

The Gainsborough Hillcrest Early Years Academy

Heapham Road, Gainsborough, DN21 1SW

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Standards are significantly above the national average. From mostly low starting points, pupils make rapid progress, achieving exceptionally well.
- The Principal, supported by the other senior leaders, ensures staff are experts in their fields through high quality training. This results in all pupils having their needs fully met, allowing them to achieve well.
- The academy has already fully implemented its preferred approach to assessment in prompt response to national changes.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the early years. Staff ensure children have a thorough understanding of how to learn. High expectations of behaviour, presentation and listening ensures that children have the basic tools to continue learning at a rapid pace in Years 1 and 2.
- Teaching is of a high standard across the academy. Experienced teachers are excellent role models for less experienced staff. Newly-qualified teachers are supported exceptionally well.
- The behaviour of pupils during breaks and around the academy is of an equally high standard to that found during lessons. Pupils take part successfully in a range of leadership roles.
- The lively range of subjects taught, and some activities in the local area, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. 'Wow' days quickly capture pupils' interest in new topics, resulting in much of the learning following their own enquiries and questions.
- Subject leaders have an excellent understanding of their subject and check the quality of teaching rigorously. Astute leadership has helped them develop their talents and skills.
- The governing body has an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for further development. Governors make robust checks to ensure all aspects of the academy are outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, pupils, parents, members of the governing body, teaching staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the results of the academy's recent parental surveys, the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 28 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school's checks on pupils' and teachers' performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and academy policies.

Inspection team

Faheem Chishti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Brothers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Gainsborough Hillcrest Early Years Academy is a smaller than the average-sized infant school. The numbers on roll have increased significantly in recent years.
- Hillcrest converted to become an academy in July 2012. When its predecessor, The Gainsborough Hillcrest Infant and Nursery School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium additional funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is much smaller than that found nationally.
- The academy is being provided with additional consultancy support by the local authority.
- The academy has a nursery with part time provision for children for at least 3 hours per day.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the range of cultural experiences for children by making even better use of local resources.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy is led exceptionally well by the Principal, ably assisted by other senior leaders. Together they have a thorough understanding of its strengths and the few areas for development. They constantly strive for improvement, even in the stronger aspects of the academy.
- Leaders have a thorough knowledge of how to keep track of pupils' progress and do so on a regular basis. They are able to tackle differences in progress and possible underachievement at a very early stage. For example, pupils who were identified at the start of Year 2 as needing additional help all achieved well by the end of the year, following extra support and careful checks on their progress.
- The development of middle and senior leaders is a strength. This is because their talents are nurtured, supported and allowed to flourish. This has led, for instance, to excellent leadership for the early years. Training is precisely tailored to need and therefore, all staff acquire expertise.
- The academy has fully implemented its preferred approach to assessment triggered by the phased removal of National Curriculum levels. This new system enables leaders to check the progress of pupils to great effect with a single method of measurements from the start of Nursery through to Year 2. Initial checks reveal that these assessments help staff to understand exactly what pupils can do and have learned, particularly during the transition between Reception and Year 1.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are extensive and robust and have led to improvements. Key strengths and areas for development are highlighted extremely well with summaries presented to staff and governors at regular intervals. This enables staff to focus clearly on improvements for themselves, and the academy as a whole. Newly qualified teachers are supported extremely well by leaders who are ensuring their development is rapid and sustained.
- The appraisal system for checking teachers' performance has contributed well to the outstanding teaching since the academy converted. Individual targets are set for staff to meet, and judge whether pay rises and promotion are justified by results. Activities undertaken by staff that go over and above normal expectations, are also recognised.
- The academy promotes equality of opportunity well and ensures no group of pupils underperform. All pupils, whatever their needs, are able to be fully involved in academy life.
- The academy has implemented the new requirements for the curriculum well. The 'wow' days at the start of topics enthuse pupils extremely well and give pupils an insight into aspects of learning they may not have come across before. For example, a 'wow' day involving the sport of fencing has resulted in this sport becoming a part of the day-to day curriculum.
- All aspects to support safeguarding are carefully undertaken including safe recruitment and a thorough safeguarding policy, effectively implemented.
- The leaders responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are helping these pupils to make similar progress to others in the academy. The new classroom arrangements to support these pupils is having a positive effect on their self esteem and on their progress.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive. Comments such as 'staff are fantastic and the academy is very well managed' are not uncommon. Parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were also overwhelmingly positive.
- The primary sports funding effectively extends the many opportunities pupils have to be involved in sporting activities, including a greater range of sports such as fencing and lacrosse.
- The academy enjoys support from the local authority, which it uses to support all leaders and managers in

