

Great Casterton C of E Primary School

Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Stamford, Rutland PE9 4AU

Inspection dates

29–30 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leadership is outstanding. The executive headteacher has successfully developed an efficient leadership team and she communicates high expectations across the school.
- Leaders fully support the headteacher's high expectations, and they are worthy role models for others in the school. This has encouraged high staff morale and contributed to the culture of raised aspirations.
- The governing body understands the school well. Governors ask sharp, challenging questions about achievement, and equally provide high-quality support.
- Communications with parents are effective. Parents are actively involved in the life of the school and frequently come in to help their children learn.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. This has lifted achievement to the excellent standard now seen across the school.
- Achievement is outstanding. Pupils make considerable progress as they move through each stage in the school. Outstanding progress has led to high proportions of Year 6 pupils achieving Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015.
- Children in the Reception Year make outstanding progress, and the proportion reaching a good level of development has consistently been above the national average for the last two years.
- Phonics is very well taught and, as a result, Year 1 pupils taking the national phonics check are ahead of others nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils, in recent years, have caught up with their classmates and successfully closed attainment gaps.
- Care and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are highly effective. The school's coordinator is committed to providing the very best fit for each individual. This underpins their rapid progress.
- Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and behave very well. Attendance has risen and remains consistently high. This shows the great value that pupils place on being in school and lies at the heart of their many successes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop excellent understanding and sensitivity towards others' beliefs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the strengths of the school curriculum, by including more opportunities for pupils to carry out science investigations, pose scientific questions and use their problem-solving skills to reach their own conclusions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The executive headteacher has successfully developed outstanding leaders in the school. The unswerving focus on values has raised expectations across the school and created a culture of high aspiration. This is openly communicated throughout the school.
 - As class teachers themselves, school leaders model their excellent practices and share expertise between Great Casterton C of E Primary School and the school with which it is federated, Empingham C of E Primary School. This has raised the quality of teaching to the outstanding level now seen and, in turn, raised pupils' achievements.
 - Staff morale is exceptionally high, and all responses to the questionnaires provided were highly positive about school leadership and the contribution made to staff professional development. Equally, parents' support and praise for the school is exceptionally positive, with many commenting directly on the impact of the executive headteacher.
 - Communications with parents are excellent and have become a strength of the school's work. Parents regularly take part in workshops and attend celebrations to support their children's achievements. The highly active parents' association makes an excellent contribution to maintain the immaculate school grounds and 'site Saturdays' are firmly established as vibrant community events.
 - Leaders make sure that teachers' pay and performance link directly to whole-school priorities and pupils' progress. This has contributed to the outstanding teaching now evident throughout the school.
 - School leaders ensure that staff are rigorous in following the school's policies. For example, all teachers provide high-quality information and guidance when marking pupils' work, and written and verbal comments offer a helpful balance between praising the pupils and showing them how they can improve their work.
 - The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils learn about others' faiths and beliefs through religious education lessons and thoughtful assembly themes; pupils engage keenly in discussions about different cultures. A group of Years 5 and 6 pupils learning about Sikhism listened avidly to the description of a 'Langar' and, seating themselves on the floor in a similar arrangement, enthusiastically debated the pros and cons, while making insightful comparisons with other faiths. Pupils understand the school's Christian values and ethos, and every opportunity is taken to promote a shared understanding of modern British values.
 - Equal opportunities are promoted rigorously, and no pupil is denied access to anything the school has to offer. The very harmonious school community ensures that all pupils feel valued and respected and they, in turn, show their mutual regard and care for each other.
 - Pupils enjoy learning through their topic work, which is effectively balanced by the core elements of the curriculum, such as reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum is both enhanced and enriched by a great variety of trips, visits and themed events to add depth to pupils' learning experiences. Science is a popular subject, and pupils keenly involve themselves in practical work offered. Pupils currently have limited opportunities to raise their own scientific questions and to follow through with investigations, in order to arrive at their own conclusions.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governors are highly effective in their roles. They have helped to improve the school. Communication between committees is swift, so that governors have an excellent understanding of current school issues.
 - Governors make frequent visits to the school and see first hand how well pupils are learning. Governors have an excellent understanding of new assessment systems and use this to ask leaders challenging questions about achievement.
 - The governing body has fully supported the appointment of the executive headteacher and the development of new leaders through the school's highly effective performance management systems.
 - Governors monitor key areas of the school's work and check that additional funds to raise pupils' involvement in sports and awareness of being healthy are used effectively.
 - Pupil premium funding is closely monitored and governors see how the additional funds are used to provide targeted support for pupils' phonics and reading activities, as well as specific mathematics help. They are passionate about allowing pupils access to school trips and activities and measure the

