

The Little Gonerby Church of England Infant School, Grantham

Sandon Road, Grantham, NG31 9AZ

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- Since the academy opened, strong leadership and governance have secured good teaching and learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start because they are well taught.
- Across the school, pupils of different abilities, including the most-able, achieve well, especially in reading and writing.
- Teaching is good. The way subjects are linked makes for vibrant and innovative learning and promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- The school’s work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. All the parents who offered a view agree that the school keeps their child safe.
- Pupils’ eagerness to learn and their good behaviour make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Leaders and governors keep a very thorough check on teaching and learning and take effective action to tackle weaknesses.
- The school’s participation in the Teaching Alliance has helped bring benefits to pupils’ achievement and has improved the impact of leadership and teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The way ‘themed’ learning is planned does not allow pupils’ mathematical skills to develop as quickly as they should.
- Teaching does not always ensure that pupils are required to think logically or really hard.
- Pupils do not always know how to take the next steps in their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons taught by seven teachers. Two were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their work. They listened to individual pupils read. A meeting was held with members of the school council.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and other members of the governing body, with members of the senior and middle leadership teams and with the leader of the Teaching Alliance.
- A wide range of documents were studied, including those relating to the school's self-evaluation and development planning, pupils' progress data, monitoring of teaching and learning, as well as records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 staff questionnaires returned.

Inspection team

Ruth McFarlane, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

James Fuller

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average school of its type. It converted to academy status in October 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected in 2009, its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- A below-average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups, or speak English as an additional language. Since the academy opened, the proportion of pupils from Eastern European countries has increased.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- Since converting to academy status, the school has become part of the EOS Teaching Alliance, which operates across four continents from its headquarters in Lincolnshire. The headteacher is the lead for the group's research and development.
- The governing body has recently reorganised under a new Chair.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - providing more thorough coverage of the skills and concepts set out in the required programme of study
 - placing more emphasis on the development of pupils' calculation and problem-solving skills.
- Make more of the teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the questions teachers use to check pupils' understanding encourage them to think logically and really hard at all times
 - pupils always understand how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children get off to a particularly good start in the Reception classes, where a significant proportion enters with skills below the levels typical for their age. Most make good progress. On entry to Year 1, more reach a good level of development than is the case nationally.
- Since the school became an academy, pupils have made consistently good progress in Key Stage 1, in reading, writing and mathematics and in other subjects. Attainment at the end of Year 2 was broadly average in 2013 and is securely on track to improve further this year.
- In the 2013 national Year 1 check on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) an above-average proportion of pupils reached the required standard. Pupils develop their knowledge of phonics through a systematic programme which promotes both speaking and listening skills and reading and writing effectively. Pupils' writing is often lively and imaginative.
- Pupils read well because the school works in close partnership with parents to foster a love of reading. Pupils read at home as well as at school, and this makes a valuable contribution to their learning. Current standards in reading are above those expected for pupils of this age. More-able pupils read challenging books and weaker readers know how to draw on appropriate strategies to help them to work out how to read words and understand texts.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are identified early, their progress is monitored and additional support is provided to help them learn.
- Gaps in the attainment between pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium and other pupils are closing rapidly across the school because funds are being used effectively to raise standards. In 2013, although the progress of eligible pupils' was good, their attainment in both English and mathematics was generally below that of their classmates. However, there is no national progress data for Key Stage 1 so the precise gap cannot be quantified. Current assessment information held in the school shows that standards for all eligible pupils in 2014 are expected to be higher and that gaps between these pupils and the others will be much smaller than last year.
- The positive impact of the use of sports funding is already clearly evident in pupils' good awareness of the importance of physical health and their keen interest, enthusiasm and skills in, for example, rugby, gymnastics and dance.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not quite as good as it is in other subjects. Their skills in calculation and logical thinking are not as confident as they should be and pupils sometimes struggle to apply their skills to solve problems.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff provide exciting, challenging activities to help children learn. The tasks children are set are very effective in helping them progress rapidly and they make good use of the resources available both indoors and outdoors.
- The specific focus given to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) helps teachers of older pupils to build on the good start pupils are given when developing early

language skills. The quality of teaching is particularly good in reading, because staff have benefited from good quality training in this area during the last year.