their drive to achieve the highest standards for pupils.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The academy prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. However, the curriculum does not always fully reflect the various cultures and faiths represented or what they have in common, or use the local area as fully as possible for this purpose.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the governing body have the relevant skills to provide sufficient support and challenge to the academy leaders and carry out their statutory duties well. They have up-to-date knowledge of pupils' achievements and have a good understanding of the key areas for improvement. They are aware of the progress made by different groups of pupils. They make good use of the academy's data. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and they are aware of the use of performance management to reward good teaching and to tackle aspects of weaker teaching.
- Governors have developed a culture of being able to ask probing questions of senior leaders about any aspect of the running of the academy.
- Governors make appropriate use of information to plan the use of funding such as the pupil premium and the primary sports funding. They ensure that pupils benefit from such funding.
- The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils arrive promptly each day and say that they always enjoy learning. They are invariably polite, well mannered and impeccably behaved, whether in classrooms with class teachers, or around the academy during breaks and lunchtimes.
- During lessons, pupils' attitudes to their learning are exceptional, resulting in learning that moves at a rapid pace. Pupils often keep each other on task and regularly discuss their learning with each other.
- Pupils with specific emotional needs are supported extremely well by the academy staff, for example, with the use of 'Being Me' well-being journals. These allow pupils to express their emotional needs and allow them to build up their self esteem. This ensures pupils are ready to learn during lessons.
- Pupils have a wide range of leadership opportunities. From helping with putting toys away in the Nursery, to roles as members of the school council, and as 'Healthy School Helpers' and 'Playground Readers' in Year 2, pupils grow in maturity and their sense of responsibility to others.
- The House system, as well as promoting a healthy competition between pupils in terms of their behaviour and learning, also raises the profile of the academy in the community by raising funds for specific charities. This gives pupils an even greater sense of pride in their academy and a greater understanding of those who may be less fortunate than themselves.
- Attendance in 2013 was below the national average with persistent absence significantly above the national average. However, due to swift action by leaders in implementing a rigorous new policy on attendance, including sterner procedures to restrict term time holidays and much greater challenge to parents of children persistently absent, attendance is now above average and there is no persistent absence.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are looked after extremely well with their wellbeing is at the heart of all it does.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of different forms of bullying including physical, mental and emotional. They have a good understanding of the risks of the internet. They are very confident in reporting any

