

The Viking School

140 Church Road North, Skegness, Lincolnshire PE25 2QJ

Inspection dates

7–9 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor and the headteacher have not ensured that all independent school standards and early years foundation stage welfare requirements are met.
- The proprietor is not ensuring that the school's health and safety policies are followed. Risks to pupils are not identified and addressed quickly.
- Leaders and teachers do not receive the training they need to carry out their responsibilities. As a result, the school has declined since the last inspection.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's success. The school improvement plan is inadequate, so the school lacks the capacity to improve further.
- Staff do not have a good understanding of what pupils should be achieving for their age. Expectations of pupils' work, especially the most able, are not high enough.
- Teachers do not make accurate assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to plan activities to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- The teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects is weak. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Leaders do not have an effective system for checking that pupils are making good progress.
- The proprietor does not ensure that the headteacher and team maintain high standards in all aspects of school life.

The school has the following strengths

- Children settle quickly in the pre-school and they are well prepared for starting school.
- Staff know the pupils very well. Pupils are happy and their conduct around school is good.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take immediate action to improve safeguarding in school and to ensure pupils' welfare, by:
 - establishing regular and rigorous checks to ensure that the premises are safe
 - identifying potential risks to pupils and taking action to ensure that they are minimised.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - school leaders understand all independent school standards and the welfare requirements of the statutory framework for the early years and foundation stage
 - monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is regular and accurate
 - school leaders have an effective plan for providing all staff with the high-quality training needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities
 - the school's improvement plan has a sharp focus on the important actions needed to secure improvement, precise timescales and details of how progress will be checked
 - there is an effective system for checking that pupils of all abilities are making good progress
 - curriculum guidance provides teachers with a clear framework for planning learning so that pupils make good progress in all subjects
 - the proprietor develops systems for holding the headteacher and staff to account for ensuring high standards and rapid improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - assess pupils' work accurately
 - use assessment information to plan learning that is well matched to pupils' abilities, especially the most able
 - provide pupils with regular opportunities to plan and produce a range of different types of writing
 - have higher expectations of pupils' application of punctuation and handwriting in their English work and other subjects
 - ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to reason and to solve a range of problems in mathematics
 - have the skills to teach reading effectively, including early phonics and reading comprehension skills such as inference and deduction.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor and headteacher do not have a good understanding of the independent school standards. Consequently, there are many unmet standards, particularly in relation to the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- The school's effectiveness has declined since the last inspection because the headteacher and other staff have not had sufficient training or time to carry out their roles effectively. Apart from the headteacher and leader with responsibility for safeguarding, there are no other staff in the main school that have leadership responsibilities for school improvement.
- Senior leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. This is partly because leaders have not kept up to date with the higher national expectations for pupils' learning and staff are not aware of expectations in other schools.
- The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. Although leaders have correctly identified that assessment is a priority for improvement, the main strategy for improving assessment is to use a system that does not match the school's curriculum and is out of date. Many of the other improvement priorities in the school's plan are not appropriate. The plan is not specific about timescales for improvement or the improvements expected in pupils' learning.
- Leaders' system for checking pupils' progress is inadequate. The school's records show pupils' attainment in levels that do not match the school's curriculum plans. The system does not allow leaders to check that different ability groups are making good progress. For example, the most able pupils in Year 5 reached the highest point in the school assessment system last year and there are no next steps in their learning for them this year.
- Leaders have not provided teachers with clear curriculum guidance for planning learning. Consequently, teachers dip into a multitude of uncoordinated resources. The result is that pupils do not build on learning and achieve well as they move through the school.
- Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities and educational visits offered by the school. Pupils say they have enjoyed a visit to a farm to learn about caring for animals. They benefit from a range of clubs, including Zumba, bingo and mindfulness colouring.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development adequately. Pupils' social and moral development are the strongest elements. Pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong. They respect institutions such as the police. All staff are committed to ensuring that pupils leave the school as responsible and considerate members of society.
- Leaders are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders are successful in promoting positive attitudes among pupils. Pupils are respectful and say that 'everyone is special and unique'.
- Leaders provide parents with regular reports on pupils' learning. Inspectors found that the reports had no guidance for parents about next steps for their children.
- Parents are unanimous in their positive views of the school. They feel that their children

benefit from the encouragement of the friendly and caring staff.

