

Sincil School Sports College

South Park, Lincoln, LN5 8EL

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors work very well together to do the best they can for every pupil so that teaching is improving and standards are rising.
- Effective systems are in place to make sure the school runs smoothly. One governor said, 'It's like a well-oiled machine'.
- Teaching is good. School leaders know this because they visit lessons regularly.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent so that pupils are keen to work hard.
- Staff know all the pupils very well and are quick to spot if they fall behind so they can help them catch up.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and there is always someone to talk to. Specialist help has a big impact on helping them overcome their problems with behaviour.
- The wide range of support available means each pupil receives exactly the right sort for them, so almost everyone makes the progress they should.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the extra opportunities of attending a sports college.
- Parents think the school is 'fantastic'. One said it fits her son 'like a glove'.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to read widely and often across all subjects.
- Pupils do not work in groups often enough.
- Marking does not always tell pupils how well they have done and what to do next.
- Sometimes staff give pupils a little too much help, which stops them learning to do things on their own.
- Governors are inconsistent in the way they share their findings from school visits.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, all but one of which was seen together with senior staff. They visited tutorials, breaks and lunchtimes and looked at pupils' work to see how it was marked.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, faculty leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor and a member of the governor's finance committee. An inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to give any information, but an inspector met with one parent and spoke by telephone to three others. Inspectors also looked at the school's own questionnaires for parents and pupils.
- Inspectors examined school policies, governing body minutes and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance, and records about staff performance.

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kathleen Yates

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sincil Sports College is a special school for pupils with statements of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some also have autism-spectrum disorders, dyslexia or attention-deficit disorders.
- The school offers an extensive range of after-hours outdoor and sports activities through its specialism as a sports college. It also funds two outreach workers to support local schools in disability sports activities.
- Most pupils are boys and join the school at Year 7, with a few joining later on as a result of difficulties at other schools.
- Sometimes pupils attend 'Build a Future' in Horncastle for part of the week.
- All current pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. They travel to school from Lincoln and the other villages and towns across a wide area of Lincolnshire.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funds for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or with a parent in the armed forces).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - using support staff more effectively to allow groups of pupils with similar abilities to work together and share ideas
 - bringing together the best ways for marking pupils' books so that pupils always know exactly how well they have done and what they need to do next
 - allowing pupils the opportunity to do more things for themselves in lessons
 - providing access to a wider range of reading materials across all subjects.
- Further improve the effectiveness of the governing body, in evaluating and supporting the work of the school, by adopting a more consistent approach to organising and feeding back to other governors about school visits.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and sometimes disrupted education, most pupils join the school working well-below national expectations for their age. Carefully planned opportunities and a shared commitment from all staff to do the very best for every pupil, means they make rapid gains on joining the school. Compared to similar pupils nationally they make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points.
- The majority of pupils do much better than expected by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 3 with some making outstanding progress. Pupils continue to do well in Key Stage 4, with all making the progress they should and most better. The school is aware of the impact low attendance has had on a few pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 in the past and acts quickly when this happens.
- Teachers keep a close eye on how well pupils are doing and school leaders have made changes to the way subjects are taught at Key Stage 4, to make sure lessons are particularly relevant to pupils of that age, keep them interested and prepare them even better for life after school. Useful work experience is provided as well as enterprise opportunities, such as producing and selling mouse mats and greetings cards at the local market.
- Because the school has carefully thought out ways of checking pupils' progress, they know that all pupils, and groups of pupils, do equally well. This includes the small number of girls. They know the way they check this is accurate because they share information with other schools so they can make comparisons.
- The schools' rigorous checks meant that senior leaders were quick to notice that a few pupils with autism spectrum disorder were not doing quite as well as some of their classmates. They used this information to rapidly improve the way these pupils were taught, so that now they can achieve as well as their peers.
- The school uses a range of additional tools apart from the usual teaching methods to help pupils overcome their particular difficulties. Skilled counsellors help pupils who have problems keeping their anger in check and provide different kinds of therapies to support them. The school has also become a leading light in delivering an exercise-based national programme, to help pupils overcome problems associated with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and dyslexia.
- A large number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and receive additional support through the pupil premium. The school has introduced a number of initiatives to enable these pupils to boost their self-esteem and confidence so that they do as well as everyone else. This includes out-of-school activities like participation in the Young Fire Fighters programme and extra support in class for reading, writing and number work.
- Pupils do well in all subjects, especially mathematics, and have the opportunity to apply their skills in different settings. For example, when the whole school went on a residential holiday pupils used their mathematical skills to work out how long it would take to travel along a zip wire. Likewise in English they kept journals and through the school's sports links have used their reading and writing skills to be 'reporters' at an athletics event.
- Although pupils also do well in English, and have some opportunities to read in lessons, they do not spend enough time doing this and do not have access to a wider range of books and other

reading materials, both for pleasure and research.

