

The Horncastle St Lawrence School

Bowl Alley Lane, Horncastle, LN9 5EJ

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The executive headteacher is determined, reflective and highly ambitious for pupils to make the best progress they can. She is well supported by a very enthusiastic team of governors, senior and middle leaders in this drive for excellence.
- New systems for checking on teaching have quickly raised the quality of teaching in the school and are accelerating pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. Progress is now good in these subjects.
- Changes in the ways in which reading is taught are paying off. Pupils throughout the school use their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) increasingly well to work out new words and take pride in doing so.
- Governors hold the school to account very effectively. They have worked well with leaders across the federation to share skills and expertise to help this school to improve rapidly.
- Teachers have high expectations for their pupils. Everyone works well together to ensure pupils have the particular equipment and support that each pupil needs to enable them to learn well.
- The school sets challenging targets and checks pupils' work and progress very carefully. As a result work is generally well matched to their needs. This all contributes to their good progress and improving attainment.
- There is a calm and purposeful working atmosphere in this school. Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. The school works effectively to ensure pupils' safety.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some initiatives to improve the quality of teaching to outstanding have yet to impact fully.
- Occasionally staff are too quick to offer help so pupils do not try to work things out for themselves. Pupils lose interest when the learning is too hard or too easy at times.
- The school has a very thorough system for checking pupils' understanding but they do not always know what they need to do to improve their learning in lessons or with their reading.
- Pupils' awareness of wider issues of modern Britain and other cultures is not as strong as other aspects of their personal development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons jointly either with the executive headteacher or the head of school. They listened to pupils read and looked at work in their books.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team, governors, a representative of the local authority and with pupils.
- Inspectors looked at documentation related to pupil progress, school improvement, school self-evaluation, safeguarding and attendance.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to the online Parent View survey. The team considered the 64 responses to the school's own most recent survey. They also looked at responses on 15 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Rosemary Mackenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Stanbridge

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, formed in 2012, with its partner school St Bernard's at Louth. There is one governing body and an executive headteacher leading both schools.
- The leadership team across the two schools has been restructured and new teachers appointed. There is a head of school on each site.
- In March 2013 the residential provision at this school was closed. The school currently has no children within the Early Years Foundation.
- There is a rural activities area located on this site. There are small animals, pets, horses and farm animals. Pupils from both schools in the federation use this facility.
- An above-average number of pupils are eligible for extra support for learning funded by the pupil premium. This is an additional fund for pupils who receive free school meals and those in local authority care.
- Although this school was originally designated for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, the school now caters for more complex needs. For example, about half of the pupils have autistic spectrum disorders and a quarter have speech, language and communications needs.
- Pupils in Year 11 attend a range of vocational provision or work experience placements, including courses at Boston College and alternative provision at Build a Future on one day of each week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by ensuring that more teaching is outstanding by:
 - helping pupils to understand their next small steps in their learning so they are clear about what they now need to do to achieve even more
 - ensuring all lessons capture pupils' interest and motivate them to try their best
 - developing further teaching assistants' skills in probing and checking pupils understanding so that they give pupils sufficient time to consider tasks and work things out for themselves before intervening or giving them the answers.
- Ensure that pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and of other cultures is promoted as well as other aspects of the spiritual, moral and social aspects of their development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and head of school provide a clear vision and drive for excellence. All leaders, including middle leaders and governors, are ambitious for the pupils and communicate their high expectations. Consequently, this is a rapidly improving school.
- The work of the leaders of teaching and learning has helped improve teaching, through support, training and coaching. The impact of this was seen during the inspection. Teachers used questioning well to deepen pupils' understanding, a focus of much work to date. New approaches to communication used with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders have improved pupils' management of their own behaviour, their communication skills and their progress in subjects because staff are able to make the learning more understandable.
- Pupils' work is carefully checked and monitored by classroom staff and leaders so everyone knows exactly the progress each individual is making. Interventions are quickly put in place for pupils if anyone appears to be falling behind. Each learner's support needs are carefully considered and equipment adapted. For example, visual timetables helped individual pupils with complex needs to understand more clearly what they will do and learn each day. This helps them to prepare themselves and feel safe to 'have-a-go' at new experiences.
- The school has reviewed its approach to assessment carefully so that pupil progress continues to be measured rigorously. It is working with other Lincolnshire special schools to refine its approach further, alongside continuing to use pre national curriculum levels and other assessments to identify small steps of progress. These all help shape pupils' next steps and teachers' planning well.
- Senior and Key Stage leaders are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They have the ability and capacity to continue to improve this school. As leaders of teaching and learning they have helped all staff to make accurate checks on pupil's progress. The information gathered is used well so that work almost always meets the learning needs of different groups, including those with the most complex needs and the more able.
- Pupil grouping is mainly by age but some lessons pupils are grouped by ability, particularly in phonics, literacy and numeracy. This is helping staff to stretch everyone, including the more able and those with autistic spectrum disorders or more complex needs, so that pupils are making faster progress in these areas.
- Older pupils attend college and work placements on a regular basis, which helps them to make informed choices about the next steps in their education. Effective careers support and guidance is in place to prepare for and build on these. A transition worker ensures that all pupils have suitable placements related to their wishes and identified next steps in their future careers. College and work placements as well as placements at the alternative provision are carefully monitored to check that pupils attend, behave and achieve well.
- A carefully thought-out curriculum motivates and supports pupils' progress well. Pupils value the opportunities for learning within the rural activities area and relish the opportunities to try out their key skills such as numeracy and reading as they work with the animals in a real life setting. Leaders have recently implemented a new revised curriculum. This has is a strong and appropriate focus on literacy, numeracy and communication with resources, expertise and facilities being shared across the federation to each school's benefit.
- Spiritual, moral and social education is well integrated into the curriculum. Moral and social education is carefully encouraged with pupils being very thoughtful and aware of how to manage relationships and bullying. They take great pride in the responsibilities they are given within the rural activities area or during work experience. However pupils' awareness of wider Britain and other cultures is less systematically provided for. For example, they have only limited awareness of other faiths and cultures