academic impact by the successful closure of in-school learning gaps.

- Governors check that the daily breakfast and after-school clubs are well run.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders have excellent partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies. This has helped to ensure that pupils are supported and kept safe. Designated safeguarding leads make thorough checks on all safeguarding practices, and governors ensure that their own training is up to date. Governors have made improvements to strengthen the security of the school site and added high-quality fencing to a length of the perimeter. Governors are committed to doing all they can to keep pupils safe and ensure that staff have all of the information and guidance they need to deal with a safeguarding concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The executive headteacher has placed a strong focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning. This is one of the main reasons why teaching has improved and is now outstanding.
- Teachers continually express their high expectations and pupils aspire to do their best to achieve them. Learning is very well planned, and teachers across both schools share their ideas and expertise, so that pupils in their classes have a good variety of challenging activities and opportunities from which to choose.
- Teachers encourage pupils to find things out for themselves and to try to resolve their own learning problems. This ethos develops resilience and high levels of confidence in pupils, who try to solve problems on their own before turning to adults for help with their work.
- Pupils understand what they are learning about because each lesson has a clear learning objective and pupils frequently direct themselves to the success criteria to check how well they are progressing. This high level of involvement contributes to pupils' enthusiasm for their learning and plays an important part in their raised expectations and achievements.
- Teachers encourage pupils to think carefully when reviewing their work and provide high-quality written and verbal feedback comments, which pupils reflect on. Daily 'MAD (make a difference) time' provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to respond to teachers' comments and direct their own next steps to improve their understanding.
- Phonics is exceptionally well taught in the early years and key stage 1. Pupils have excellent opportunities to use their phonics knowledge and skills to read unfamiliar and tricky words early on. This places them in a strong position to make accelerated progress in their reading as they move through each year group.
- The skills of writing are very well taught, and pupils consistently apply their skills when writing in all areas of their work. Pupils are challenged to write at length and in great depth and they successfully apply their excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar to create accurate, neatly presented pieces.
- Science is taught well, and pupils express great enthusiasm and interest for the subject. Although pupils are presented with some science practical work, their opportunities to investigate and use their own methods to find answers and solve scientific problems are limited.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form highly productive partnerships. Teachers skilfully direct teaching assistants to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high-quality support and achieve very well. Adults know their pupils and are sensitive to their needs, providing the right balance of support at the right time. As a result, they help to ensure that all pupils try their best and make the progress that they can.
- The most able pupils are regularly provided with the most challenging tasks and work. Year 6 pupils have a separate, weekly mathematics session to boost their higher-order thinking skills and further develop their depth of knowledge. This strategy was highly effective in raising standards to the higher levels in mathematics in 2015.
