

Gipsey Bridge Academy

Leagate Road, Gipsey Bridge, Boston, PE22 7BP

Inspection dates

22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	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
Early years provision	Outstanding		1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have a very accurate view of the schools' strengths and areas for improvement. They use this information well to ensure that teaching and pupils' progress are continually improving.
- The early years work is outstanding. Children in the Reception class learn extremely well. They enjoy a stimulating range of practical learning activities. Reading skills are taught particularly well from a very early age.
- Pupils achieve well by the time they leave Year 6, especially in reading and writing.
- Some aspects of teaching are very strong, such as the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and marking in English and mathematics.
- Skilled and well-trained teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils behave well, are enthusiastic about learning and are proud of their academy. They are respectful to adults and each other as they move around the academy and play outside.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. They have confidence that staff will deal with any problems they might have.
- The academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The highly committed governing body has a thorough knowledge of the academy. They visit regularly to work alongside senior leaders, and provide both challenge and support to ensure improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In Key Stage 2 some pupils' mental mathematics skills, although improving, still hold them back from achieving higher standards.
- Pupils' handwriting is not of a consistently high standard because teachers do not place enough emphasis on pupils forming letters correctly and developing a fluent style.
- Not all pupils maintain concentration in class, particularly at times when activities change. A few take too long to settle to work at such times.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons and learning activities, some seen jointly with senior leaders. She looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to a group of pupils read.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders, staff, four members of the governing body and the academy's improvement partner.
- A range of documents were reviewed, including plans for academy improvement, the academy's own information about pupils' progress, the monitoring of learning and teachers' performance, curriculum planning and governing body minutes. The academy's website was scrutinised.
- The inspector took account of the 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the academy's own survey of parents and the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector checked records and arrangements for safeguarding pupils and also looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Lindsay Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This rural academy is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has three mixed-age classes and a full-time Reception class.
- Almost all pupils are White British. In the last two years, a larger proportion of pupils than nationally have joined the academy partway through their primary school education.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, at less than four per cent, is well below average. Around 13% of pupils are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, which is well above average. Few have education, health and care plans.
- Very few pupils, a below-average proportion, are supported by the pupil premium. This is government funding to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by carers who are not their parents.
- In 2013 there were too few pupils in Year 6 to make a judgement on whether the academy met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school converted to become an academy on 1 February 2013, and is part of the ISIS Academies Trust. When its predecessor school, Gipsey Bridge Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- Gipsey Bridge Academy has a formal partnership with Spilsby Primary School. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of both schools.
- All the classroom teachers are new to the academy in the last two years. A newly qualified teacher had recently joined the academy at the time of the inspection. The Key Stage 1 teacher was appointed in 2013, and the Reception teacher also joined the academy as a newly qualified teacher in 2013. One other teacher joined the academy in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy as they move through Key Stage 2 by:
 - improving the teaching of handwriting so that pupils develop a fluent, legible script with correctly formed letters
 - improving pupils' ability to mentally recall and use number facts to solve mathematical problems
 - making sure that when activities change teachers are quick to intervene if pupils do not settle quickly, so that no time for learning is lost.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, senior leaders and governors are determined to make Gipse Bridge Academy outstanding and work tirelessly to achieve this. They are working closely with the new staff team to achieve this. Almost all teachers have areas of responsibility linked to the academy's improvement plan and fulfil these very well. For example, successfully improving the teaching of phonics and ensuring that the sports premium is used to best effect.
- This clear focus on improvement means that children get off to a flying start in early years and that teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour are good and improving. Some aspects such as the ways in which teachers mark pupils' work are particularly strong and are contributing to acceleration in achievement, over the last two years, that is evident throughout the academy.
- The senior leaders, supported by governors, review and assess the quality of teaching regularly. They provide teachers with clear guidance to improve their practice to ensure high expectations across the academy. The academy's improvement plan identifies the right priorities to raise achievement further because it is based on an accurate evaluation of how well it is performing.
- Staff performance is managed effectively and teachers are held accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. This in turn informs decisions about salary increases and career progression. Apart from observing lessons, leaders regularly talk to pupils about their learning and look at their work to guide further improvement.
- Leaders make sure all groups of pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed, free from discrimination. A good tracking system and weekly pupil progress meetings ensure that staff have a sharp understanding of each pupil's progress. The academy has been highly effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils for whom it receives the pupil premium. As well as providing targeted support for learning and emotional well-being, it ensures that these pupils are able to take part in all activities, including educational trips to support their all-round development. This has had a good impact on their achievement.
- The academy is well prepared for the national changes to the primary curriculum. Teachers have worked together to integrate all subjects into termly topics providing pupils with rich experiences that broaden their horizons. They encourage pupils to write at length and apply mathematical skills across a range of subjects. Senior leaders are consulting with other schools about the best way to assess pupils' attainment and progress following the removal of National Curriculum levels.
- The curriculum and the ethos within the academy promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, so they develop skills in being resourceful and reflective, and work very well together. Religious education lessons help them to respect the feelings and beliefs of different faiths in preparation for life in modern Britain. Sports funding is used very effectively. Pupils are participating in a wider range of sports that promote physical well-being and healthy lifestyles.
- The Trust supports the academy well. It is helping the academy to build many partnerships within the local area. It supports the executive headteacher's plans to enable the pupils and staff to benefit further from links with its partner school and other Trust schools. The Trust is enabling its schools to link and support each other in a range of activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors have a very good overview of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, and bring a wide range of skills which they use effectively to support and strengthen its leadership. They are actively involved in the life of the academy, visit regularly to see it at work and have been fully involved in the conversion to academy status. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching throughout the academy and how this is evaluated. Governors take account of teachers' performance when making decisions about salary increases. They set challenging targets for the executive headteacher and keep a close eye on how things are progressing from term to term. Governors track