and traditions.

- The school works particularly well to promote equality and foster good relations within the school in lessons and during social and play times. It also tackles discrimination effectively within the school community. All pupils are supported to take part in trips and residential experiences. In the rural activities area great care is taken to enable all pupils to access a wide range of experiences. For example, those with physical difficulties are enabled to care for and ride horses in ways that develop skills well, secure safety, support confidence and enjoyment and foster strong relationships between the pupils and animals.
- The school works well to keep everyone safe and is rigorous in ensuring that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority knows the school well and provides skilled support. It has worked well with the school to restructure the federation, and to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding have been put to good use enabling pupils to improve their literacy and mathematics well and occasionally exceptionally well, because of the one to one support that they have received.
- Pupils report that they really enjoy their P.E. sessions. The additional funding for sports has been used to employ a sports coach across the federation to improve staff skills and provide coaching for pupils. This has had a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment of sporting activities and improving their skills, for example in basketball, cricket and football.
- The governance of the school:
 - The governing body are thorough, committed and knowledgeable and visit the school frequently. They provide good oversight of the work of school leaders.
 - Governors have worked hard with the executive headteacher and head of school to recruit high quality staff and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and participate in performance related pay decisions.
 - Governors hold the school to account well for their spending of additional funds such as pupil premium and challenge the leadership to explain how their spending priorities will help to improve pupil achievement.
 - Governors ensure that pupils are kept safe and that all safeguarding requirements are met, through careful monitoring and review of practice.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour has improved rapidly since the executive headteacher brought in new strategies to promote high standards of conduct and improve staff skills in dealing effectively with difficult behaviour. This means that pupils whose particular special educational needs include challenging behaviour improve this and learn to manage it more effectively themselves.
- No low-level disruption was seen and little time for learning was wasted in lessons. Work in books reflects the very positive attitudes shown by pupils in lessons. Pupils value and take pride in their work and in their learning.
- Attitudes to learning are good because most lessons are well planned to capture pupils' interest and there are good relationships between staff and pupils. This impacts well on progress. However, although students enjoy their lessons they are not always motivated by the work or clear as to the purpose of the lesson. This means occasionally they lose interest and the progress of a few individuals slows.
- Pupils are happy, polite and respectful with one another and towards adults. Spiritual, social and moral development is monitored by the leadership team and planned for within lessons and subjects. However,

although learning about other faiths and cultures has a high priority within the new curriculum, pupils do not yet have a clear awareness of wider Britain and other cultures.

