

The West Grantham Academy

Spitalgate

Trent Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 7XQ

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy has experienced a most remarkable turnaround in just 12 months. This transformation in teaching and outcomes for pupils has been achieved by outstanding leadership, which is embedded at all levels.
- The Acting Principal is an inspirational leader who gets the very best out of all the staff and pupils by modelling exactly what she expects.
- Pupils achieve well, often from low starting points. Children make rapid progress in all areas of learning, from the minute they start in the Nursery, and no one is left behind.
- Teaching is outstanding and marking is excellent. Teachers set work that is suitably difficult but also interesting, so that pupils are motivated and learn consistently well.
- Adults at Spitalgate 'go the extra mile' for the pupils and their families. They set high expectations and provide all the necessary encouragement, guidance and support.
- Pupils like coming to school. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are still too low. This is because, despite the academy's best efforts, there has not been time to make up for pupils' low starting points and their previously slow progress.
- The pupils have a good range of different experiences, including a variety of enrichment activities. However, these are not fully developed for the curriculum to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- This two-day inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- HMI observed lessons taught by each of the 15 class teachers. Most observations were undertaken jointly with the Acting Principal.
- The inspection included a scrutiny of a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress and attendance, and the impact of additional government funding. HMI also looked closely at the academy's reviews of teaching, its systems for managing teachers' performance and improving teaching and learning.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils, the Acting Principal, groups of teachers, the Chief Executive Officer of the West Grantham Academies Trust, and four other directors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) available during the inspection, but HMI took account of the academy's summary analysis of its parental surveys.

Inspection team

Paul Brooker, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- In September 2012, all the staff and pupils from West Grantham Academy Spitalgate were amalgamated with The West Gratham Academy Earl of Dysart, the partner primary academy in the Trust. Since then, younger pupils have been taught at the Spitalgate campus and Years 5 and 6 on the neighbouring Earl of Dysart Primary School site. This arrangement is the precursor of a more formal reorganisation that is due to take place in January 2014.
- The amalgamated academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British background and speak English as their first language. However, a small but significant number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Of these, most are new arrivals from the European Union.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding provided by the government to support particular groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is more than twice the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress at Key Stage 2.
- When the academy was last inspected in May 2012, it was found to require special measures. Her Majesty's Inspector undertook monitoring visits in November 2012 and in February 2013 to evaluate its progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement so that the academy meets the government floor standards in English and mathematics by:
 - relentlessly plugging the gaps in pupils' learning, particularly their skills in writing and reading
 - ensuring that all pupils attend well and that attendance exceeds the national average
 - developing the involvement of parents so they can more fully support their children's learning.
- Enrich the curriculum and increase the range and quality of learning opportunities for pupils by:
 - giving teachers free rein to introduce creative subject developments
 - glean ideas from primary schools that have an outstanding curriculum
 - seizing every opportunity to enrich the extra-curricular provision.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Results in the most recent national assessments in 2012 saw a sharp rise in standards, both at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Assessment information for current pupils shows that progress has greatly accelerated since September, and that attainment has continued to increase. However, although gaps are closing rapidly, standards in writing, reading and mathematics remain below average.
- Children start school with skills that are typically well below the levels expected for their age; often more than 18 months below the usual developmental level. However, in Reception, they make impressive progress in mathematics and literacy because formal teaching of these basic skills is planned exceptionally well. In addition, children also make excellent progress in developing language, and in their physical and social development, because they are immersed in activities throughout the day that consolidate these basic skills.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a dramatic and sustained improvement in standards in literacy and numeracy. This has been brought about by the systematic and highly structured approach to teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make), handwriting, reading, writing and mathematics. The insistence that all teachers deliver these sessions at the same time, using a similar approach, has helped the planning of sessions and enabled senior leaders to check that they are being done well.
- Despite impressive improvements, older pupils often have gaps in their learning. Teachers have to work hard to spot these and plug them, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils who can explain personification or onomatopoeia might still struggle to spell accurately or sound out unfamiliar words.
- The academy is forensic in the way that assessment information is collected and analysed so that no pupil is left behind. As a result of the much improved teaching and sharply focused interventions, such as the two-week summer school and holiday booster sessions, pupils most at risk of underachievement have closed the gap on their peers.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good, while pupils who speak English as an additional language have made even better gains. Achievement is also good for those pupils supported through the pupil premium. Whereas, in 2012, eligible pupils in Year 6 were the equivalent of almost two terms behind their classmates in English and mathematics, eligible pupils are currently on track to attain broadly similar levels to their classmates.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is never less than good, and is often outstanding, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers are aware that time is precious, so not a minute is wasted: lesson introductions are brisk and sharply focused, pupils are given carefully prepared independent tasks that stretch them, and additional adults target their support exceptionally well.
- Teachers have high expectations and make sure that work is suitably difficult for each ability group. In an English lesson, for example, Year 3 pupils enjoyed the challenge of decoding the *Jabberwocky*, by working out which nonsense words were nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, and what each one might mean. Pair and group activities cleverly encouraged pupils to work together to share and refine their ideas.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a key priority from the last inspection, has been

transformed. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes strikes just the right balance between formal instruction and structured play. Children quickly learn to make choices, but every activity has a specific purpose. Indoor and outdoor areas provide stimulating resources to entice the children into learning, and adults skilfully guide children with timely guidance and clever questioning.

