

The Horncastle St Lawrence School

Bowl Alley Lane, Horncastle, LN9 5EJ

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement in the lower-aged primary class and in Year 10 is not as good as it should be. Teaching in these classes does not always make enough use of the information about where pupils are in their learning to plan the next small steps they need to take.
- There are inconsistencies in the teaching of reading across the school.
- Recent improvements introduced by senior leaders to speed up pupils' progress in writing and numeracy across subjects have not yet had time to benefit pupils in all classes.
- The governing body has not yet had training so as to gain the confidence required to question the school sufficiently deeply about its performance.

The school has the following strengths

- In most classes, the achievement gap in reading, writing and mathematics has narrowed significantly over the last year. This is because of actions taken by the new senior leadership team.
- The proportion of good teaching is improving and this is enabling pupils to make increasingly good progress in most classes.
- Pupils enjoy school. They particularly like the project work introduced recently. Pupils behave well and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Recent changes to the curriculum are beginning to speed up pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders and the governing body understand what the school needs to do to improve. Since the arrival of the executive headteacher just over a year ago, developments and improvements have been put in place. Assessment is much better than it was and teachers have become more skilled in teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by 12 different teachers. All of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also heard pupils from different classes read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the departure of the pupils at the end of the school day as they were escorted to their waiting taxis and buses for their journey home.
- The inspectors looked at a sample of statements, individual pupil learning plans, assessment information, the school’s plans for improvement, the school’s monitoring information, a range of policies including safeguarding policies, and governing body documentation. The lead inspector examined 27 staff questionnaires.
- There were 11 responses to Parent View at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with letters sent in to the school marked for the attention of the inspection team.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is designated as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Since the previous inspection, there has been an increase in the number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and associated complex challenging behaviours, and with speech and language difficulties. A few pupils have multi-sensory impairment and a very few have physical difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- In October of this year, a new upper aged primary class was created to meet the need within Lincolnshire for more places for primary-aged pupils with disabilities and special educational needs.
- An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those from families where the home language is not English is below the national average.
- In September 2011, this school became part of a loose federation with another special school in Lincolnshire. The two governing bodies began to work together and the headteacher of the other school became acting executive headteacher of both schools. A head of site was appointed to this school.
- In September 2012 this federation became more formalised. There is a newly constituted governing body serving both schools. The position of the executive headteacher is substantive and there has been a staffing re-structure, with three new phase leaders appointed since this term. There is also an acting leader to drive developments for pupils with autism.
- Staff turnover over the past sixteen months has been significant and a number of teachers are new to the school.
- There is boarding provision for up to 20 pupils. This is due to close in April 2013 as a part of the re-organization of special schools across Lincolnshire. It was inspected separately earlier this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Speed up the rate of pupils' progress and raise attainment, particularly in the lower primary years and in Year 10, by:
 - consistently setting reading targets based on where pupils are currently in their reading to accelerate their progress
 - making better use of symbols to enable pupils to use computers with increased confidence to improve their writing
 - taking every opportunity in all lessons to develop pupils' skills in writing and solving mathematical problems.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the lower primary years and in Year 10 so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - making effective use of information about pupils' prior learning to plan new and challenging work that is set at the right level for them so that they reach their full potential in every lesson
 - using questions consistently to take pupils forward in their learning and deepen their understanding
 - checking pupils' understanding of what they learn in each lesson and giving them feedback

before moving them on to new work.

■ Strengthen governance by:

- ensuring that governors receive appropriate training to develop their skills and gain confidence so as to challenge the senior leadership team more effectively
- carrying out a skills audit to find out how their expertise can best be used to support the school
- becoming more involved with the senior leadership team in drawing up plans to address the small amount of less than good teaching within the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although the achievement gap is narrowing throughout the school as a whole, achievement is not yet good because of inconsistencies in the rate of progress made in different year groups. Not enough pupils make more than the expected progress in reading and writing from their starting points in the lower primary aged-class or in Year 10. In Years 8 and 11, their progress in reading and writing is rapid and standards are rising.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is better than in reading and writing in most classes, but it still lags behind in a few classes. Overall, progress in mathematics is not yet in line with that of schools catering for pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- Better use of assessment data, which is now accurate, and much improved teaching results in a higher proportion of pupils making good progress.
- Year 11 pupils make consistently good progress and achieve a good range of qualifications that enable them to enter colleges when they leave school in order to further their studies. These pupils are equipped with important life skills, such as how to travel independently and safely. They also develop very good work-related skills in various aspects of horticulture, horse stable management and construction work.
- Over the last year, pupils have made rapid gains in their development of communication skills using symbols, pictures and signs. This is of enormous benefit to pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. As they have begun to communicate independent choices, they have become less frustrated and so their behaviour has improved significantly.
- This year's focus on removing obstacles pupils have to learning associated with their complex needs is improving the quality of pupils' learning and their pace of progress. This includes careful positioning away from objects in the classroom that are likely to distract them; use of picture schedules to help them establish good work routines; and an emphasis on re-directing pupils who lose concentration have led to improvements in their learning.
- The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those learning English as an additional language, receive high quality individual support in their home language. As a result, they make good progress in speaking English.
- Pupil premium funding is used to purchase resources aimed at improving these pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. While most benefit from the use of these resources, this is not consistent across classes due to variations in the quality of teaching.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. This is because not all lesson planning takes sufficient account of pupils' different abilities and needs. In a few lessons, teaching does not make sufficient demands on pupils to enable them to reach their full learning potential.
- At times, there is insufficient use of questioning and other means to check on pupils' understanding and re-align the method of teaching quickly enough to ensure that pupils make the progress required. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson a few pupils failed to grasp

fraction work but they were moved on to other work before they were ready, and so became lost with what they were doing.

