

The Bluecoat School, Stamford

Green Lane, Stamford, PE9 1HE

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Not all teaching is good or better, and some teaching requires improvement.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 are not high enough.
- The progress made by all pupils is not yet fast enough to make up for the slow progress made in previous years, particularly in Years 4 to 6.
- Pupils lack opportunities to work independently.
- More-able pupils do not always receive enough challenge.
- Pupils known to qualify for the pupil premium do not do as well as other pupils.
- English and mathematics subject leaders have not brought about necessary improvements quickly enough across all year groups.
- In recent years, the management of teachers' performance has not been effective enough.
- Leaders and managers have not improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement fast enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in Nursery and Reception make at least good, and often outstanding, progress.
- The teaching of early reading skills is good.
- Standards in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have improved steadily over the last three years.
- Behaviour is good, and pupils have very good relationships with adults.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust, and pupils feel safe when in school.
- The new headteacher has implemented changes that have started to improve outcomes.
- A recently appointed set of governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and have taken decisive steps to improve the quality of leadership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons. Six joint lesson observations were undertaken with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' books, listened to pupils read and examined pupils' work on display.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and senior representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire for parents provided by Ofsted (Parent View). They talked directly to parents during the inspection. In addition, 24 responses to a staff questionnaire were considered.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Andrew Read, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The percentage of pupils from different minority ethnic groups is low; as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the additional government funding for certain groups, such as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In recent times the school has been led by two separate interim headteachers. The school now has a permanent headteacher, chair and deputy chair of governors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good or better teaching, raise standards and improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - providing more opportunity for pupils to work independently
 - strengthening the capacity of pupils to understand more complex texts, and use mental calculation skills to solve number problems
 - closing the attainment gap in Key Stage 2 between pupils known to qualify for the pupil premium and other pupils
 - improving the level of challenge for more-able pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders play a more active role in improving standards in English, mathematics and science
 - recently introduced arrangements for leaders to manage the performance of teachers are effective in improving the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The standards reached by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are lower than at the time of the last inspection and below national averages. This is because the progress made by pupils has not been good enough, particularly in Years 4 to 6. However, the school's assessment data shows that in 2013 there was an improvement in the rate of progress made by pupils. As a result, standards have started to improve.
- The proportions of pupils meeting and exceeding expected levels of progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 was better in 2013 than 2012. For example, the proportion of pupils doing better than expected in mathematics was higher, and more pupils achieved at the highest levels. The quality of teaching and work seen in pupils' books during the inspection indicate that such improvements have been sustained into the current academic year.
- While the proportion of pupils achieving well in either reading, writing or mathematics rose in 2013, there was a decline in the proportion of individuals that did well in all three of these subjects. However, over half of these pupils had a specific special educational need of a kind that made learning harder in one particular subject, thus reducing the number of individuals achieving well in all subjects combined.
- The progress made by children in Nursery and Reception is typically good or outstanding. This is because teaching is very well matched to the needs of each learner. While the majority of children enter Nursery with levels of development that are well below those typical for their age, a large majority leave Reception reaching the expected levels of development, and a minority are above expected levels for their age.
- Standards in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have risen steadily over the last three years. In 2013, more pupils achieved at a higher level than in previous years. Although the rate of progress made by pupils has improved, standards are still lower than expected given pupils' starting points.
- In 2013, there was a significant improvement in the standards reached by pupils in their early reading skills, with an above-average proportion of pupils achieving at expected levels by the end of Year 1. This was due to a new, targeted approach to the teaching of reading, and the provision of new library facilities.
- While the standards reached by more-able pupils have risen in the last year, not enough more-able pupils achieve at the highest level, particularly by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make adequate progress. They make good progress in Reception and Key Stage 1, because teaching is better targeted to specific needs. While the pace of progress made in Key Stage 2 improved in 2013, it remains slower than that achieved in other year groups, particularly in writing.
- The progress made by pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium has recently improved. However, pupils are still achieving at a lower standard than other pupils by the end of Year 6, and are, therefore, up to two terms behind others in English and mathematics. The gap is, however, closing as the quality of teaching improves. For example, the school's own assessment information shows that, in 2013, more pupils attained at a level closer to that of their peers in reading, writing and mathematics than in the previous year.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- While improving, the quality of teaching remains too variable across the school. Although much good or better teaching exists in the school, a small minority requires improvement. This matches the school's most recent analysis of the quality of teaching received by learners. Not enough lessons in Years 1 to 5 cater for those of a higher ability. All too often, these pupils work at a pace dictated by the needs of the whole class and, therefore, work at a pace that is too slow.
- In the recent past, marking has been of variable quality, as seen in the books of those pupils who left the school in 2013. However, evidence in the books of current pupils shows that the implementation of a new marking policy has improved the quality of marking in all year groups. The use of such information to inform the planning of teaching is strongest in younger-aged classes.
- Teaching is strongest when it is well matched to the needs of learners, and encourages independent work. This is most evident in Nursery and Reception, where early language, number and reading skills are taught well through clearly planned activities. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-directed activity. Teachers are supported effectively by additional adults, who have well-defined roles and responsibilities.
- Recent improvements to the teaching of English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 have improved standards. For example, the teaching of early reading skills is now consistently good or better, leading to significantly improved outcomes. A new and well-resourced library run by a specialist in reading development supports this success.
- Improvements made by senior leaders have recently increased the proportion of good or better teaching in Key Stage 2, and outstanding teaching is evident in Year 6. Despite this, teaching does not always provide enough opportunity for independent work. Pupils also lack confidence when asked to work alone or in groups to interpret more complex texts, or when required to use mental calculation skills to solve more challenging number problems.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium receive extra help and resources from teachers and support staff. The impact of such provision is strongest in Key Stage 1, and improving in Key Stage 2. The school now provides a wide range of different specialist teaching programmes for such pupils, which are increasingly effective in narrowing gaps in attainment. During the inspection, pupils said how much they valued such opportunities, and cited specific examples of how such provision has recently improved their access to activities and learning.
- When given clear direction, the teaching of individuals or groups by teaching assistants is generally good. However, such staff are not always pro-active in supporting learning, and in weaker lessons where teaching is less well matched to the needs of individuals, their impact is less effective.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils have extensive opportunities to discuss their feelings and debate moral issues, and enjoy opportunities to do so from a very young age. Pupils say they highly value this aspect of school life. Pupils learn about the diversity of different nationalities across the world and, therefore, have awareness of other cultures. The spiritual development of the pupils is very strong, and assemblies are used effectively to promote different belief systems. During the inspection, the headteacher was seen delivering an outstanding assembly, demonstrating the strength of leadership in this area. Music and art are also used extensively as vehicles to

