activities are excellent. However, pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as their other skills due to the limited amount of curriculum time spent refining them.

The high quality care, guidance and support all pupils receive is central to their emotional and physical security. Adults in the school know pupils and their families very well through their very close community ties. Specific interventions are quickly and confidentially made when an individual or group needs additional help. Parents and carers have high regard for the work of the school, particularly the support for those pupils who are most vulnerable due to their circumstances.

School self-evaluation is accurate, and linked to both the academic and pastoral outcomes reached by pupils. Staff morale is high, and all adults in the school are fully committed to doing their very best for the pupils in their care. Senior leaders, including the governing body, have sustained previous good and outstanding practice. They know which aspects of provision require development, and what to do to make the necessary changes. The school has good capacity to make further improvements.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers make consistently good use of the information they hold on what pupils already know and can do, to explain and set work in lessons which meets their individual learning needs accurately.
- Ensure that pupils are given more opportunities and more time to develop their writing skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils learn well in lessons. All groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are making good progress over time. Pupils usually enter Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age, though this can vary markedly from year to year due to the small group sizes and their writing and calculation skills are often limited. In 2011, the school's comprehensive and accurate assessment and tracking system clearly shows that all pupils in Year 6 have made good progress from their various starting points. Standards observed by inspectors were above average, including at the higher levels, in both English and mathematics.

Pupils have exceptionally good attitudes to learning, built consistently throughout the school on secure foundations laid in the Reception class. This ensures that lessons run smoothly. Pupils have excellent personal attributes of respect, consideration and tolerance, and respond promptly to guidance from the teacher. They listen closely to each other's opinions and ideas, knowing that different or unusual interpretations will help them to understand more deeply. They can be trusted to work productively when not directly supervised. This was seen in all class groupings, from Reception to Year 6. Their concentration is good and their confidence grows as they successfully meet teachers' high expectations.

Pupils enjoy coming to school because, as one said, 'It's just so nice to be here.' Pupils react with surprise when asked about bullying, saying firmly that there simply isn't any. However, they are well aware of what to do, should it occur. They can explain with clarity and certainty why they are safe in school, and are confident that the school deals quickly, fairly and effectively with any issues that might arise. They are fully aware of the dangers they may face outside school and what steps to take to avoid them. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and most can describe the effects of exercise and diet on the body. It is clear from pupils' discussions that they are very proud of their school, and they feel that their opinions are listened to when they attend meetings with the governing body. Their involvement in activities in the immediate local area is strong. They are keen to represent the school in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. Their understanding of the different cultures they are likely to meet within the United Kingdom and across the globe is excellent. They have a wide range of direct contacts with different schools locally and in nearby large towns. They have a range of excellent links, built through the British Council and Comenius Regio, with schools of different faiths in India and in Poland. They take part in celebrations of other faiths, and raise significant amounts of money for charitable causes. When they leave school at the end of Year 6, pupils are mature and confident young citizens, who are well prepared for the next stage of their education and their lives. Pupils' attendance is average. Despite good systems to

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promote attendance, levels are affected significantly by illnesses of individual pupils in this small school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

Classrooms (known as studios) are colourful and unique places which reflect the individuality of the teachers and pupils in them. Examples of pupils' written work are prominently displayed to motivate and inspire. Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between adults and pupils. Lessons usually move on briskly, keeping pupils on their toes, though occasionally the pace slows when all pupils receive the same exposition or explanation. Pupils listen politely and wait patiently for the next task. Scrutiny of pupils' books showed that marking is regular and celebratory, and usually gives clear advice on how to get better. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and play an active and important role in supporting different groups of pupils to ensure they make good progress. They particularly ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have access to everything that the school has to offer, and gain the same benefits as all other pupils.

The curriculum has a strong focus on building pupils' values of tolerance, compassion and respect for the individual and the environment. It combines these with a wide range of extra-curricular enrichment activities, though many of these involve travel and do not take full advantage of the school's own extensive grounds. The school's drive to help pupils 'to

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learn how to learn' is solidly based upon providing regular opportunities for problem solving, research, investigation and discussion. This secures pupils' reading, speaking and listening skills. Pupils are very competent and comfortable in these areas. However, pupils do not have the same level of opportunity to develop their writing skills, and their competency in this area of literacy is not as well developed.

