

# Ambergate Sports College

Dysart Road, Grantham, NG31 7LP

**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- All pupils make exceptional progress both academically and socially.
- Teaching is always good and often outstanding. The executive headteacher and senior principal lead by example and are unflinching in their resolve to improve this even further.
- There is a very strong emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics which makes sure pupils are particularly well prepared for life after school.
- All adults work together extremely well. The sense of common purpose permeates through the school and is shared by staff and pupils.
- Excellent relationships mean pupils are eager to learn. They feel very safe in this enabling, supportive school, of which they are rightly proud.
- Staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond by behaving impeccably in lessons. They are polite and considerate of others around the school.
- Managers' meticulous checks on pupils' progress help them achieve their very best and is at the heart of everything the school plans.
- Leaders and managers work incredibly hard to make sure parents are fully informed about their child's progress. Consequently parents are particularly supportive, especially parents of pupils with autism spectrum disorders. The school has an excellent reputation for top-quality care and education for these pupils.
- Governors have a wide range of skills and expertise that they use well to support the school and challenge it to do even better.
- Membership of Grantham Additional Needs Federation has been used very well to give pupils many more opportunities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior leaders. The team listened to pupils read, looked at their work and joined them at break and lunch times.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, outreach worker and a member of the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke to one parent by telephone and to a member of staff from a school where Ambergate provides outreach support.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors looked at documents showing how senior leaders check the effectiveness of the school's work and ensure pupils are progressing well. In addition, they examined records about behaviour, attendance and safeguarding and how this is reported to governors. They also looked at how senior leaders check staff performance.

## Inspection team

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joan McPhail

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ambergate Sports College is part of the Grantham Additional Needs Federation along with The Grantham Sandon School. There is an executive headteacher in overall charge and a senior principal for each site. There is a principal with responsibility for pastoral care across the federation and a number of staff work in both schools.
- The school is a specialist sports college, although a significant amount of the funding received for this is now directed towards the outreach support to pupils in mainstream schools who have autism spectrum disorders.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have autism spectrum disorders or moderate learning difficulties. Some have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and a few have severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have a combination of these.
- A higher than average number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority).
- Most pupils are from a White British background and speak English as their first language.
- A few students attend part-time courses at Grantham College and others join in lessons at the Sandon site. A small number are members of the Combined Cadet Force at King's Grammar School, Grantham.
- The school opened an Early Years Foundation Stage class for four-year-olds in September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
  - enabling senior leaders to continue to model best practice and provide opportunities for teachers to share outstanding practice in a practical way
  - maintaining the rigorous methods by which the school checks that teachers are doing as well as they can to meet individual pupils' needs.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- All groups of pupils, in each age group including junior-age pupils, and those with moderate or severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorders, or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, make equally exceptional progress. This is because senior leaders ensure all staff are highly skilled in teaching these pupils. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have made a super start to their learning.
- Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties respond extremely well to attending a specialist sports college which inspires them to do their very best through offering all pupils a wide range of exciting sports activities, including climbing and canoeing. This develops high levels of confidence and enthusiasm which pupils bring to all their learning.
- Pupils follow highly relevant, well-thought-out programmes and gain a range of worthwhile qualifications that prepares them extremely well for their future lives.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons very much. They told inspectors staff 'make teaching like a game so it's fun' and 'the teachers are brilliant'.
- The high number of pupils who benefit from pupil premium funding also achieve particularly well. This is because the school uses the extra funds to help them improve their reading. Because they make rapid gains in literacy, they are able to do much better in all their lessons. By the time they leave, they have narrowed the gap in performance and are achieving as well as their classmates. Reading is a particular strength of the school and has a high priority.
- Pupils achieve equally well in mathematics and understand how important it is. 'Maths helps us learn about taxes. It helps us with the future and to get jobs'.
- Pupils know how much progress they are making and what they need to do next because teachers' marking, written and verbal, is helpful. Pupils are regularly reminded about their targets so they understand what is expected of them.
- Pupils achieve consistently well across all subjects at all key stages, including at other venues. This is because subject specialisms have been developed across the federation, enabling teachers to be very knowledgeable about just one subject and concentrate on ensuring it is taught well.
- From the age of 14 pupils for whom this is appropriate benefit from opportunities to attend lessons at the Sandon site and Grantham College, where they gain a range of qualifications in both practical and academic subjects including GCSEs.
- Work experience opportunities for older pupils are very well organised and include placements at local businesses. These have led to employment in some cases, including working as teaching assistants within the school under the apprenticeship scheme.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good with much that was outstanding across the whole age range. Senior leader's records show that outstanding teaching has

increased since the last inspection and continues to do so. This is because leaders have worked so hard to find different ways of helping teachers improve.