- Pupils appreciate and value homework, which is regularly set. This ranges from weekly spellings and mathematics practice to lengthier project pieces linked to their topic work. Good use is made of online learning packages, which help to prepare older pupils for the discipline of secondary school work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The small size of the school means that staff get to know pupils and their families well. Every child is known as an individual, and adults skilfully provide the highest levels of care and support. Pupils with additional needs receive sensitively tailored support, which enables them to learn and make excellent progress. This is carefully monitored by the special educational needs coordinator, who checks that the best package of support is put in place.
- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' health and emotional well-being and has many established partnerships with specialists to support those who are most vulnerable. A daily 'Sensory' circuits session for pupils who have specific needs helps to boost concentration, social skills and individuals' self-esteem. The learning mentor provides excellent support for those who are feeling vulnerable and particularly keeps a watchful eye over pupils whose parents are called away to serve in the armed forces.
- Pupils embrace responsibilities, such as being school councillors and sports leaders, and take the time to listen to others' views or to organise lunchtime sports activities. Pupils readily share their interests. A keen Year 5 birdwatcher sharing his enthusiasm for osprey conservation resulted in the appointment of two osprey ambassadors and the whole school participating in a global project. Pupils have been able to see the activity in the birds' nest and speak with pupils in schools around the world.
- This is a very reflective, caring school and pupils have many opportunities to think about their own and others' points of view. Pupils show great sensitivity when listening to others in the school and offer helpful suggestions if their advice is sought.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally positive learners. Attendance has risen and remains consistently above average. Pupils arrive on time and express genuine enjoyment in coming to school.
- School values lie at the heart of pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning. Pupils discuss their meanings keenly and show their helpfulness, empathy and compassion for each other. They are exceptionally polite and listen patiently to others without interruption.
- The school environment is calm and orderly, and pupils move around with ease, greeting their friends and classmates politely and speaking respectfully to staff and visitors. Parents, carers and staff agree that behaviour is excellent and that there are very few occasions when this is not the case.
- Pupils feel very safe in school, and are well informed about staying safe on the roads outside, through Bikeability training and road safety talks. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and vividly recall an internet safety film, which they were shown on a school safety awareness day. A pupil commented, 'The school works really hard to keep us safe', and several others nodded in agreement.
- The different forms of bullying are very well understood, and pupils agree that bullying is a very rare occurrence in their school. Adults are always on hand to listen if they have any concerns and the 'worry box' is easily accessible for those who prefer to express their views more privately. Pupils are confident that any issues raised are taken seriously and that adults deal with them quickly and effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress through the school from their different starting points. When compared with pupils nationally, the progress of Year 6 pupils in 2015 was high in all subjects. The proportions of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics was in line with the national figure.
- This excellent progress has led to higher than average proportions of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in combined, reading, writing and mathematics tests. Year 6 pupils were significantly ahead of others nationally in the spelling, punctuation and grammar test last year.
- The overall attainment of Year 2 pupils was significantly above the national figures and has been for the past two years. This supports the inspection findings that pupils reach above-average standards as they