- The school is ambitious for its pupils and all leave with at least one qualification. An increasing number of pupils now take GCSEs in a range of subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- School leaders visit lessons regularly, to make sure teaching is as good as it should be and use this to make any improvements. The quality of teaching observed by inspectors mirrored the view held by the school.
 - The very warm relationships between staff and pupils mean pupils are keen to join in activities and are eager to do their best. Occasionally, because staff want pupils to do well, they sometimes give a little too much help, rather than allow them to do things for themselves and learn from their mistakes.
 - Teachers of particular subjects know their subjects very well. This is especially so in mathematics where pupils were encouraged to 'talk their strategy through' so the teacher could be sure they thoroughly understand what had been taught. On a few occasions teachers are so keen to fit as many exciting opportunities into lessons as they can, that they do not always give pupils enough time to think their answers through.
 - Class teams work really well together and support staff give very skilled and sensitive help to individual pupils. In the best teaching they were also given responsibility for groups of pupils, so they could encourage them to hold discussions and share ideas.
 - Pupils enjoy their lessons, especially when given the opportunity to take part in practical activities, such as helping to build a model of the National Grid or exploring different types of rocks in science. Whenever possible, outside visitors are invited in to add a new dimension to pupils' learning such as a local artist or theatre company.
 - Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils and do not just take the first answer they are given. They mostly use questioning effectively to check how much pupils have understood and push them a little further. Teachers make sure pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, as seen in a GCSE Art lesson, where the teacher made it clear what pupils needed to do to achieve the next grade.
 - Marking in books is good in most subjects and lets pupils know what they need to do next. However, this is not always consistent across all subjects and in all lessons.
 - Often, subject teachers include mathematical thinking in their lessons, such as weighing out the right amount of pasta in food technology and pupils practising their reading skills by following recipes. Sometimes, though, a few opportunities for pupils to read for themselves are missed.
 - The pupil premium has been used very well to help pupils who struggle with their reading and writing to participate more in lessons, either by giving them extra support to improve their reading or by additional help from support staff to complete written work.
 - The school has an excellent way of making sure pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are met, by recording examples electronically so that staff can check that they are taking this
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into account when planning lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils mostly behave well in lessons, especially in the classes for older pupils where it can be exemplary. Staff provide excellent role models for pupils. The respect and courtesy they show them is reflected in the way pupils significantly improve their social skills during their time at Sincil.
 - Through its work as a sports college, pupils are able to take part in schemes such as Young Leaders or Junior Sports Leaders, working with pupils in mainstream and other special schools in disability sport activities.
 - Very occasionally, in some classes for the youngest pupils, behaviour starts to bubble over, but not so much that it holds up the lesson. As pupils progress through the school they learn how to control their behaviour. This is because of the very good systems the school has in place and the way staff work together.
 - Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through lessons in personal, social and health education, citizenship and assemblies. E-safety is given a high priority and enables pupils of all ages to become safe and responsible users of the internet. The vast array of outdoor educational and sporting activities means they have ample opportunities to learn about the importance of health and safety. In lessons such as food technology they learn about how important good hygiene is and how to prepare healthy, low-cost meals.
 - Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use the school's points system well to reward pupils. They use just the right amount of praise to encourage them and when appropriate use sanctions to make sure pupils know they need to improve their behaviour.
 - Pupils also behave well around the school, at break and lunchtimes. This can be seen in the way, despite the occasional hiccup, they show respect for each other, towards staff and take care of their surroundings. They are polite and welcoming to visitors.
 - The school works hard to make sure there is no discrimination. The different strategies and therapies used makes sure everyone has an equal chance to overcome their difficulties. Staff work effectively with other agencies such as health and social care to provide a complete service to the young people and their families.
 - Incidents of racism are rare. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and say there is some bullying in school. However, they say they feel safe and are confident that if they go to a member of staff they will be able to help.
 - The school has very thorough procedures to address absenteeism. This is because senior leaders know how important it is for pupils to attend school if they are to do well. Although pupils' attendance rises significantly on joining the school, it is still low compared to national averages for mainstream secondary schools. This is because despite the school working extremely hard to encourage pupils to attend, there are still a very small number of pupils who are persistently absent.
 - The school occasionally uses fixed-term exclusions as a last resort when pupils' behaviour is
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unacceptable. The school's analysis shows that this is effective in giving the message that inappropriate or anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other school leaders have worked hard to make Sincil College a good school. They knew what had to be done and put detailed plans in place to make the required improvements. For example, keeping a very careful check on pupils' progress to make sure everyone has the same opportunities and regularly checking teaching to identify where improvements have been necessary.
 - The headteacher has worked closely with the local authority and this has played a part in the schools' success. The secondment of the permanent deputy headteacher to another school in the authority is testament to the high regard in which the school is held.
 - Parents are very positive about the difference the school has made to their children and also the support they themselves have received.
 - Senior leaders think carefully about what pupils need to learn at different stages of their school career, so that their education prepares them well for when they leave school. This is reviewed regularly so that any gaps can be filled, for example the need for more work-related learning at Key Stage 4. The wealth of lunchtime and after-school clubs plus the many opportunities for sports and outdoor education further enrich pupils' experiences.
 - Inspirational speakers such as 'the memory man' add a spiritual dimension to pupils' learning and they are able to find out about other cultures through links with schools in Ghana and Ethiopia. Pupils are encouraged to think about moral issues through lessons in personal social and health education, as well as themed assemblies. A strong social code permeates through everything the school does so that pupils learn what is and is not acceptable behaviour.
 - The pupil premium is used effectively to make a real difference to pupils' lives. The extra help they have with their reading and writing means they can make much better use of their time at school than previously. This is because they are able to participate more in their lessons.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has significantly improved over the last 3 years. It has recruited governors with a wide range of skills to support the school to improve. Governors with a background in education have joined school leaders in classroom visits, so that they have first-hand knowledge about the quality of teaching and the process involved in addressing underperformance. They understand the importance of setting targets for teachers to help pupils achieve more and the link between how well they are doing and their pay.
 - Governors' increased profile in school means they know the school much better. It means they are able to ask the right sort of questions about how the school is helping pupils do their best. They can see how effective the pupil premium has been through their visits to look at pupils' behaviour. Their understanding of the school's finances has helped them support the headteacher manage the planned budget cuts by the local authority and make sure it has not affected the quality of education the school provides. Safeguarding requirements are met.
 - Although governor visits are well focused and regular, there is inconsistency in how well they report to other governors.
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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

Unique reference number	131277
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	402460

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Riley
Headteacher	Robert Parkin
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
Telephone number	01522 534559
Fax number	01522 536190
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