

Litcham School

Church Street, Litcham, King's Lynn, PE32 2NS

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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

- In the primary section, pupils' progress in mathematics is not consistently high enough and reading is not taught well to all age groups.
- Lower attaining students do not have a wide enough range of subjects to choose from at GCSE.
- Not all staff ask pupils challenging enough questions.
- Too many lessons have a slow pace, with activities that do not require pupils to think about their learning and discuss their ideas.
- Pupils do not always know what they need to do to make better progress.
- Many teachers do not regularly plan lessons that build on and extend what pupils of different attainment levels can do already.
- Information about pupils' progress is not used well enough by teachers and school managers to identify where further support is needed for pupils or for staff.
- There are still too many differences in approach and expectations between the primary and secondary age groups.
- Leadership of teaching requires improvement in the primary section, and some staff throughout the school have had too few opportunities for training.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress is improving. Achievement in mathematics in the secondary age range is already good.
- Many pupils receiving support through extra funding are making good progress.
- Pupils enjoy the good range of after-school clubs and activities, and the 'Impact Days'.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils of all ages say they enjoy being at the school, and that they feel safe and well cared for.
- School leaders have improved teaching. They have a clear grasp of the major development needs in the school and are planning well to meet them.
- The governing body provides a good level of external monitoring and challenge to school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, including joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons, observed school assemblies and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of subject departments, teachers, members of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority and the partner Local Leader in Education school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in the 29 questionnaires returned by school staff, together with the 61 responses submitted by parents to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Stephen Palmer | Additional Inspector |
| Brenda Watson | Additional Inspector |
| Bob Roberts | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Litcham School is a smaller than average-sized school, formed as a new all-through school in September 2012 from the local secondary and primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding is allocated by the government for groups of pupils, including those looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils receiving extra support through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6 and Year 11.
- The school offers work-related training for one day per week for a very small number of students at Easton College and at Norfolk Training Services.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote consistently good progress in all lessons by making sure that teachers:
 - provide activities that encourage pupils to think about their learning and discuss their ideas
 - plan interesting and challenging tasks that are well matched to pupils' previous learning
 - use questions that challenge pupils to explain their ideas
 - give pupils clear information on how well they are doing, what they are aiming for and how they will get there.
- Raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers of all subjects and age groups have clear and consistent expectations about literacy, handwriting and presentation
 - planning phonics teaching systematically and teaching phonics consistently well
 - providing longer term plans in mathematics and in the Reception class that ensure day-to-day work builds pupils' understanding
 - providing lower-ability pupils with an appropriate range and number of examination subjects.
- Improve the use of reliable information about pupils' standards to ensure that:
 - weaknesses in pupils' progress are identified early enough to take effective action
 - school managers hold staff to account for pupils' performance.
- Ensure more consistency in good leadership and in expectations between the primary and secondary age ranges, and provide teaching staff and leaders with good opportunities to improve their skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Progress is improving, but achievement still requires improvement in Reception, in reading in Key Stage 1, in mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2, and for lower ability pupils in Key Stage 4.
- The proportion of students achieving five good passes at GCSE in 2013, including English and mathematics, was in line with the 2012 national average. The progress made by these students since the school opened required improvement. They made good progress in mathematics, but progress in English, and overall, was slower. School assessments for current Year 11 students show that they have made better progress since their starting points in Year 10.
- The overall achievement of some lower-attaining students requires improvement in Key Stage 4 because they are not entered for a wide enough range of examination subjects.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- In Years 1 to 6, and the Reception Year, the low numbers of pupils in each year mean that overall attainment figures vary significantly from one year group to another. Progress requires improvement during the Reception Year, particularly in reading.
- Year 6 pupils in 2013 showed overall attainment close to the national averages in reading and writing, and below in mathematics. Higher-level pass rates were above average in English and below average in mathematics. Progress was good in English and required improvement in mathematics. Progress in mathematics still requires improvement in the primary year groups.
- Achievement in communication skills is improving. A very low percentage of the current Year 3 pupils achieved the national expectation in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in Year 1 in 2012. However, after extra support was provided for boys, in particular, almost all these pupils went on to achieve the expected standard in Year 2. Reading is developing well for older age groups. Pupils from Years 3 and 7 were heard to read fluently and make predictions from the text appropriate to their ages. Students in Years 7 to 11 make good use of the new library facilities and their independent reading opportunities in tutor period.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly similar to that of other pupils. The pupils who left school in 2013 made particularly good progress in mathematics, while their progress in English was slower. The school has drawn up a literacy action plan to support pupils with special educational needs in the future.
- The school uses pupil premium funding effectively; for example, to give one-to-one support and to provide after-school booster work. As a result, pupils supported by the pupil premium made good progress in the primary phase, so the small number of pupils identified achieved in line with the rest of the last Year 6 group. At GCSE, the gap in performance for these students is narrowing, and the 2013 results show students to be just less than one grade behind their classmates.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used to support small-group teaching in literacy, where lower attaining students were seen to make good progress. Booster groups help students to make increasingly good progress in mathematics.
- The achievement of students educated off-site for one day per week is monitored carefully by the school, with regular attendance and progress updates. Most of these students attend in line