- The school is meticulous in checking how well pupils do in every subject, whatever their needs or disabilities. This means teachers know immediately if a pupil isn't making progress and can quickly put things right. Also, if pupils find work too easy, teachers can make it harder so they are able to achieve their potential.
- All adults work very well together in lessons. Teaching assistants play a strong role in recording pupils' progress to help teachers' plan next steps, and, in helping pupils learn. Teachers direct support staff well, who also use their initiative to give just the right amount of support to pupils.
- In the very best lessons teachers are particularly skilled at making sure pupils work at exactly the right level, while giving them equal opportunity to work as independently as possible. Good relations are fostered. In one Key Stage 3 English lesson, the teacher used adapted reading materials, which helped pupils make outstanding progress. Meanwhile the teaching assistant used the interactive white board very skilfully to enable others at an early stage of reading to begin making connections between letters and sounds.
- Teachers use questioning very well to check how much pupils have learnt and use this information to change their plans to make sure every pupil is achieving very well at all times.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils who find their work is at just the right level to be successful and so boosts their confidence.
- Moral values and social skills are interwoven skilfully into lessons so that pupils learn to work together co-operatively, respect one another and to listen to others.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils love their school and are proud of it. They say 'it's an amazing school' and that they have 'so many friends'. Year 11 pupils said how sorry they will be to leave.
  - Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and their behaviour in lessons, whether at school or college, is impeccable. Around the school they are bubbly, but well behaved, polite and respectful. Despite not being able to go outside for two days because of bad weather, no poor behaviour was observed at break or lunch times during the inspection.
  - Behaviour management is first class. Teachers use the right mix of sanctions and rewards to motivate pupils. They relish the opportunity to spend the 'power points' their good behaviour earns them' or to win a 'Golden Bus Ticket'. Excellent relationships mean they are eager to please. In one lesson the whole class fell silent at the prospect of a pupil having his name put on the board for not paying attention.
  - Where pupils do have problems with their behaviour, staff agree high-quality behaviour plans with parents. These are consistently implemented and regularly reviewed to check their effectiveness. Meetings are held at least daily to make sure all adults are working together and procedures for safeguarding are very thorough. There is just the right balance so that staff keep pupils safe, while allowing them to be independent.
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- There is a clear focus on looking after all pupils' personal and social development. The deployment of a senior leader responsible for this across the federation ensures a highly co-ordinated approach to pastoral care.
- Lessons in information communication technology and personal, social and health education help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say there is no bullying in school and older pupils know about the different kinds of bullying they might encounter including cyber bullying and homophobia.
- Attendance is high and the school acts quickly if pupils' absence increases. It uses a range of imaginative strategies to encourage attendance, such as the weekly raffle.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Senior leaders and governors use the federation very effectively to improve teaching and learning and there is a shared commitment to excellence.
- This sense of common responsibility permeates throughout, so that all staff are part of the process of school improvement. This makes the school a happy, cohesive community where everyone unselfishly celebrates each other's successes.
- The executive headteacher and senior principal are uncompromising in their drive to improve teaching and learning. Nothing is allowed to hinder pupils' progress. They use pupil premium funding particularly effectively to make the best use of those pupils' time in school and help them achieve as well as their peers.
- The way in which senior leaders review their work is rigorous and they use this information to decide accurately what needs to be done next. This means the school is on a perpetual journey to make it the best it can be.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to meet individual needs. It concentrates on the academic skills pupils will need in later life such as reading, writing and mathematics as well as helping them develop a range of personal and social skills. This is supplemented by additional therapies when needed.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school and breadth of experience is greatly enhanced by the extensive enrichment activities provided as part of the school's specialist sports college status. As well as lunchtime and after school clubs, pupils take part in out of school activities, such as farm visits, nature trails and outdoor cooking as well as residential trips in this country and abroad.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is exceptional. They richly celebrate successes, both in assembly and throughout the school day. There is a strong focus on the importance of working together and learning to appreciate the needs of others. Discrimination is not tolerated. Diversity Days exploring other religions and cultures ensure they know they are part of a multicultural society.
- The school is highly regarded in the authority for its success in supporting pupils with autism spectrum disorders, both within the school and by sharing its expertise with colleagues in other local schools. Feedback from parents and teachers suggests that this very well targeted support has had a considerable impact on increasing the opportunities open to these pupils in

mainstream education.

- Support from the local authority is strong. Senior leaders work closely with local authority personnel to improve provision. In September this year they opened an Early Years Foundation Stage class. It is too early yet to know how effective this will be, but plans to develop this are in place and there is a clear vision of how to take it forward.
- The local authority adviser has worked alongside the senior management team at its request, to support its focussed work on improving teaching and learning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The wide range of knowledge and expertise within the governing body has made a strong contribution to the outstanding quality of education provided by the school. Because of senior leaders' strenuous and concerted efforts to include governors in the daily life the school, for example through the 'adopt a governor scheme', and their understanding of pupils 'progress data provided by leaders, they have a thorough knowledge of how well the school is doing compared with similar schools, as well as teacher's performance in relation to their pay. They keep a close check on the school's finances and carry out their statutory responsibilities assiduously.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	120746
<b>Local authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401962

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	125
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Boucher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Bell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 March 2010
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