Regular consultations, including parents and carers' evenings, annual questionnaires, surveys and face-to-face meetings, underpin the extremely strong and positive links between school and home. These allow the school rapidly and sympathetically to address any personal issues which might arise. The headteacher goes the 'extra-mile' to make sure that all pupils are given every opportunity to be happy and to achieve their best. Transitions arrangements are well managed and ensure that pupils transfer into school, from one class to another, and on to secondary education, with the minimum of room for error or misunderstanding. The pre-school breakfast club caters for about a fifth of the pupils in the school, and gives those who attend a well-balanced and nourishing breakfast, and a good start to the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The reflective and very effective headteacher has ensured that all pupils in this school get 'a good deal'. She has the full confidence of pupils and staff, parents and carers. The school's engagement with parents and carers is extremely strong and close. Morale in the school community is high, and all adults buy fully into the vision, 'Together, we strive for excellence'. Though she has the full support of staff and the governing body, a great deal of responsibility for further improvement rests squarely on the headteacher's shoulders, and the role of middle leaders and managers in this small school is relatively underdeveloped.

Procedures for safeguarding are meticulous. Pupils, parents and carers are quite certain of this. Several members of the governing body are involved in ensuring that current requirements are fully met. Governors generously give their time in and around the school, and are hardworking, knowledgeable and challenging. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, know where the school is strong, and what it needs to do to get better.

The school makes good provision to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. All have the support necessary to make good progress. The school successfully ensures that pupils understand that inequality in all forms must be confronted. There is no discrimination or bias in this school. The school makes excellent and longstanding provision for building

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community cohesion. Local, national and international links are well established within the curriculum. Pupils' excellent understanding of the need for religious tolerance, the removal of societal inequalities and respect for diversity is firmly established through direct links with schools abroad, and through extension work in geography, history, art and religious education. This contributes significantly to pupils' excellent spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage, which comprises one Reception class, is good. Children settle into school routines easily because of good induction arrangements. Children play and work together in a happy atmosphere where every child, regardless of background or ability, is valued equally. Children make good progress and achieve well because teaching meets their learning needs well. They work and play together in a welcoming, stimulating and supportive environment. Teaching is enthusiastic and raises curiosity. Children are content and enjoy their learning in the safe and nurturing environment provided. Parents and carers are regularly informed of their child's progress. When necessary, effective use is made of outside agencies to provide support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. They provide a clear vision for future success, and a sense of purpose for its work. Children's progress is checked regularly. The information gathered is used to plan next activities according to individual children's learning needs and to ensure a good range and balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Welfare requirements are met.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire was much higher than usual. Almost all responses were very strongly in support of the work of the school. In particular, respondents were unanimously sure that the school kept their child safe, were happy with the experiences their children were getting at the school, and that the school was led and managed well. A very small minority of parents and carers raised some individual or particular concerns. Inspectors weighed these views carefully in reaching the overall judgements expressed in the report, but they followed no particular pattern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby 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 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 103 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	75	18	23	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	96	3	4	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	61	77	18	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	76	16	20	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	81	15	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	78	17	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	78	17	22	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)	63	80	11	14	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	77	17	22	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	67	24	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	67	26	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	74	94	5	6	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	85	12	15	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



23 June 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby, Alford, LN13 9NH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently, and for telling us your views. We were very impressed with your manners, your excellent behaviour and your very good attitudes to learning in lessons. We noticed particularly how trustworthy you are when working independently.

We found that St Helena's is a good school. You are taught well, learning about lots of different and interesting things in exciting ways. The school has several outstanding features which ensure that several aspects of your personal development are excellent. The most important of these are the outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides for all of you, and the high quality of the procedures the school has to keep all of you safe.

However, there are some things which the school could do even better. So I have asked your teachers and the other adults in school to do the following to help you learn more quickly:

- when planning lessons, make sure that they always make the best use of the information they know about you, to set work and give explanations which meet your particular learning needs well
- make sure that you get enough time to practise your writing skills as well as your reading and speaking skills.

Please continue to be the happy, hard working and sensible young people you already are. Good luck to you all for the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott

Lead inspector

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