with the overall school figures and make good progress in their off-site work.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement across the key stages. Where it requires improvement, the main issues are often the result of planning that does not fine-tune work to the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils are not always challenged enough, either through the tasks they are given, by probing questions, or by the opportunity to learn through discussion and explore their ideas. In addition, pupils are not always given enough information about what to aim for or how to improve.
- In Key Stage 4, teaching is strongest across a range of GCSE subjects where staff use their subject knowledge well to plan potentially challenging work. However, too often students are expected all to start work at the same level of task, or not encouraged to move on to higher level working quickly enough. In several lessons, the result was that some students' pace of working was too slow.
- In lessons in Years 7 to 9, progress was sometimes limited because the students were not clear what a good piece of work would look like so did not aim high enough. Sometimes students' attention waned when tasks were not interesting enough.
- In several subjects, new classes were given work with too little attention to what they had learnt previously, so that some found the work too easy. In the best cases, pupils had been given a topic overview so that they could see how their learning would develop across the term.
- Plans for some lessons in Years 1 to 6 did not show a clear progression of work in order to make sure pupils built on what had been covered earlier. This was particularly true of work in mathematics and, as a result, not all pupils were developing the right basic understanding in order to move forward. In the Reception class, there were useful topic overviews for the term ahead, but the aims of tasks planned for each day were not always clear to staff or children, so children were not always challenged to develop their understanding well enough.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress through questioning and feedback on 'mini whiteboards' has been a recent school training initiative, and several good examples of its use were seen. However, in some cases, the pupils' responses were not followed up at all, or the opportunity was not taken to challenge pupils to explain their answers.
- Teaching assistants were seen mainly in practical lessons and with some lower-ability classes. They were often most effective in helping pupils to maintain their concentration and to reflect on their independent tasks but, occasionally, they lacked the subject expertise to give specific support or provide probing questions on the actual topic being covered.
- The assessment and marking of pupils' work is not consistent enough. A new school policy for teacher comments and pupil responses on written work has been recently introduced and some good examples of this were seen in science, for example. However, pupils were often unclear about their specific targets and what they needed to do to improve.
- The teaching of reading is not sufficiently systematic to ensure good progress throughout the school. The arrangements for teaching phonics for younger pupils are not consistent, although the strong showing for Year 2 recently indicates that staff have the skills needed to teach the work. Staff do not all demonstrate consistent expectations of handwriting and presentation, and there is no whole-school literacy policy to guide them.