- Pupils are responsive and move punctually and in an orderly manner about the school. They are proud of their school and keen to show off their work. Transport is managed to ensure that pupils arrive punctually. The school has sound systems to work with families and help pupils come to and stay in school, including when they have medical needs. Consequently attendance is good.
- Exclusions have dropped significantly and now there are virtually no exclusions. This is because the school works well to manage conduct through skilled approaches to improving communication. Staff understand and use the best approaches to meeting individual pupils' special needs so they behave and learn well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding has a high priority and all staff work well together to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The school works well with other agencies such as social care to keep pupils safe. Staff know what to do and lines of responsibility are clear. They check carefully on how pupils are kept safe in alternative provisions and how well their behaviour is being supported and managed.
- Parents agree that pupils are kept safe and any bullying is dealt with by the school. Any discriminatory language is tackled immediately. Assemblies and a strong personal, social and emotional development curriculum help support mutual tolerance and understanding of other's points of view.
- There is also a 'no sanctions' approach to managing conduct and bullying. This means that any bullying is dealt with swiftly by staff. Students report that they feel safe because the systems protect them well. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet and how to deal with bullying. This is confirmed by parents and pupils who say that this is a very safe school.
- There are strict vetting procedures for visitors, staff and safeguarding and first aid training is regular and appropriate. Good quality risk assessments ensure that all parts of the school site are safe and activities have been carefully considered from a health and safety point of view. Educational visits are strictly monitored and risk assessments in place before trips are offered to parents for their children to go on.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection because of the improvements in the way in which leaders check on its quality and help staff to improve. Literacy and numeracy are now taught well and pupils make at least good progress in these key areas.
- Teachers and leaders use assessment effectively to ensure that lessons are well planned and to provide work that is usually at just the right amount of difficulty for each pupil to achieve. Most staff listen to and observe pupils carefully, using questions well to probe further and help pupils to understand. Occasionally teaching assistants give pupils too much help or jump in too quickly rather than giving pupils more time to work things out for themselves.
- Senior leaders checks show teaching is typically good and this is confirmed by inspectors. The coaching and support programme provided by senior and middle leaders has ensured teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, learning and progress and of themselves.
- Leaders and teachers identify pupils' needs carefully and link this to interventions and additional support. For example, pupils on the autistic spectrum and those with speech, language and communication difficulties are helped to access learning effectively. Staff use visual timetables and other communication systems well to help these pupils stay calm in lessons and to understand what they are going to do.
- The new approaches to teaching phonics, additional training for staff and different ways of grouping pupils are helping pupils' reading to improve. Homework is used regularly to support pupils' learning. The school is seeking even more ways of involving parents in helping their children's learning.

- Staff think carefully about how they will support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reflect this in their planning. Pupils are respectful to one another and have learned about democracy through activities such as elections to the school's council, although some aspects of life in modern Britain, including about different cultures within it are not so systematically provided for.
- Not all of the new approaches to supporting learning are consistently used by staff or have had their full impact on pupils' learning. For example, pupils are not always sure how to improve their work in lessons or when reading and this limits their enthusiasm and progress. More able pupils too are usually challenged well to achieve even more, although occasionally the work is too easy and this slows individual pupils' progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their starting points, pupils' progress across year groups and subjects, including English and mathematics, is consistently strong. The schools own data, confirmed by the inspection team, show that all groups of pupils, including those with communication and language difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum, make at least good progress.
- Pupils receiving pupil premium support also make good progress and sometimes outstanding progress. The school uses this funding to provide individual support and interventions that enable pupils to make accelerated progress compared with other pupils in this school. This means the gaps between them and others in literacy and mathematics have closed.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 learn to use phonics effectively which helps them progress well when reading and writing. In Key Stage 3 and 4 students build well on these skills and show great pride in reading aloud a new word. They learn to solve problems in maths and science, particularly enjoying analysing the number and types of food collected for the food bank.
- Improved assessment is already ensuring that expectations are higher and that pupils' progress is accelerating. Staff work well with other schools to ensure data is reliable and can be used accurately to check of pupils' progress and plan next steps. Challenging targets are set using national guidance. Records show a very high percentage to be meeting and exceeding these.
- Pupils who have more complex learning needs including those with autistic spectrum disorders achieve well because teachers are now more skilled in communicating with these pupils and ensure that they have any specialist resources and support they need to help them to learn.
- Older pupils choose from and achieve well in a wide range of vocational and academic accreditations at different levels. These include English and mathematics, at both functional and entry levels. Amongst the wide range of qualifications attained are skills for work, creative media studies, animal care and food safety in catering. This, alongside work experience and college placements, prepares them well for the next stage in their education and lives.

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	120757
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	441880

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Rhodes
Executive Headteacher	Lea Mason
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2012
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