move through each stage in the school.

- Reliable school assessment information, checked by the local authority, and the work in pupils' books, indicate that pupils are making excellent progress. This is consistent across subjects and in most year groups. Pupils currently in Year 6 are working at standards ahead of those expected for their age.
- The small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress in line with that of their classmates. This is as a result of receiving tailored, high-quality support in class and through additional specialist help when required.
- The most able pupils make excellent progress. Teachers know who the most able pupils are and provide challenging tasks to stretch them even further. Pupils, such as the Years 5 and 6 talented scientists, also participate in workshops and activities at their local secondary school.
- The small number of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium funding make at least good progress in most year groups. The small number of these pupils in Year 6 made excellent progress in all subjects. They successfully closed the learning gaps with their classmates in all subjects last year. At the higher Level 5, they were ahead of their classmates in the spelling, punctuation and grammar test. This shows the impact of the targeted support provided by the additional funding.
- The very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make at least good progress. Their needs are identified on an individual basis, and appropriate support is put into place.
- Pupils in Year 1 show a secure grasp of the principles of reading. Results in the national phonics screening check have been above the national standard for two of the last three years, and current pupils are working at an even higher level. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes towards reading and are encouraged to read for pleasure every day. Pupils have weekly time allocated in the library and enthuse about 'changeover book day' when they can choose from a good selection of different novels and non-fiction books. Pupils' bulging reading journals show that they read extensively in class and at home.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The children in the early years make excellent progress. Children typically enter with skills and abilities that are in line with those expected for their age. By the end of Reception Year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen consistently and remains above the national average. Children currently in Reception Year are working ahead of their predecessors, and every child has now reached the 'good' level of development. Half of the children in the early years phase, a higher proportion than previously, are at the 'exceeding' level of attainment. This represents outstanding progress.
- Teaching is outstanding, and the excellent partnership with the Reception class teaching assistant means that children's needs are quickly understood. They settle in easily and soon become immersed in the variety of exciting learning activities on offer.
- Exceptional phonics teaching develops children's early reading skills very well, and adults provide excellent opportunities for children to practise and extend them further.
- Adults express their high expectations in everything they do and use every activity as an opportunity to extend and challenge children further. While learning about the beach, children happily sing their well-known 'Come to the beach' song, replacing verses with their own descriptive sentences. This stimulates an array of different writing activities and is typical of the culture of high achievement, which is replicated throughout the school.
- Adults know each individual child in Reception very well and they have embraced the new online assessment system to capture children's achievements and track their progress. They are quick to identify when additional help is needed and to act swiftly to put this into place. This secures the excellent progress of every child.
- Adults encourage safe play and responsible use of resources, and every opportunity is taken to raise children's awareness of the potential perils outside school. For example, the story of 'Hansel and Gretel' is used to remind children that they must never be out alone and to teach them the importance of never speaking to strangers.
- Children learn the school values early on and frequently show their well-developed manners and excellent behaviour. The Reception children were highly praised for sitting patiently and attentively through the hour-long, whole-school music assembly.

- The extended outdoor area provides more space for children to learn, and adults use this creatively to continuously reinforce essential, early skills. Children preparing for snack-time outside gathered around the teacher as she counted out the healthy snacks, adding a price for children to add up, before taking their food and going to sit on the train in the fresh air.
- Parents frequently spend time reading with their children and attend open sessions such as 'Chance to share' to see how well their children are learning. Their input to children's learning journals is good, and they increasingly share their children's achievements at home through the new, online system.
- The excellent leadership of the early years ensures that standards remain high in all areas. The close partnership with the Class 1 teacher ensures that children are very well prepared for their next steps when the time comes to move up to Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	120185
Local authority	Rutland
Inspection number	10011742

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Rawlins
Executive headteacher	Anne Platt
Telephone number	01780 762417
Website	www.greatcastertonprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	office@greatcasterton.rutland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. A new executive headteacher joined the school in August 2015.
- The school is in a federation with Empingham Church of England Primary School. The two schools are led by the executive headteacher and a single governing body.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and, therefore, supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- More pupils than are seen typically, leave and join the school in the older year groups. This is partly due to parents and carers who are in the employment of the armed forces.
- The school runs daily breakfast and after-school clubs, which are overseen by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed eight lessons, including phonics (letters and their sounds) and guided reading. Four were jointly seen with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher.
- The inspector observed support in class for pupils who need additional help with their learning, listened to readers and attended a whole-school music celebration assembly supported by parents and carers.
- The inspector looked closely at pupils' work in every class and did some of this jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector spoke informally with parents at the start of each day and took note of their views through the 29 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Staff expressed their views by speaking with the inspector and returned 11 online questionnaires for analysis.
- The inspector spoke with pupils around the school and met with two groups of pupils for a discussion about their experiences of life in the school. Pupils' views were also noted through the 25 online questionnaires that were completed.
- The inspector met with five governors to discuss their work with the school. Discussions were held with school leaders responsible for checking English, mathematics and the early years, and for coordinating special educational needs.
- The inspector checked school documentation on attendance and behaviour and looked closely at pupils' current progress and the monitoring of safeguarding. She looked at records of governors' meetings and how the school manages staff performance.

Inspection team

Aune Turkson-Jones, Lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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