

The Marston Thorold's Charity Church of England School

School Lane, Marston, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG32 2HQ

Inspection dates 15–16 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders and managers are effective. They were quick to identify why standards dipped in 2014 and put action in place that has led to improvement.
- The headteacher leads the school well. Her checks on the quality of teaching are rigorous and have led to acceleration in most pupils' progress this year.
- Governors are effective. They have become more skilled recently through training, and now contribute to the improvements in teaching and learning.
- The additional sports funding for primary schools is spent extremely effectively to inspire pupils and ensure their sports skills and enthusiasm are secured.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance is above average. Pupils arrive each day eager to learn.
- Pupils feel safe because staff are caring and vigilant.
- Teaching is good. It enables pupils to make good progress. Teaching assistants contribute fully to pupils' learning.
- Children in the early years make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6, in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in reading are particularly high.
- All the parents who stated a view would wholeheartedly recommend the school to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Tasks provided for children in Years 1 and 2 do not always get the best out of them. As a result, progress is not always as rapid as it might be.
- Writing skills are not taught as well as reading, throughout the school. This means that standards in writing are not as high as those in reading.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed several hours of learning across all age groups over a range of subjects. She looked closely at pupils' written and creative work produced over the current school year. Some of the observations and scrutiny were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, looked at their reading records and asked them about their reading.
- She held meetings with pupils, governors and staff. She held a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 19 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. She also chatted with parents when they brought their children to school in the morning or collected them at the end of the school day.
- The inspector looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement and records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. She also considered minutes of governors' meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to check pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Ruth McFarlane, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The early years comprises children of Reception age, all attending full time.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Class 1 is for Reception-age children and for Years 1 and 2 pupils; Class 2 is for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4, and Class 3 is for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage who speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is very low compared with the national average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in September 2014.
- The school offers a daily breakfast during term time. The facility was included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teaching in Years 1 and 2 makes pupils of all abilities think hard and provides sufficient challenge so that pupils make rapid progress
 - ensuring that the teaching of writing skills such as spelling, grammar and punctuation, throughout the school, enables pupils to reach the same high standards in these aspects as they do in reading.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, together with the teacher who holds the main teaching and learning responsibilities, sets a well-established culture that insists on good teaching and encourages pupils to behave well.
 - School leaders have comprehensive information on pupils' performance which is used through effective pupil progress meetings to ensure that no pupil falls behind in their learning.
 - The headteacher makes thorough checks on the quality of teaching. Warm and supportive feedback to staff encourages development and training helps eliminate weaknesses. This is linked to the effective procedures for setting targets to improve teachers' practice and manage their performance, which are securely established.
 - The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher and governors are very clear as to where further improvement is needed and how to achieve it.
 - Under the headteacher's guidance and direction, staff in the early years maintain clear and comprehensive records of assessments that provide revealing and informative commentary for parents, who fully appreciate all the school does.
 - Subject leaders contribute effectively to the school. Working together, they have implemented the new National Curriculum and have devised assessment processes that meet the new requirements. All staff help make this a success.
 - The school endeavours to ensure equality of opportunity for all. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Staff evaluate the impact of pupil premium expenditure exceptionally thoroughly and utilise an inspiring range of strategies to help these pupils accelerate their progress successfully. Funding activities such as individual music lessons and residential visits foster good relationships, develop pupils' personal skills and instil confidence. This supplements the individual help these pupils receive in academic subjects. The impact, in accelerated progress, is significant.
 - The primary school sports funding is used extremely well to improve staff training and to provide pupils with additional sports and aspirational goals. An excellent presentation by a 2012 Paralympian medal winner during the inspection, to the whole school, enthralled and inspired pupils, and staff. As a result of the spending, more pupils are now involved in a wider range of sports and competitions.
 - The local authority has provided effective support for the school, for the early years as well as through the school. This has helped the school to ensure its assessments are accurate.
 - The school has established strong links with parents. Parents praise the school and would recommend it to other parents.
 - Statutory safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are effectively implemented. All staff are trained to the required levels and vetted before appointment. Records show that the school deals correctly with any incidents.
 - Subjects taught cover all the requirements and are often linked together, which boosts pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well overall, particularly the aspects that link with the school's status as a church school. British values, such as respect and tolerance, are taught well. Pupils are beginning to understand their rights and responsibilities as British citizens and this prepares them effectively for life in modern Britain.
 - The headteacher was quick to identify weaknesses in teaching writing skills through Year 1 to Year 6, following the 2014 Year 2 and Year 6 results. While there is clear, positive impact of action taken, particularly in Years 3 to 6, this is patchy in Years 1 and 2.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance is effective. Governors have reorganised themselves recently. New members have joined who have specific, relevant skills. Training has helped governors to be better informed about the school's work and the pace of improvement. They are more closely involved in school improvement and monitor progress carefully. They hold school leaders to account more fully.
 - Governors evaluate the school's performance in relation to schools nationally and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They have a clear grasp of data about pupils' standards and the progress they make.
 - Governors ensure that pay increases are aligned to teachers' performance and they know how weaknesses are being tackled.
 - The governing body, together with senior leaders, ensures that statutory duties are met, including those for keeping pupils safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good throughout the school. Pupils contribute well to the smooth running of the school through taking on responsibilities. Year 6 pupils have many duties, such as looking after younger children during lunch, or performing eco- and sports ambassador duties.
- Attendance is above average. This and pupils' beaming smiles show that they enjoy coming to school.
- Across the school, pupils demonstrate eagerness to learn. They are well motivated, work hard, persist with tasks in lessons and produce work to a good standard. Occasionally, they are too ready to coast along when learning is not demanding and this behaviour limits their learning.
- The playground is particularly calm and well supervised. The school's records show that, while occasionally individual pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour, serious behaviour incidents are rare. Exclusions have declined recently and pupils' behaviour is managed successfully.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The site is secure and carefully monitored. Staff respond immediately if pupils feel threatened in any way. Pupils feel safe and can give examples of staff dealing promptly with their concerns. Risk assessments are thorough. Staff are fully checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils are well aware of the potential risks they might meet and how to deal with them. The school actively helps pupils to protect themselves from a range of risks, including internet abuse and cyber-bullying.
- Pupils know that bullying may arise in different forms. They feel that only isolated instances arise, and are confident that staff will respond promptly if there are any concerns.
- Records, such as for fire risk, health and safety and behaviour incidents, meet requirements. Safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively. Staff are caring and vigilant.
- Early-arrivers at school receive good care in the breakfast club.

