

Lacey Gardens Junior School

Lacey Gardens, Louth, LN11 8DH

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This much-improved school is now almost unrecognisable from its description in its last inspection report. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is at the heart of this transformation.
- Currently, pupils are achieving well. Mathematics in particular has improved. Most Year 6 pupils are on track to leave the school with standards in English and mathematics that are markedly higher than previous years.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Consequently, current pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and their behaviour is excellent.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Checks made by senior and subject leaders are regular and robust. As a result, leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the school's performance.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and enjoy being there. Their attendance has improved and the incidence of persistent absence continues to decline.
- The school is successfully increasing its engagement with parents. It has their confidence.
- The governing body is highly effective and knows its school well. Together with the headteacher, it expects the school to continue to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Teachers do not all check pupils progress closely enough as lessons progress. In some lessons, teachers do not adapt their initial plan where needed to demand more, particularly for some of the most-able.
- Some marking is not precise enough to help pupils improve their work.
- Pupils do not always fully understand the ideas behind their mathematical calculations. Due to insecure phonic skills, a few pupils' reading lacks fluency and they spell some common words wrong.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. The lead inspector also reviewed examples of pupils' written work with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with two randomly selected groups of pupils, and with senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met a representative of the local authority. He also met the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's records of current pupils' progress, a summary of the school's evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses, monitoring reports, the school's most recent rapid improvement plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took into account 54 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school's records of parents' written comments registered during their visits at recent events at school.
- Inspectors considered 25 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Hopkins	Additional Inspector
Anne McAvan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is well above average. This is extra funding provided by the government to support certain groups of pupils. In this school the pupils for whom it is currently provided all qualify through being or having been eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6.
- Since its last inspection, when it was judged to be requiring improvement, the school received two monitoring inspection visits. Both visits noted the rapid progress the school had made towards the identified areas requiring improvement. As a result, at the end of the second monitoring visit in November 2013, the HMI concluded that the school was ready for its next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - ask probing questions and make sufficient checks on pupils' understanding to speed up their learning
 - adapt their teaching as lessons progress to demand more of pupils where needed
 - give precise guidance through their marking and expect pupils to make, and demonstrate improvement in their subsequent work.
- Ensure that pupils' skills in English and mathematics are consistently strong across the school by:
 - developing pupils' understanding of the ideas behind the techniques they use in making calculations
 - improving pupils' phonic skills to help them read with greater fluency and spell more accurately.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is now good due to the much-improved teaching and a highly successful leadership drive to improve standards. It was clearly evident in lessons, in pupils' written work and the school's tracking records. This picture of rapid progress is now a consistent feature across the school and it is markedly better than that shown by the school's results over the last three years.
- The school makes a thorough assessment of pupils' attainment on entry to Year 3. It combines its own assessment and that it receives from the infant school, to correctly identify pupils whose skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not secure for their age. As a result of the support that is given to them, these pupils quickly begin to fill in gaps in their knowledge and skills, and have a better start.
- After a series of static end-of-Year 6 test results, in general, and low results in mathematics over time, attainment is currently rising. An increasing proportion of pupils are making better than expected progress in English and mathematics. As a result, the pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to gain results at least in line with the national average. Progress made by the current Year 5 group is similarly strong. The 2013 Year 6 results do not reflect the school's improved practice because this particular group of pupils did not benefit from it for long enough.
- Reading is improving and pupils' progress is mostly good, but their knowledge of phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) is not consistently strong across the school. Consequently, as a few pupils cannot work out new words quickly, they are not able to read with fluency. Pupils' progress in writing is good. They can develop their ideas comfortably and most of them can construct sensible sentences with basic punctuation that is usually correct. The limited phonic knowledge, however, shows up in some inaccurate spelling.
- In mathematics, progress is now stronger but it is not yet rapid in all aspects. It has rightly been recognised as a persistent weakness over the years, which the senior and subject leaders are urgently tackling. Pupils can handle numbers and enjoy making calculations. Whereas most of them can use the techniques taught to them correctly, they do not always understand why they got the answer right. This can slow their progress when they are older, when they try to build on the work they have done.
- Most of the disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to their peers. The extra support they receive, within or away from classrooms, is accurately matched to their individual needs.
- The progress made by a few of the most-able pupils slows in some lessons when the work set does not demand enough of them or they do not receive fresh challenge after they have completed their work.
- Across the school, pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding are regularly given extra help through one-to-one and small group activities to improve their skills in English and mathematics. The 2013 Year 6 results show that the attainment in English and mathematics of pupils supported by pupil premium was overall about two terms behind their classmates. The lag was greatest in mathematics, where they made slower progress than others. This group started with lower than usual starting points and they did not benefit from consistently good teaching, which is now the norm.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is now good overall and some of it is outstanding. The much-improved teaching since the last inspection less than a year ago has been instrumental in raising current pupils' achievement. Most of the teaching is engaging and promotes positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers build on what pupils' already know, understand and can do. At the start of lessons, they ask searching questions and use pupils' responses to set the pace of learning. In some lessons, particularly during the middle part of the lesson, teachers' questioning is not as probing. Consequently, teachers do not get such a full view of pupils' understanding and are not able to challenge them so effectively to achieve their best.
- In the very best lessons, teachers create high levels of interest and manage to instil a love of learning. Tasks set are demanding of all groups of pupils. The most-able pupils make the best possible progress in these lessons. Not all teaching is as consistently challenging as this. In some lessons, a few of the most-able pupils do not receive work that really taxes them because teachers stick to the agreed planning and do not adjust it quickly enough to move pupils, who are ready, to the next level of difficulty.
- Marking is conscientious. In the best examples, teachers clearly indicate what pupils have done well and what they need to do next to improve their work. At times, the guidance is not precise enough and teachers do not consistently follow-through their advice in pupils' later work to check they have learned from the mistakes pointed out to them. For example, a pupil may take immediate notice of what a teacher tells them to do, but later forget to apply it.
- The teaching assistants have a clear brief. They know the pupils they regularly work with well and ensure their learning and progress are as good as for others.
- Teachers use reading sessions well to improve pupils' interpretation of the text as a whole, but teaching of phonic skills, particularly for a small number of pupils whose knowledge is insecure, is not as regular as it needs to be. Other than the use of phonics in spelling, the teaching of writing is systematic and is helping pupils to become confident writers. The teaching of mathematics is now strong in improving pupils' calculation skills, although pupils' understanding of the techniques they are taught is not yet as secure.
- The improved quality of teaching is contributing equally well to the learning and progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those who are supported through pupil premium funding. In general, teachers and teaching assistants tailor their teaching to meet specific needs of these two groups well and help them catch up with other groups.
- In lessons, teachers promote pupils' social skills well. As a result, relationships are excellent. Pupils are frequently encouraged to express their views and opinions on matters of interest to them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Parents, staff and pupils acknowledge that the standards of behaviour at the school are high. The management of behaviour is highly consistent, which pupils find reassuring. Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are harmonious. One pupil described it as a 'warm-hearted school'.

