

Gamston CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	122801
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	380538
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Brown
Headteacher	David Fotheringham
Date of previous school inspection	7 April 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspector observed six teachers in nine lessons, over approximately five hours. She held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and representatives from the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at data relating to pupils' achievement, a range of school's policies, and planning for school improvement. She analysed the 60 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, although the proportion who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including pupils who are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs, is also well below average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school collaborates with the Tuxford family of schools.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The headteacher took up his post in September 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not good because its monitoring systems are not comprehensive or regular enough to support whole-school improvement planning. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching practices mean that pupils' progress and behaviour are no better than satisfactory. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory for all groups of pupils. Attainment is average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, representing satisfactory progress throughout the school from pupils' individual starting points.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Some practices, such as effective introductory activities, promote quicker progress. However, pupils do not always benefit from work at the right level of challenge, because teaching is not based closely enough on data about their individual attainment levels. There is inconsistency in both the quality of lesson planning and the way teachers use questioning to extend pupils' thinking.
- Many pupils behave consistently well in lessons and at play, but a few disengage in lessons and behave immaturely around the school. This is because the behaviour policy is not applied consistently, and expectations of behaviour are sometimes too low. Attendance is average. Pupils do not have targets to promote improved attendance and to give them greater ownership of it.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning, and sets appropriate performance management goals for the staff. School improvement planning reflects the school's needs. However, leadership is not yet fully distributed between middle leaders, who do not have accountability for their specific roles.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment levels throughout the school by making sure that:
 - planning of lessons is based on data about the levels at which pupils work, so that it provides appropriate challenge to pupils of all abilities
 - questioning is carefully considered to match pupils' abilities, and is closely focused on promoting their thinking and progress.

- Make sure behaviour is always at least good in lessons and round the school and good progress is promoted, by establishing:
 - high expectations of pupils' behaviour among all staff
 - a consistently applied behaviour policy that is known and understood by all pupils and implemented by all staff
 - above-average attendance for all pupils through the setting of individual attendance targets.

- Strengthen the impact of leaders and managers throughout the school by ensuring that:
 - monitoring systems are comprehensive, regular and result in whole-school initiatives to move the school forward uniformly
 - leaders and managers have responsibility and accountability for overseeing specific aspects of the school's work, and their impact is evaluated regularly by the headteacher.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

A high proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, and a very large majority believe that their children make good progress. The work seen in lessons and pupils' books shows that progress in lessons is typically satisfactory, as is their achievement over time.

Children join the school with levels of knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age, and make satisfactory progress in Reception. Constant revisiting of the sounds that letters make helps children to develop a secure understanding of how to enunciate groups of letters, and they accurately pronounce a growing number of words. They are developing a range of satisfactory personal skills, such as sharing, listening to each other and organising their learning. Almost all can count down from at least ten to one.

In Year 1, some pupils have emerging writing skills, and others can construct simple sentences. They showed delight in their creation of accurate rhyming sentences. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils reach average levels in reading. In Key Stage 1 and 2,

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they continue to make satisfactory progress because teaching is mostly satisfactory. In a Year 4 lesson observed, pupils made good progress in finding the area of rectilinear shapes drawn on a square grid because the work set provided a good level of challenge to pupils of all abilities. Attainment levels vary from year to year in the small year groups, but overall they are average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved from last year and is now satisfactory, because of a greater focus on mental mathematics and problem-solving.

Different groups of pupils make very similar progress, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve satisfactorily in number skills and in constructing sentences. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make steady progress. The school is aware of potential language barriers and it is working to address them.

Quality of teaching

Inspection evidence, including the school's own judgements, shows that teaching is satisfactory in most lessons, despite the more positive views of parents and carers. In Reception, the teaching of letters and sounds is systematic and very regular. Pupils increasingly use their understanding of the sounds made by groups of letters to enunciate words accurately as they move through the school. Opportunities are sometimes missed to transfer these skills into other lessons. Teachers know their subjects and make the purpose of lessons clear. All lessons have introductory activities that reinforce basic number operation skills or literacy skills. They get learning off to a quick start. Planning, however, is variable in how closely it caters for pupils' needs because data about pupils' levels are not incorporated into planning consistently carefully. Teachers sometimes get the balance of teaching and opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learnt absolutely right. At other times, too much whole-class teaching that does not cater for all abilities can lead to inattention and restlessness.

Some pupils know their targets and older pupils know the levels at which they are working, but not always the sub-levels. Marking, particularly in literacy, provides pupils regularly with the necessary information to move onto the next level. Questioning is sometimes used well as a catalyst for further improvement, as seen in a science lesson that combined problem-solving with fair testing. This also demonstrated pupils rising to the challenge and taking responsibility for their learning. This does not happen often enough. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit regularly from clear, focused questioning. There are marked variations in teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.