- Where teaching was best in the GCSE lessons seen, students made good progress because their teachers allowed time to discuss progress throughout the lesson, showed them carefully what they needed to do, and encouraged a good level of student involvement in the tasks through well-chosen opportunities to work independently. Students responded well to the challenge to use their skills of analysis and reflection, maintaining good levels of concentration.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good throughout the school, with pupils showing increasing maturity and responsibility as they progress through the age range. They move throughout the building in a calm and orderly manner, arriving at lessons on time and settling to their work with little time wasted.
- In most lessons, behaviour is good. Pupils listen carefully to the class teacher and to each other, with little need to be reminded about the school's expectations. Behaviour is sometimes outstanding when pupils show high levels of concentration and interest in their independent tasks over sustained periods of time. Good behaviour was seen in the Reception class, where children showed a good appreciation of class routines within a week of first arriving in school.
- Very positive responses were received from pupils, staff and parents alike about how well pupils enjoy being at the school. Pupils had a good degree of confidence in the school's approach to bullying and felt that incidents were very rare; this was also indicated by the parental questionnaire. Pupils say they feel safe, and felt well informed about e-safety matters, such as safety when using the internet.
- Attendance is improving, particularly in the primary section, and is above the national average. The school has successfully reduced the levels of persistent absence. Pupils arrive in school on time, and morning lessons make a prompt start, despite the distances some have to travel.
- There have been recent changes in behaviour management at the school and fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly. There have been no permanent exclusions in the past year in the secondary section. However, expectations of behaviour are not always consistently applied in both the primary and secondary age ranges.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher and governing body have a clear vision for the development of the school as an all-through institution, and leadership has been strengthened at all levels over the past year. As a result, teaching and achievement have improved. Nevertheless, there remain inconsistencies in expectations and approaches between leaders working largely with pupils of primary age and those working with students in Years 7 to 11.
- The school procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation are now fit for purpose, and the summary of findings from internal monitoring identifies the school's major development needs in sound detail. However, subject leaders have a limited understanding of the priorities relating to the new all-through school and very few have been actively involved in raising standards for pupils of primary age.
- The leadership of teaching is stronger in the secondary sector of the school. The school policy for monitoring teaching and performance management is now established for teachers of Years 7 to 11, and has begun for staff with younger classes. Overall, opportunities for staff to improve

their skills as teachers and leaders are limited, with little provision for them to gain new ideas from visits to other schools or attendance at outside courses.

- The school is working urgently on making pupils' tracking data more readily available to senior and subject leaders, and to class teachers. Although there has been some success in the secondary years, the poor provision of data about pupils' progress is a major weakness in the primary section. This means that if pupils' progress slows it is not always identified quickly. This makes it harder for leaders to assess how well teaching is working. Nevertheless, the introduction of the School Improvement Committee has been a major development and is leading to increased accountability of teachers and managers for pupil outcomes.
- The range of examination subjects does not take account of new courses available to better meet the need of less academic students. A very small number of students attend work-related training off-site and the school is considering making this provision more widely available. The total number of GCSEs taken by students is lower than found in many schools.
- The school offers a wide range of after-school clubs and activities, with particularly good use made of the dance studio. The new funding for primary sport has been used well to provide extra opportunities for pupils to take part in swimming, cricket and dance.
- The six school 'Impact Days' offer effective activities to promote pupils' personal development and are generally appreciated by pupils. The development of social and moral awareness is well provided for throughout the school; spiritual and cultural experiences are not as widespread.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are skilled and experienced, offering good support and challenge to the leadership team. They manage their work very effectively, with a good balance of committee meetings and visits to the school to hold senior leaders to account over pupils' progress and teaching standards.
 - The governing body have reviewed their own strengths and development needs carefully. They manage training for committee members very well and show a high degree of awareness of the importance of pupil progress information in analysing the success of the school.
 - They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle underperformance. They are well informed about the targets that are set for teachers to manage their performance, the arrangements for teachers' pay progression and the expenditure of the pupil premium.
 - The School Improvement Committee, formed earlier in the year, has worked well to identify key school improvement areas and to plan appropriate actions in response. It has been supported well in this by local authority representatives and a headteacher who is a Local Leader in Education. These have helped ensure that procedures for monitoring and accountability are now effective.
 - Governors make sure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities. Statutory safeguarding arrangements are in place and aspects are reviewed at termly meetings. All staff have been vetted and given recent training on safety and child protection.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 121168 |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 412796 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 650 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andrea Craig |
| Headteacher | Jim Adams |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01328 701265 |
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