concerns they may have to adults in the academy, and consequently, from the earliest age, feel very safe when they are there.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Work seen in last year's books, as well as the work completed in the first few weeks of this term, shows that the quality of teaching over time is outstanding across the academy and in different subjects, including in the early years. This matches the academy's own vigorous checks on the quality of teaching.
- Computer devices such as small recording instruments are used extremely well to support learning. Pupils use these devices sensibly to capture their thoughts and ideas, as well as for practising their speaking skills. Similarly, small tablets are used routinely and extensively by staff and pupils to record video, share learning and engage interest. This facilitates the rapid progress evident during learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and use this information to help them improve. They mark pupils' books in a meticulous and helpful manner. Pupils also reflect on their own work and often comment on how they could improve their work, or provide helpful comments to their peers about their work. Pupils are provided with clear learning targets which are checked by themselves as well as by their teachers. This motivates them to learn more briskly and in depth, not only in English and mathematics, but also in other subjects.
- The teaching of reading is very effective. Starting with the excellent start to phonics learning (the sounds letters make) in the early years, most pupils have opportunities to read every day in class and often have more than one book 'on the go'. By the time they leave Year 2, most read widely for pleasure as well as to find things out.
- Writing skills are taught extremely effectively resulting in high quality of work and rapid progress. This is because staff have excellent subject knowledge, understand the needs of their pupils well and provide extensive and interesting opportunities for pupils to write at length in a range of subjects. Teachers' expectations of grammar, punctuation and spelling is of an equally high standard in pupils' topic books as well as in their writing books.
- Putting tasks into real life contexts is much enjoyed by pupils and helps them to learn. This is particularly successful in the teaching of mathematics. For example, in Key Stage 1, pupils' attention was captured extremely well through a video message from 'grandma' who was struggling to read a train timetable and so required pupils' help.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is outstanding. Leaders ensure that they are often taught in small groups. Adults ensure the pace of learning does not slow so that teaching always maintains pupils' engagement as they move from one interesting task to another.
- Activities for the most able enable them to make rapid progress. This is because they are challenged well by teachers and also by themselves. For example, the older, more able pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and to understand how they can improve their work to attain even higher standards.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The majority of children start in Nursery with skills below those typical for their age. They make excellent progress in the early years classes so that when they start in Year 1, they have caught up with most children of their age. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Scrutiny of the academy's data shows that in 2014, these high standards have been maintained.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) show standards were considerably above the national average in 2013 and again in 2014. Pupils use their phonic knowledge well to read and spell unfamiliar words. Standards in reading are consistently well

above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. Most pupils make the progress expected of them, with many exceeding this, particularly in Year 2. In 2013, standards in reading for girls were slightly below that of boys in the academy, but inspection evidence shows no discernible difference now.

- The quality of written work across the academy in a wide range of subjects is high. For example, Year 2 pupils are adept at writing instructions, reports and descriptions using an increasingly wide range of vocabulary.
- The achievement of pupils in mathematics is similarly outstanding. Both in 2013 and in 2014, all pupils achieved well. The progress of pupils with their mathematics work currently shows it is even better, and better than in reading and writing. Boys in Year 2 in particular make exceptionally rapid progress.
- Standards of the most able pupils reflect their excellent progress. The proportions of pupils reaching the highest standards is almost double that found in schools nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive effective support so that they make similar progress to that of other pupils in the academy. This is because their progress is closely checked, planned help and support is prompt, and the skilled teachers are supported by well-directed additional staff.
- The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils matches that of other pupils in the academy, and is above that nationally. This is because pupil premium funding is used exceptionally well to provide very effective support for pupils with their English and mathematics.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a rapid start to their education. This is because of excellent leadership, excellent training provided and the stringent drive for high standards.
- From their mostly low starting points, when leaving Reception, the vast majority of children are working at the level expected of them. They are therefore well prepared for their next stage of their education in Year 1.
- Teaching in the early years is outstanding. The consistency in approach to the planning of lessons, to procedures within the setting and with the expectations of behaviour and learning leads to children's rapid progress.
- Progress is rapid because children's behaviour helps them to learn. They are extremely well motivated, are not shy to ask for help and are able to conduct conversations with adults at length. They also readily discuss their work with each other. For example, in a Reception classroom, children were busily engaged in writing invitations for a planned party, and discussed ideas in depth amongst each other as to what to write.
- The early years leader has trained other adults extremely well in the accurate use of systems to assess children's progress. This is organised very well in children's 'Special Books' which showcase their work to a very high standard. Parents are involved through contributing information about what their child learns at home, and they are kept fully informed about their child's progress.

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	138330
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	448622

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Grant
Principal	Julie McDonald
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected.
Telephone number	01427 613483
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