Pupils enjoy the visual stimulus provided by whiteboards. Teachers very rarely use them as an interactive resource to help secure pupils' understanding of, for example, counting in one thirds. Some lessons promote pupils' moral learning effectively, such as their views about current events and the right course of action to take.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Many pupils behave consistently well, both in lessons and around the school, but behaviour is satisfactory overall from Reception onwards. When lessons do not engage pupils, some become restless and lose interest. Several pupils and parents and carers raised concerns about the bad language of a very few pupils around the school. A large majority of parents and carers believe that behaviour is good, and it is when expectations of behaviour are high, and the behaviour policy is implemented consistently.

The very large majority of pupils feel safe in school. They have confidence in the staff to help them with any concerns. As pupils move through the school, lessons give them a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of potential dangers and how to manage them. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers say that their children are safe and that bullying is dealt with effectively. During the inspection, pupils showed a satisfactory knowledge of different types of bullying, ranging from unkind words to that based on prejudices. Pupils spoke confidently of internet safety and how the school protects them. While they have opportunities to develop wider skills, such as through being pupil councillors, they would appreciate more responsibilities.

Pupils' attendance is average. Although the school has used initiatives such as 'J.B. Bear' to raise attendance, pupils do not have individual targets to give them personal ownership of their attendance rates.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. He has improved the systems for collecting and assessing data, and used the findings to place a sharper emphasis on individual pupils' progress. The staff support his direction for the school, and focused middle leaders are increasingly concentrating on raising achievement. As a result, progress in mathematics for example, which has been variable throughout Key Stage 2, is improving. Systems for monitoring every aspect of the school's work and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountability are not fully established to ensure maximum impact. Middle leaders, although making important improvements, do not have overall responsibility for the quality of teaching in their areas. Their actions are not having an impact as quickly as they could, because they are not always carried out as whole-school priorities. The new 'Achievement for All' initiative is enabling parents and carers to be more closely informed of their children's progress. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school, which demonstrates its satisfactory equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination. Individual pupils with special educational needs, while making satisfactory progress in lessons, make more variable progress over time. The school is investigating this as a priority.

Staff's performance management targets and training and development opportunities

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link appropriately to the school's priorities. The school's partnerships with the Tuxford Family of Schools enable regular interaction with other schools. Joint training is resulting in staff sharing good practice and building up the necessary skills in teaching strategies.

The curriculum focuses appropriately on literacy and numeracy. Themes promote a greater depth and breadth to learning, with links to other subjects developing. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a stronger aspect that promotes good skills and competences. There is appropriate coverage of the curriculum in the mixed-year classes and a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. After-school activities are popular but largely confined to sport. Assemblies, religious education and personal, social and health education lessons promote pupils' moral, social and cultural understanding satisfactorily. Spiritual development is a stronger aspect because it is increasingly integral to the school's work. The diversity within each year group enables pupils to learn about different cultures, and one parent/carer judged this as a particularly positive aspect of the school.

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, and the caring environment helps to keep pupils safe. This starts each day with the breakfast club. Parents and carers support the school and feel that day-to-day communication is helpful. The governing body challenges the school's performance strenuously. It is well placed to do this because governors find out a lot about the school from their involvement in pupils' learning and their contact with parents. They are monitoring the impact of improvements closely. This, together with much improved data systems and a sharper focus on pupils' progress, supports the school's capacity to move further forward.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



11 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gamston CofE (Aided) Primary School, Retford, DN22 0PE

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited you recently. It was very informative to watch you learning and playing, and to hear your thoughts about your school. Many of you are a real credit to the school in your behaviour and kindness towards others.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. From Reception onwards, teaching that is mostly satisfactory helps you to make satisfactory progress and reach average attainment levels by the end of Year 6. You like school and you particularly like opportunities to learn for yourselves and to carry out problem-solving activities. Many of you behave well all of the time. However, some of you do not concentrate in lessons and do not behave sensibly round the school. Your attendance is average.

Your headteacher and the staff know that the school can be better. They are going to make the following improvements. They will make sure that:

- your work gives you exactly the right challenge to quicken your progress and to help you to reach higher levels
- teachers' questions help you to think more carefully about your learning and how to improve it
- all of the staff have high expectations of your behaviour
- you know and understand the behaviour policy and it is always used
- you are given targets to help you achieve above-average attendance
- monitoring of your learning, attendance and behaviour is detailed and regular, to make sure that you are doing as well as you can.

I hope that you will help the staff to make these improvements by working as hard as you can, by behaving well, attending every day that the school is open, unless you are ill, and by always acting on the advice that you are given.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock
Lead inspector

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