Governance

- The proprietor has not provided the headteacher with the training, guidance and the time she needs to have a secure understanding of good teaching and learning.
- Although the proprietor is very 'hands-on' and supports the day-to-day running of the school, she does not provide the headteacher with effective challenge and support for leadership.
- The proprietor does not have an effective way of reviewing the headteacher's performance and holding her to account for ensuring that the school is making good progress in priority areas.
- The proprietor knows the families well that are served by the school. She is a trusted figure in the community. She has established a tightly knit team of caring staff who are supportive of each other and are very committed to the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The proprietor does not ensure that staff follow the school's health, safety and fire safety policies. As a result, the school lacks a culture of vigilance so risks to pupils' welfare are not identified quickly and addressed promptly.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets the most recent government guidance for child protection and is easily available to parents on the school's website.
- The proprietor ensures that the member of staff with responsibility for child protection receives regular, high-quality training. The outcomes from child protection training are then shared with all members of staff. Everyone understands their responsibilities for child protection and is alert to potential current risks in the community.
- Where staff have concerns about a vulnerable pupil they keep very careful records. They work very closely with parents, police, the local authority and other agencies to ensure that the pupil and family get the right help.
- The proprietor is trained in safer recruitment. She is meticulous in checking references and ensuring that legally required checks are complete before staff start work at the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe in a range of situations. Pupils who spoke to the inspector explained that a talk from a lifeguard has helped them to understand how to stay safe on the beach.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because teachers do not make accurate assessments of pupils' starting points and do not match activities to pupils' needs. Workbooks and folders, across a range of curriculum areas, show that the pupils often do the same task regardless of their age or ability. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work are

too low, so pupils are often given undemanding work.

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching effectively. As a result, the quality of teaching is very variable across a range of subjects.
- The teaching of writing is poor. In most classes, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in English lessons or other subjects. In many classes, pupils do not have opportunities to learn about different types of writing. In some classes, pupils are not expected to plan their own written work and all pupils simply copy the same piece of writing. Frequently, teachers write comments like 'well done' and 'excellent' when pupils are making basic errors in punctuation. All these weaknesses in teaching limit pupils' progress in writing.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with regular opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge, to use reasoning and to solve problems. As a result, pupils' skills in these areas are weak.
- The teaching of reading is inadequate. This is because teachers do not possess the knowledge they need to teach phonics well. For example, teachers do not provide pupils with good models of letter sounds. This limits pupils' ability to blend sounds together and to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils are not given the opportunities they need to develop more advanced reading skills. Consequently, their ability to deduce and infer information is underdeveloped. Pupils say they enjoy reading and the school has plenty of books.
- The relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils respond well to adults' requests and instructions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The proprietor has not ensured that many of the standards relating to health, welfare and safety of pupils are met. Health and safety checks are not sufficiently rigorous. Risks are not always identified and so leaders do not take actions to minimise risk to pupils. The school does not follow its own policies for safety. This puts pupils' welfare at risk.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their sense of responsibility and confidence. For example, many pupils have special jobs at lunchtime and enjoy helping younger pupils.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying, including physical, racial and homophobic bullying. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that bullying is not a problem in school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. During the inspection, pupils explained what they had learned from a police talk about e-safety. Some pupils told the inspector how they had helped their parents to stay safe when working online.
- Key stage 2 pupils say they enjoy physical education lessons. Pupils understand how exercise is important to stay healthy and can explain why a 'warm up' before exercise can

