

The Viking School

140 Church Road North, Skegness, PE25 2QJ

Inspection dates	4–6 June 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well because teachers inspire them to try their best. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. Almost all are skilled at providing work that has just the right amount of difficulty for everyone to achieve well.
- Senior leaders know the school well and hold teachers to account effectively for the progress of pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary as is their conduct in lessons and around the school. They take great care with their work and pride in their achievements.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that their achievement in these is much higher than others of their age when they leave the school. This means all gain places at their preferred secondary schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally the most able pupils find the work too easy; the proportion in this group who make better than the expected progress from their starting points is not as high as for other groups.
- Although pupils are given lots of verbal praise and ideas as to how they can improve their work, marking in books does not consistently help pupils to consider their next steps.
- School leaders collect detailed evidence as to how well pupils are progressing from their starting points on entry and monitors this carefully. Some of this is recent, however, and the use of this information to drive forward improvements within the school and subjects is less established.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed 11 lessons and examples of extra-curricular activities. Discussions were held with the proprietor, the headteacher and pupils.
- The inspectors checked the school’s compliance with the standards for independent schools. They viewed a wide range of documentation including the single central register, policies, risk assessments, schemes of work, performance data, information for parents, and pupils’ work.
- The inspectors also considered 24 responses to Ofsted’s ‘Parent View’, 14 staff questionnaires and the ‘point in time’ survey completed by ten pupils earlier in the year.

Inspection team

Peter McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Douglas Folan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Viking School opened in Skegness in 1964, as an independent preparatory day school for boys and girls aged from three to 11 years.
- There are currently 43 full-time and 43 part-time children on roll. Those who are part-time all attend the school's Early Years Foundation Stage classes. All of these children are funded through the local authority.
- Seven pupils have English as an additional language. A very small proportion has identified special educational needs although no pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school uses facilities for physical education at the neighbouring grammar school in the summer and in the church hall for the rest of the year.
- The school's mission is to provide a 'broad curriculum to a high standard [and to] ensure children have the best opportunities to realise their full potential'. The school prepares pupils for entrance examinations to grammar schools at age 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress by providing harder work for more able pupils.
- Ensure that the marking of pupils' work provides them with more information on how to improve.
- Further develop the school's self evaluation by ensuring that the leadership and staff analyse in more detail the information they gather about pupils' starting points and progress to inform their planning for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress by the end of Year 6, often demonstrating high skills compared to others of their age in English and mathematics, including the ability and confidence to read aloud fluently. They are confident in giving their opinions about the books they have read, often making insightful comments.
- Pupils' work shows they make good and sometimes better progress in English and mathematics, which contributes significantly to the good progress they make in other subjects. The overwhelming majority of parents strongly agree that their children make good progress at Viking School. One parent wrote, 'I have seen amazing progress in ...his knowledge [and] confidence...' In recent years all pupils have succeeded in gaining places at the grammar schools of their choice.
- Despite the high levels of achievement of most, the proportion making better than the expected progress from their starting points is not yet high enough for achievement to be considered outstanding. This is because occasionally the work is too easy and particularly for a few of the most able.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning support their achievement very well, because they have inquisitive minds and their teachers give them opportunities to find out different ways of tackling problems. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson on measurement, pupils not only learnt to measure items by a number of different scales, but discussed among themselves which measurements were the biggest and smallest.
- Pupils make especially good progress in a range of creative subjects and particularly in music. Every class learns the recorder and all pupils take part in the impressive school choir which has performed for various groups in the community.
- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the school with the skills, knowledge and understanding typical of others of their age. They make good progress in all the areas of learning. The proportion that leaves the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development is considerably higher than that nationally.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and for whom English is an additional language, make particularly good progress in their communication and language skills. This is because of the effective partnership between their parents and the school and the many opportunities provided to practice and develop these skills. Older pupils for whom English is an additional language make rapid progress too in their English language skills and use these skills well in other subjects because of the high quality support they receive.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers provide work suited to their ability which supports their learning well.

Quality of teaching

Good

- Good teaching captures pupils' interest and helps them to achieve well. Teachers use skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning, whilst building carefully on what pupils have learned before.

- Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and they enjoy lessons. Teachers know all their pupils well and plan interesting activities to encourage pupils to learn. They give pupils the opportunities to work in groups and pairs. Pupils say they learn well in this way.
- Teachers and pupils enjoy good relationships. . Parents responding on Parent View and others spoken with praise the teaching at Viking School and the ways in which it motivates their children to learn.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good and provides pupils with a sound basis for good learning, ensuring for example that they have a very good grasp of phonics (the links between sounds and letters) and of calculations. These strengths in literacy and numeracy are developed further in their work in other subjects, such as science and geography, but also support their achievement in such subjects very well indeed.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and carefully, often praising and encouraging pupils. However although teachers discuss with pupils how their work might be improved, they rarely do so through written marking. This means some pupils are unsure as to what they should be concentrating on doing to improve their work further.
- Teachers help pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language to make progress by giving them extra help in lessons, such as by matching the work very carefully to their targets or by giving further explanations that extend their understanding of language and subject vocabulary.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, because teachers have a good understanding of how to enable children’s learning and development effectively. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to children’s achievement in both the work chosen for them by their teacher and in activities chosen by the children themselves.
- A good range of indoor and outdoor learning experiences develop children’s skills across all areas of learning well, including their communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills. Staff have very high expectations about children’s behaviour with each other and make these clear. As a result, children are very well set up in their attitudes to learning and their skills for when they enter Year 1.
- Classrooms are well resourced. Pupils have access to a good range of appropriate reading material, computers and learning aids. This all contributes to helping them learn effectively.
- The school tracks pupils’ progress carefully in all subjects. This information is also used to identify the very few pupils in need of further help. Good support is put into place to make sure these pupils catch up. However, occasionally staff do not use the information they have about pupils’ current levels to set tasks at just the right level of difficulty and a few pupils therefore do not learn as much as they could.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are considerate towards others and show a genuine care for their friends and empathy for others who might have different life experiences to themselves.
- Attendance is high and punctuality to school is excellent. Pupils come to school with a smile on their faces. Teachers meet parents and pupils on arrival and supervise departure,

ensuring that pupils are safe at all times.

- Pupils have a real enthusiasm for learning. They enjoy succeeding; they always look for the opportunity to extend their activities. They work well with their teacher and peers to satisfy their thirst for learning. One pupil said, 'I like sharing ideas with people.'
- Pupils strongly agree that they like school and that they feel safe. They know how to deal with any potentially unsafe situations which may arise. They insist that there is no bullying at the school. Parents too believe that the school promotes good behaviour.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school has all the necessary safety policies and procedures and is meticulous in ensuring that these are implemented. Staff are suitably trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid and fully understand and consistently apply the school's behaviour and other policies.
- Risk assessment is thorough for activities in school and on regular off-site such as physical education and swimming lessons and visits. Fire risk assessment is meticulous. All staff have had training in 'Fire awareness in the workplace' and any recommendations to improve fire safety and welfare, health and safety are swiftly carried out.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They demonstrate high levels of self-confidence and have a strong sense of belonging to the school and broader community. They help others, care for younger children and represent the school with a sense of pride.
- Pupils with responsibilities carry them out very well: 'Prefects help to keep people safe and help those who are lonely.' Pupils understand the need to ensure their own safety and that of others. They have clear ideas of right and wrong and practise them well.
- Pupils acquire a good understanding of their own and other cultures. Pupils from a wide range of other cultures live and work together naturally in the school as a harmonious multicultural community. They love to hear about and explore each other's traditions and beliefs.
- Visitors from police, fire service and religious leaders and visits out of school give pupils a good understanding of public institutions and services and all issues are presented in a balanced way, exploring different points of view.

Leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all the independent schools standards. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, ensuring compliance with the statutory requirements and that children make good progress.
- Leaders and managers communicate high levels of enthusiasm, commitment and ambition for the school. They have the confidence and support of all staff and of parents. They receive good support from the neighbouring grammar school and church, for example.
- As a result of regular monitoring, performance management and training for staff, teaching is good and improving further. Parents agree that their children are taught well and are making good progress. They value the reports that the school sends to them about their child's progress, including the 'learning journals' that document children's progress in the youngest

classes.

- Although the school's knowledge of their attainment levels is accurate and supported well by the school's own assessment framework including reading and spelling ages, its use of information gained as a result of assessment on entry is less well developed. Whole school target setting and school self evaluation and judgements about outcomes overall have only recently begin to take account of these.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum results in pupils' good achievement and provides pupils with good preparation for the next stage of their education. All areas of learning required in the independent schools standards are provided. Pupils learn French, enjoy a range of musical and other enrichment activities, such as sport, cooking, craft, and dance. There is an excellent choir, well known in the local community for its performances and the opportunity to join in a residential field trip. This all contributes to excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet all requirements. All the required staff training in relation to this and for first aid is in place. Leaders ensure through their monitoring and the strong personal, social and health education that pupils are not exposed to partisan views. As a result pupils develop a high level for respect for the values of British society and for the beliefs and traditions of others.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

School details

Unique reference number	120739
Inspection number	443465
DfE registration number	925/6033
Type of school	Primary school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Number of part time pupils	43
Proprietor	Sandra Barker
Headteacher	Laura Middlebrook
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2008
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,825
Telephone number	01754 765749
Email address	principal@vikingschool.co.uk

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