- Pupils are mostly set reading targets based on their current performance and these very successfully help them to improve their reading skills. But not all do so because the school's approach to teaching reading is inconsistent.
- A newly implemented project-based approach to teaching and learning mostly develops pupils' writing and numeracy skills well across subjects. However, the use of symbol-based computer programs to support pupils in improving their writing through their project work is not consistent.
- Much of the teaching is now good; it has improved significantly over the past year due to the support teachers receive from senior leaders. The majority of teachers use what they know about pupils' prior learning to plan suitable activities to move them on quickly.
- Overall, questions are used effectively to deepen pupils understanding in their learning. As a result, an increasing number of pupils are producing high quality work. For example, in a good Year 11 English lesson pupils produced well-written headlines for a newspaper article; the highest achieving pupils used alliteration effectively. In a project-based learning lesson, pupils produced powerful posters using the computer to persuade the intended readers to purchase high quality products they had made in design and technology.
- Teaching is becoming increasingly relevant and develops pupils' life and work-related skills very well by Year 11. However, very small pockets of teaching within the school remain dull; fail to inspire pupils to learn; have far too little relevance; and do not enable pupils to make the progress required.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most pupils have challenging behaviours associated with their struggle to communicate their needs linked to their speech difficulties. Overall, staff are skilled at enabling them to overcome their communication difficulties and, as they do, so pupils' frustration dissipates and their behaviour improves. Attendance is broadly average and improving.
- Seen in the context of pupils' complex needs, their behaviour is good. Most staff use verbal prompts, which very successfully bring pupils quickly back to their work. Almost all pupils engage enthusiastically with learning and greatly enjoy working together in teams. Only on the rare occasions when verbal prompts are not used or, in the case of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, insufficient reference is made to their picture schedules does pupils' concentration drift.
- Around the school pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Older pupils take delight in helping younger pupils. Year 11 pupils visit a local primary school to help younger pupils with sports. They take responsibility, with maturity, in helping look after the farm animals on the school site. Playtimes are enjoyable experiences; pupils say, 'We love playing football on the field'.
- Pupils feel safe. They can talk about their worries with a trusted adult. Overwhelmingly, parents and carers say that their children are safe at school. Pupils say that there are no fights at school and that bullying is exceptionally rare. Isolated racist incidents occur due mainly to pupils' speech difficulties. These instances are tackled very swiftly and positive outcomes result.

- Within their capability, pupils have a good knowledge of different types of bullying. They are particularly aware of cyber bullying. They know that smoking can cause lung disease and that drinking too much alcohol can damage the liver. They understand why they must wear a helmet and put on a protective jacket when they go horse riding. They know about the dangers associated with social network sites when using computers at home. Older pupils, undergoing specific independent travel training, are acutely aware of potential stranger danger.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The executive headteacher's relentless drive to improve teaching is having a positive impact on narrowing the achievement gap. Key to this has been putting in place an accurate assessment system and a rigorous programme of monitoring pupils' progress. However, some teaching still requires improvement and this has an adverse effect on pupils' progress in two classes.
 - Decisive action has improved behaviour, increased attendance and significantly improved teaching. The quality of teaching is checked rigorously and action plans are in place to provide the support and challenge required to improve teachers' performance. There is a clearly defined appraisal policy and movement up the pay scale is linked to successfully meeting targets.
 - Self-evaluation is accurate and improvement plans focus on raising pupils' achievement. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leaders are clear. The newly appointed phase leaders are energetic, full of creative ideas and have shaped improvement plans, but it is too early to measure the impact of their work. The local authority has been effective in supporting the school, particularly in putting in place an accurate assessment system.
 - Recently introduced project work has increased pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Through a well-planned assembly programme and use of the outdoor environment to support the curriculum, pupils have many opportunities to reflect. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, including their awareness of cultural diversity through links with schools in China and France.
 - Leaders work hard to ensure that different groups of pupils are given equal opportunity to succeed and rigorously tackle any discrimination, particularly in respect of disability and race. However, the opportunity to succeed at the same fast pace is not yet consistent across all of the classes. Much successful work has been carried out with parents and carers in managing their children's behaviour, sleep patterns and in helping them to improve their communication skills. A few parents and carers express concern about the wide range of needs in each class. This is undergoing a review by the senior leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance requires improvement. As a new governing body, it has not yet looked carefully enough at the skills held by its members in order to be as effective as it can be in supporting and challenging the school. It has not yet received training to become confident in providing sufficient challenge. However, it already has a firm grasp on the strengths and areas in need of development, but it is not yet sufficiently involved in shaping the plans to bring about the required improvements. The governing body is knowledgeable about teachers' performance and ensures that the headteacher's performance is robustly reviewed. The governing body ensures that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Important financial decisions, including how the premium funding is spent, are based on careful consideration of what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120757
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	405960

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Number of boarders on roll	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Rhodes
Headteacher	Lea Mason
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2010
Telephone number	01507 522563
Fax number	01507 522974
Email address	enquiries@st-lawrence-special.lincs.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