finances well and are fully involved in decisions about how to spend additional money, such as the pupil premium and sports funding. The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures are effective and meet current regulations in all respects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy coming to the academy, are polite and confident and are proud of their academy. They move around the academy sensibly and play and work collaboratively with each other. They take care of the environment and show pride in their work.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are positive and respectful. Staff consistently use effective systems to reward pupils' behaviour, and pupils enjoy taking on the responsibility of being a prefect as recognition of their good behaviour.
- Records show that the academy deals rapidly and effectively with the very few incidents of poor behaviour. Behavioural expectations are well communicated. The '5R' values promote self-confidence, respect and thoughtfulness towards others. All who responded to the parent questionnaire said they are confident that the academy manages behaviour well and that pupils are well looked after.
- Pupils typically concentrate well in lessons. On a few occasions, however, the older pupils lose concentration in lessons, particularly as they move from one activity to another. A few pupils then take too long to settle and so do not achieve as much in their work as they could.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught about risk assessment and keeping safe in different situations. E-safety is promoted effectively.
- Through assemblies, lessons and events such as the anti-bullying week, pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and other forms of mistreatment. Pupils who talked to the inspector said they felt safe in the academy and insisted there was no bullying. They were confident that if they had any concerns they would tell a member of staff, who would help them sort it out.
- Attendance was broadly average last year. Current attendance levels have risen and are above average. The academy uses rigorous procedures for following up absences.

The quality of teaching is good

- Staff promote supportive and productive relationships and create a welcoming atmosphere in their classrooms. Teachers show high expectations of what all pupils can achieve whatever their abilities. They plan tasks that are at the right level of difficulty for different groups, consolidate previous learning and deepen pupils' understanding of new ideas. Adults make particularly good use of challenging questions to check pupils' understanding and to move their learning forward.
- Teaching in the early years is especially successful in underpinning rapid progress. In the rest of the school, pupils' books confirm the good progress they make. Teachers make good links between subjects to promote pupils' confidence and enjoyment, as well as their spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to read a wide range of books. Reading is taught well, beginning with the high priority given to developing a secure understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make) when children join in the Reception class and move through Key Stage 1.
- Teachers' marking is particularly effective. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and they are given clear guidance how to improve their work. Pupils are given time to respond to the marking which helps move their learning forward. They are also encouraged to evaluate each other's work and give constructive

comments for improvement, which helps each to reflect carefully on what even better work would look like.