The quality of teaching is good

- Increasingly rapid progress, especially in Key Stage 2, reflects the improvements in teaching, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. They receive good help and guidance from all staff.
- The teaching is so well planned for pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium that their progress has accelerated significantly this year. Social skills and confidence are increased through astute use of the funding, and this boosts the overall impact of the teaching.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is effective, in the early years and elsewhere, with additional support for any pupils who need it. The teaching of reading provides pupils with high-quality technical skills and systematically extends their understanding of language. Consequently, even the weaker readers in Year 6 read well for their age.
- A particular strength is the questioning techniques teachers use in Key Stage 2. These almost always make pupils think hard and spark lively debate, extending learning. In mathematics, pupils made exceptional progress discussing mystery graphs and what they might represent, bringing creativity, imagination and ingenuity into play as well as mathematical expertise. Pupils much enjoyed having to explain fully their ideas and predictions and interrogate their graphs to ensure their theories could be proven. Overall, the teaching of mathematics has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers make effective use of the new and effective systems to check and improve pupils' progress. This has boosted progress overall and has ensured that those who may be falling behind are quickly identified and supported.
- Teachers' marking has improved, particularly for writing, since it was identified as an issue at the previous Ofsted subject survey for English. However, the teaching of writing is not leading to the same consistently high rates of progress as that for reading. Improvement in writing is a focus of the school development plan. The work to improve spelling, grammar and punctuation has had the greatest impact in Key Stage 2 where teaching is at its best, but is not fully effective across the school.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work are typically high. For Key Stage 1 pupils, while teaching is good overall, progress is occasionally less than good because work is not consistently challenging.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good overall. No pupils underachieve and many make good progress. Some make outstanding progress.
- From their good start in the early years, an above-average proportion of pupils attain the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check each year. This reflects the success of the school's teaching of phonics in the early years and Key Stage 1.
- The impact of the good grounding in phonics is that standards in reading are high. Year 6 readers of all abilities read well for pleasure and research. They are able to set stories in their historical context and discuss other stories that they have enjoyed, written by their chosen favourite authors.
- School data show that disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress. This is because the pupil premium is spent very wisely. There are too few to compare their attainment and performance with others in the class or nationally without potentially identifying them.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well because their needs are clearly identified and they are given the right care and attention. These pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good and sometimes rapid progress. Standards by the end of Year 6 are, in most years, above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, standards dipped, although most pupils had made at least the progress expected nationally between Years 3 and 6. A weakness in teaching writing through the school was quickly identified by the headteacher, because this had had an adverse impact on results in the English, grammar and spelling test. Effective strategies, such as more frequent checks of pupils' understanding of grammatical points and closer management of the aspect have led to improvement. There is no sign of any weakness now in Key Stage 2 although in Key Stage 1 the recovery has been slower.
- Typically, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has been average. School data and pupils' work indicate no underachievement. As in the rest of the school, progress is accelerating, but at a slower pace than elsewhere, due to the occasional lack of challenge.
- The most-able pupils usually achieve well. However, a smaller proportion than average reached the higher levels in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2014. Current Year 6 pupils tackle the very challenging Level 6 work, in reading, writing and mathematics, with ability and skill, because they are taught exceptionally well. In Year 2, a higher proportion of pupils are on track this year to achieve the high Level 3, but overall, the occasional lack of challenge, evident from observations and from pupils' workbooks in this key stage, is sometimes holding back rapid progress.

The early years provision is good

- The headteacher leads the early years well. She ensures that staff are focused on helping the children to make good progress in their learning and development, as well as promoting their safety and welfare effectively. Consequently, children behave well and are kept safe.
- Staff have created a well-resourced environment which has a positive impact on children's learning. The effective partnership with the local authority ensures the accuracy of assessments made by staff.
- Teaching is good overall. All adults, including teaching assistants, encourage children to share their ideas and develop their speaking skills. Resources are used well by staff to plan activities that cover all the areas of learning. Children mix readily with each other, learn to share and follow routines successfully. This helps them to achieve well from their individual starting points.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are included fully. They enjoy talking and playing with other children, and are well supported. They make the same rate of progress as their peers.
- A higher proportion of the children than average attain a good level of development. In 2014, all the children were successful in meeting the required standard in health and self-care in 2014, and all the boys also achieved this in physical development, personal education and technology. In communication and language, children lag a little behind those high standards, but overall they achieve well and are well prepared for Year 1.
- All the children's development is meticulously monitored by staff, and parents are kept closely informed about the progress their child is making through informal daily exchanges, regular meetings and thoroughly documented shared records.

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	120605
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	464163

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gordon Cannon
Headteacher	Jan Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2010
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