- Assessment and marking are exemplary, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers give regular and detailed feedback so that pupils know how they have succeeded and how to improve. In return, the pupils respond to this advice by correcting their mistakes and putting the guidance into practice.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils respond to the academy's high expectations and they behave well. Their behaviour in lessons and assemblies is consistently good and often exemplary. Parents, staff and pupils agree that behaviour is good.
- Some of the youngest children struggle, initially, to comply with what adults expect, but they soon learn how to get on with one another. They are keen to do well and like being rewarded with their 'didi dots' and the postcards home.
- Older pupils develop greater self-reliance and good social skills. Their positive attitudes to learning are reflected in their good levels of concentration and their readiness to work collaboratively. Pupils say that they enjoy doing homework projects like making Viking longboats.
- Attendance has increased sharply this year. Most pupils attend well, and levels of persistent absenteeism have decreased significantly, but overall attendance figures are below the national average.
- Pupils know what constitutes bullying, including unkind name-calling. However, they know how to stay safe, for example when using the internet. Pupils say that bullying does happen, but they know what to do if they feel unhappy, and that teachers will always sort out any problems.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Acting Principal's endless energy and uncompromising standards are the reason for the academy's rapid transformation. Her success is rooted in the way that she models what she expects, and in the 'can do' approach that she instils. Staff work exceptionally hard to meet these expectations, and the quality of their classroom environments, lesson planning and marking are testament to this.
- Strong and effective leadership has been developed at all levels, including governance. Leaders and managers share the ambitious vision of the Chief Executive Officer and the determination to secure the best possible outcomes for each child. Every step is taken to secure the pupils' wellbeing and to ensure that every child has equal opportunity to thrive.
- The drive to strengthen teaching has been relentless, but not too onerous because teachers have been guided every step of the way. Teachers work effectively in teams to plan lessons, to support and coach one another and share best practice, and, more recently, to plan subject developments. The result is a buoyant staff who channel their energies into the never-ending pursuit of excellence.

- The curriculum is good, but does not yet have the range of memorable experiences that would make it outstanding. Even so, during the two days of the inspection, there were external workshops, a trip to the fire station and a tennis match. Importantly, teachers are taking responsibility for steering improvement in their allocated areas. They work together in teams, drawing on one another's ideas and also on good practice seen in other schools.
- Self-review is part of everyday life at the academy. Learning walks, where leaders pay short visits to a number of lessons, combined with more formal lesson observations, book checks and pupil progress meetings, check that there are no weaknesses and help to identify best practice. These involve governors and senior leaders. The performance of staff is carefully managed and is closely linked to pupil progress. With such a young staff, only about one third of teachers are on the upper pay scale.
- The academy promotes strongly the pupils' social and moral development, with lots of emphasis on showing respect and regard for others. Opportunities for spiritual reflection and cultural enrichment are also developing well. Pupils respond positively to these and enjoy the chance to experience music or artistic events, or sporting and other cultural activities. Winning a tennis tournament or a choir competition is an added bonus!
- Surveys of parental views show that they are overwhelmingly positive about the academy. Leaders work hard to engage support from home. This has been particularly successful in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with initiatives like 'Tots and Toys' and sessions on how parents can help with reading. However, some parents do not know how best to support their children's learning.
- The additional government funding provided through the pupil premium has been carefully allocated to improve the engagement and to raise achievement of targeted pupils. Spending covers a range of areas, including additional sessions to boost pupils' reading and subsidies for pre- and after-school clubs and trips. The academy checks carefully that this funding is used effectively, not only to raise standards and improve attendance, but also to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- The academy has taken full advantage of expertise from within the Trust, and has drawn on external support where necessary. This includes advice from other schools, external training for governors, and subject guidance in literacy and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, governance has been overhauled. The governing body is strong and effective. Governors are well informed, fully trained and well led. Governors make regular visits and are provided with timely, clear and concise information about the academy's performance and progress, so they are able to balance their support and challenge. The Academy Trust has made shrewd decisions about staffing and the reorganisation of primary provision, and has invested significant resources into improving the environment for learning.
 - Governors understand their specific responsibilities, such as safeguarding and financial efficiency. They ensure that arrangements for safeguarding and securing pupils' welfare meet all current regulatory requirements. Governors know how strong the teaching is, and oversee the performance management of staff. They have an impressive grasp of the way that the academy uses its resources, including pupil premium funding, to raise standards and close gaps in attainment.

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	136478
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	402931

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Fox
Headteacher	Trudy Brothwell (Chief Executive Officer) Zara Harrington (Acting Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2012
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