- Attitudes to learning are extremely positive across the school and have contributed to the school's recent transformation. Pupils feel their school is a place where they come to learn and value that. They take a pride in succeeding in lessons and making suggestions. For example, in some classes, pupils take on the role of a teacher and willingly pass on their knowledge and excitement to their classmates who struggle with their work.
- Behaviour outside lessons is also excellent. Pupils take care of the environment and are very courteous to adults. They enter and leave assemblies in an orderly fashion. They move in and around the school responsibly, always sensitive to others' wellbeing.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents think very highly of the level of care shown towards their children by staff. Pupils say bullying is rare and it is dealt with promptly, if it occurs. They are acutely aware of the different forms bullying can take, such as name-calling or the misuse of the internet or that which is prejudice-based. They feel very safe at school, and are alert for situations in which hazards are possible.
- Attendance continues to improve strongly. It is now average and very recently has crept higher. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when it was judged low. Senior leaders and governors have successfully reduced the persistent absence and remain alert to consolidating and building on recent gains further.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has been highly effective in pushing for rapid improvement in pupils' achievement, their personal development and the quality of teaching. With a strong team spirit, which she has nurtured, a lot has been achieved on all fronts in such a short time. There is an unmistakable trend of rapid improvement, which demonstrates the school has developed an enduring capacity to secure and sustain further improvement.
- Checks made by senior and subject leaders are now extensive and rigorous. They feed into the school's self-evaluation, which is robust and helps leaders keep the implementation of its key priorities in focus. The regular monitoring of teaching and the subsequent feedback provides challenge and support in equal measure and has led to consistently good teaching.
- Pupils' progress is regularly checked and analysed to review the performance of different groups and to allocate extra help for those pupils who have special educational needs and those who are supported by the pupil premium funding. The current data show that this additional support is working for these two groups and that many of these pupils achieve well from their starting points. The gap between them and others in the school continues to shrink.
- The use of new primary school sport funding has increased pupils' participation in competitive sport locally and more widely. Pupils diligently practise and raise their performance levels. The school's cross-country team gained first place in a recent Championship competition. Multi-skills coaching has increased pupils' participation as well as their physical dexterity. Working with other schools, teachers have refined their skills, which they now regularly use to plan and provide more demanding physical lessons.
- The school's current arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are robust. These are designed to challenge by linking decisions about teachers' pay to their performance in the classroom. Good support is also provided. Staff training has played a central role in improving the current quality of teaching.

- The range of subjects taught and other planned activities are rightly focused on developing pupils' basic and personal skills. The school is revising its curriculum in earnest to adapt it to the new requirements from September 2014. Enrichment activities and the basic curriculum together contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is fostering stronger links with its parents. The headteacher and the governing body rightly see parents as partners in pupils' learning and achievement. Parents attend educational events at school in increasing numbers, which inform them about what the school does for their children and how they can help their children at home.
- The headteacher has drawn on a range of practical support from the local authority. This has included effective support for improving the quality of teaching and leadership and management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have been very much part of the school's recent journey and successes. They feel that they and the school had a 'new start' with the arrival of the current headteacher a year ago. Now, they critically examine the national and the school's own data about pupils' performance and have a clear grasp of how good teaching is, how pupil premium funding is being used, and with what effect. The governing body fully recognises the need to link teachers' salary progression to their performance in the classroom and it has adopted a suitable policy to ensure that it happens. It ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet the current requirements.

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	120673
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	433541

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	278
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Newlove
Headteacher	Heather Sandy
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2013
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