- Teaching assistants are often used very well to support small groups in class and help individual pupils to develop their learning skills. They provide a good level of support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Teachers maintain strong relationships with pupils, based on mutual respect. They praise achievement when deserved and help sensitively when pupils experience difficulty in learning. Consequently, pupils are courteous, strive to improve their work and show respect for others.
- Homework often provides a good supplement for classwork and pupils readily explain how homework has helped them understand the topics and tasks they do in school. For example, in Year 2, pupils had researched at home to find words to describe 'night' to help their classwork on description.
- Teachers set pupils targets for each lesson, using a well-understood school system that incorporates progressively harder challenges. This works well. However, pupils are not always sure what they need to do to reach the next level in their work over the longer term.
- Teachers question pupils to check their understanding and to extend learning, but with mixed success. At its best teachers use probing questions to deepen learning and help pupils explain their thinking. However, sometimes, questions only require a 'yes' or 'no' answer, limiting their value and effectiveness.
- The school's use of 'themed' learning, which forms the bulk of the timetable, is popular and inspires sustained interest in learning, especially among boys, who had been falling behind the girls. However, the chosen themes do not always give sufficient emphasis to the development of key concepts and skills in mathematics, or teach pupils how to calculate or solve problems accurately and efficiently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are eager to learn and listen well in lessons, readily asking questions and showing curiosity and inquisitiveness.
- Attendance has risen recently and is now above average. The percentage of pupils who are absent frequently was high last year, but it has fallen dramatically as a result of the efforts made by the school. There is a new keenness evident across all age-groups to attend school regularly and enjoy the vibrant new curriculum it is offering.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They show good manners and respectful consideration to one another and to all the adults.
- In the playground, pupils are ready to take turns, and are carefully supervised. Pupils told inspectors that the good behaviour seen in and around the school was typical.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school keeps pupils safe and helps them to understand how to keep themselves safe, for instance on roads or near water.

- Pupils told inspectors that when bullying happens, they know they can turn to any adult in school for help, and are confident that any concerns will be quickly dealt with. They have a mature understanding of the types of bullying children of their age might encounter.
- All the parents who responded to Parent View or who spoke to inspectors believe their child is safe at the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders share a determination that the school will continue to improve and know exactly what is needed for this to happen. All staff, not only those with assigned leadership responsibilities, work effectively together for the benefit of the pupils.
- Leaders have introduced several initiatives that have improved the school. These include the system introduced for tracking pupils' progress, the improved teaching of phonics and pupils' subsequent improvements in reading standards. These demonstrate that the school has the capacity to continue to improve.
- Leaders' checks on teaching are thorough and are underpinned by work with the Teaching Alliance. This has enabled teachers to share expertise and improve their skills, and thereby, pupils' achievement. The school has effective procedures for managing staff performance and ensures that decisions about teachers' movement up the pay scale are linked to the quality of their teaching and their effectiveness.
- Subjects are taught through a recently introduced framework of themed learning that promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well, and requires pupils to interact and cooperate together in their learning. Subject leaders have been quick to spot 'teething troubles' in the system and are beginning to set about improving planning, especially for mathematics. The many additional group activities, such as cheer leading, gymnastics and cookery, enrich pupils' learning and enhance the inclusive and 'fun' atmosphere of the school.
- Good use is being made of the primary school sports funding to improve the quality of physical education, to promote healthy lifestyles for pupils and to make use of specialist partners. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the 'virtual' competition, which allows sports competition between schools without leaving the school grounds, and includes 'Speed Bounce', 'ZigZag Running', 'Bean Bag Shuttles' and 'Agility Run'.
- The school's work with the Teaching Alliance is extensive. Pupils and staff benefit from the exposure to ideas and practice from the very broad range of different schools. Through its links with the Alliance, the school is able to ensure pupils develop a good understanding of the different cultures and religions in modern Britain and elsewhere.
- Pupil premium fund spending is reducing gaps in performance. Rigorous evaluation of its effectiveness by leaders ensures good value for money. The appointment of a parent support adviser has led to improved rates of attendance. Small group interventions help accelerate progress for those eligible. This work, and similar interventions for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, ensures equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The recently re-organised governing body supports and challenges school leaders effectively.

The vision and commitment of the governors, for instance through support for participation in the Teaching Alliance, is reaping rewards for pupils.

- Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities meticulously, including for safeguarding. They undertake appropriate training. They visit the school regularly and demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for the pupils.
- Governors play a key role in checking the work of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use achievement information well. They ask probing questions, for instance about the impact of the spending of pupil premium funding.
- Governors understand how the performance of teachers is managed and how teachers are rewarded based on their effectiveness.

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	138816
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	440162

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Allen
Headteacher	Helen Hilton
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01476 564112
Email address	enquiries@little-gonerby.lincs.sch.uk

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