promote wider spiritual development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Adults have good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils respect their teachers, behave well and say that they enjoy school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and reflect an increasingly strong emphasis on raising pupils' aspirations to achieve well in English and mathematics. When given the chance to do so in lessons, pupils work well together and contribute readily to group discussion.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a well-developed understanding of how to look after each other. For example, when at play pupils were seen being caring of each other, and mindful of the needs of those of a different age.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to lower the risk of coming to harm out of school. For example, they know how to cope with the unwanted attention of adults with whom they are unfamiliar, and how to stay safe on the internet.
- Pupils' behaviour beyond lessons and when not directly supervised by adults is good. Those who find it harder to regulate their own behaviour are well supported and show improvement over time.
- Parental surveys and interviews during the inspection show that parents feel that behaviour is managed well and that any concerns are addressed rapidly. Staff also feel that behaviour is generally good. Pupils agree with this analysis, and say that bullying is rare, and that where it does occur teachers are quick to address it.
- For the last two years, attendance has consistently been below the national average. However, current attendance is at the national average because the school has improved the way that it works with the families of pupils with low attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school has been through a period of turbulence and, until very recently, leaders and managers had been unable to halt a decline in standards. While leaders and managers have recently made improvements, thus demonstrating a capacity to improve the school further, such changes are as yet unproven over a sustained period. Further improvements are required to improve the standards reached by pupils in English and mathematics.
- The coordination of English, mathematics and science remains underdeveloped, and while improvements in these subjects have been made in certain year groups, such as in the teaching of reading to younger-aged pupils, improvements have not been made across the whole school. A coordinator of science is yet to be appointed. Resourcing and support for those tasked with leading improvements to reading, writing and mathematics have only recently been provided by senior leaders.
- A comparatively new senior leadership team and governing body are, however, instigating improvements across the school. For example, the headteacher has energetically and competently instigated new systems of management, in order to address declining standards, and improvements made to the quality of teaching have halted a previous decline in standards.

Ably supported by a relatively new deputy headteacher, she has the unanimous support of parents and staff.

- Until recently, the use of performance management processes to improve teaching has been not been effective enough. However, current arrangements are good. For example, governors and the headteacher now ensure that this process is rigorous, and that individual targets for improvement are closely matched to the development priorities of the school. Teaching is monitored, and results are reported regularly to governors.
- The primary school sport funding (extra money provided by the government to encourage physical activity and improve sports education) is starting to being used to good effect. The school has identified key areas of development and, in addition to improving provision in existing areas, it is extending the range of sports on offer to pupils.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, while recently improved under the leadership of headteacher, still requires improvement, particularly in Key Stage 2. Specifically, issues are not always identified quickly and accurately enough. However, parents say that there are now improved lines of communication between themselves, managers and classroom teachers, which means that provision is now better-coordinated between the home and school.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. For example, the current provision for Nursery and Reception children shows that leaders have a detailed understanding of the needs of each individual child, and plan provision accordingly.
- A range of local authority officers have been providing leadership support for the school, including the provision of two interim headteachers who have also provided ongoing support to the new headteacher. Such provision is underpinned by a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The leaders have a strong focus on ensuring equal opportunities and avoiding discrimination within the school. They are aware that, to achieve this fully, they need to eliminate the variations in the impact of teaching throughout the school.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of learning opportunities beyond English and mathematics, delivered through many additional activities. For example, they have good opportunities to learn how to speak and write French from a young age. Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy the wide variety of clubs and activities available to them, which have recently increased in number and variety.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet national requirements. A robust approach is taken to the identification and resolution of care issues affecting the pupils. All staff ensure that any pupils at risk are well supported.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The newly appointed governors are effective. They have taken decisive steps to improve the leadership of the school and demonstrated a strong drive to improve standards of achievement, supporting the headteacher through a scrutiny committee that actively reviews all aspects of school provision. For example, they are fully aware of the amount and manner in which the pupil premium is being spent. The governing body is well led by the Chair, and ably supported by others, many of whom have specialist expertise in school leadership. Governors, therefore, hold leaders to account and have a good understanding of the performance of pupils across the school, and the need to raise standards. For example, they have a well-developed understanding of the need to improve rates of progress made by different groups,

such as those who are eligible for the pupil premium. Governors have improved the extent to which teachers' pay and promotion are linked to their performance in helping pupils to achieve well. Governors apply rigorous planning and controls to the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

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	120399
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	425110

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Kieran
Headteacher	Carol Hines
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 November 2011
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