- Teaching assistants are skilled and play a key role in aiding pupils' progress. They help disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to increase their skills in English and mathematics. As a result, they learn and achieve well.
- Pupils are encouraged to talk about their work and explain how they have worked something out, and this helps them to gain a thorough understanding of key concepts in mathematics. Good use is made of computer technology to support and reinforce pupils' learning. Some pupils in Year 5 and 6, for example, were working collaboratively in small groups making a video explaining how to create a pie chart.
- Homework is set regularly across all classes. Attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms celebrate their achievements. At the time of the inspection the oldest pupils had made some realistic models of rainforest animals as part of a homework project linked to their topic this term.
- Through the academy's exceptionally informative website, teachers provide pupils and their families with valuable homework resources and guidance to enable parents to support pupils' learning at home. In videos made by the pupils, they explain the calculation methods used in mathematics, while others demonstrate clearly the sounds letters make for phonics.
- At times teachers do not place enough emphasis on improving pupils' handwriting or honing pupils' mental mathematics skills to help pupils to solve mathematical problems and reach higher standards.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The small number of pupils in each year group suggests caution when considering averages, but inspection evidence confirms that progress is now consistently good across the academy. In 2013 Year 6 attainment varied for each subject. It was average in reading, above average in writing and below average in mathematics. Progress in mathematics and reading accelerated in 2014. Unvalidated data for 2014, and inspection evidence, indicate that all groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The fastest progress is in the early years and this enables pupils to enter Year 1 with above-average attainment. By the end of Year 2 standards are now above average. This more recent higher attainment at the end of Year 2 has not yet had time to have an impact on achievement higher up the academy.
- Early reading skills are taught exceptionally well in the early years. This gives pupils a strong foundation. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening test show that standards were well above national averages in both 2013 and 2014. Pupils make good use of their knowledge of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words. They read widely in the academy and say they are avid readers at home.
- The most able pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6. They benefit from challenging work. Unvalidated data for 2014 indicate that nearly half of the Year 6 pupils reached Level 5 in reading and English grammar, spelling and punctuation, a higher proportion than the national average in 2013. The proportion reaching the higher level in mathematics was broadly average. A lack of fluency in recalling number facts affects pupils' ability to solve problems, not only for the more able. However, a small proportion reached the highest Level 6 in mathematics and in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Academy records show that disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and others who enrol at the academy later than the usual starting points typically make good progress. This is because staff provide support that is carefully chosen to meet their specific needs. There are too few disadvantaged pupils to comment on their attainment without potentially identifying individuals.

The early years provision is outstanding

- Children enter the Reception class with skills and understanding that vary significantly from year to year. They make an excellent start in response to strong teaching and engaging learning activities. In 2014 the vast majority reached the age-expected levels and just under half exceeded them. This is a higher proportion than nationally.
- The structured teaching of phonics enables children rapidly build up a strong knowledge of sounds and then enthusiastically begin to build words. They leave Reception well equipped to make a good start in Year 1, especially in reading, writing and number skills and in personal development.
- The indoor and outside spaces provide children with an exciting range of purposeful and challenging activities that encourage them to wonder, ask questions, explore and discover things for themselves. During the inspection they were seen to be enjoying the wide range of resources, confidently playing and cooperating readily with other children and taking part in discussions.
- Adults use praise effectively so that children are keen to follow rules and make good progress. They extend children's learning while they are playing by asking searching questions to extend their knowledge and understanding. Adults use a wide range of vocabulary to improve the range of words children use. Strong teaching and the very well-resourced learning areas ensure that children make progress that is consistently at least good and often outstanding in all areas of learning.
- The recently appointed Reception teacher leads the early years with clear vision and high expectations. Children's progress is monitored very effectively and recorded in their digital 'learning journals'. The teacher has led training for other schools on using these journals, and works closely with a cluster of schools to share good practice and training, and ensure accuracy of assessment.
- Children settle quickly into Reception class after just a short time and behave well, because of the high levels of care and clear routines. All safeguarding procedures are met. There is a strong commitment to helping parents and carers support children's learning, and they are encouraged to make their own observations of their child's development.

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	139296
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	448648

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Westaway
Headteacher	Gavin Booth (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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