help to avoid injury. The youngest pupils enjoy using a range of outdoor equipment to have active and sociable play and lunchtimes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the school sensibly and do not require reminders from adults about how to behave. Standards of behaviour in the lunch hall are high. Around the school, pupils are consistently polite to each other, to adults and to visitors.
- School records and inspectors' discussions with pupils show that behaviour rarely falls short of the expected standards.
- The school environment is very clean and tidy. Pupils respect the resources, building and grounds.
- During lessons, pupils' behaviour in almost all classes is good. Sometimes standards slip a little when pupils do not find lessons interesting and engaging.
- Levels of attendance are below average and have declined since the last inspection. This is because there is a small number of pupils who have taken holidays during term time.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' work from this year and the last academic year shows that pupils of all abilities do not make the progress that they should.
- Pupils underachieve in all subjects because leaders have not ensured that curriculum plans give teachers the guidance they need to make sure that pupils achieve well.
- In almost all classes, pupils are not making enough progress in writing. Pupils do not have a good understanding of the features of different types of writing. Standards of punctuation are very inconsistent. For example, pupils in Year 4 regularly use full stops, capital letters and a range of other punctuation correctly. In contrast, pupils in Year 5 and 6 do not routinely use full stops and capital letters.
- Standards of handwriting are low because teachers do not have high expectations of pupils. Pupils' progress in spelling is stronger than other areas.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is weak because the school does not have an adequate scheme of progression for teaching basic skills in this area. For example, pupils who were able to add double-digit numbers correctly using column addition were then required to identify two numbers that add up to five and then given some undemanding colouring work.
- Standards in reading are low across the whole school. Pupils at the end of key stage 1 do not have a good understanding of the sounds that letters make. As a result, pupils cannot identify basic letter sounds such as 'th' and cannot blend sounds together to read unfamiliar words. The most able pupils in upper key stage 2 are not fluent and stumble on words that they should be able to read using letter sounds.
- There is a similar picture of low expectations and limited progress across other subjects. For example, religious education books and history files show that pupils are rarely

challenged to think hard or reason for themselves.

- The low standards across the curriculum mean that pupils are not being well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- The proprietor has not ensured that the necessary risk assessments and health and safety checks are in place. As a result, children are put at risk and the early years provision fails to meet the legal early years welfare requirements.
- The pre-school setting is nurturing and works well with parents. Consequently, the youngest children settle very quickly, get a good start to their education and are well prepared for starting school.
- Children in the pre-school enjoy a range of carefully planned activities. As a result, children develop good concentration, curiosity, social and language skills. During the inspection, children were engrossed as they developed their creative and physical skills by drawing firework patterns in coloured sand. An adult who was alongside the children encouraged them to speak about the fireworks they had seen at the weekend. Some children even went on to describe how they felt when the fireworks went bang.
- Adults in the pre-school setting know the children very well indeed. They make individual learning plans for each child. The pre-school manager keeps a careful check on children's progress and ensures that learning plans are adjusted so that children of all abilities make strong progress. Children leave the pre-school well prepared for life in school.
- The pre-school manager is experienced and knowledgeable. She works effectively with her team and ensures that her staff receive regular support and guidance. As a result, teaching is strong across all age groups and all groups of children achieve well.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the Reception class is not the same standard as in the pre-school. School leaders do not provide the support, training and guidance needed to secure good teaching and learning in the Reception class.

School details

Unique reference number	120739
DfE registration number	925/6033
Inspection number	10033526

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Number of part-time pupils	42
Proprietor	Mrs S J Barker
Headteacher	Laura Middlebrook
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,350
Telephone number	01754 765749
Website	www.vikingschool.co.uk
Email address	principal@vikingschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–6 June 2014

Information about this school

- The Viking School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Since the previous inspection, the pre-school has admitted two-year-old children on a part-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- Two inspectors observed learning in all classes in the main school. An inspector visited pre-school classes with the pre-school manager. The proprietor and headteacher were invited to take part in classroom visits but declined this offer.
- Two inspectors carried out book scrutinies with the proprietor and headteacher. At the request of the school, two inspectors also carried out a book scrutiny of books from last year.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at playtime and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor, the headteacher, the pre-school leader, the designated leader for safeguarding, the coordinator for SEN and/or disabilities and two members of staff.
- An inspector held formal meetings with pupils. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally in lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan; curriculum plans; records of attendance, risk assessments, school policies, behaviour and safeguarding, and information about the achievement of current pupils.
- An inspector reviewed the school's website and carried out a tour of the premises alongside the school proprietor.
- The lead inspector took into account the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, parent responses to the free-text service and responses to the staff survey. An inspector spoke with seven parents as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Carol Smith, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Andrew	Ofsted Inspector
Deirdre Duignan	Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage

The school does not comply with the statutory early years foundation stage safeguarding and welfare requirements. Requirements are met if–

3.2. Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. The requirements in this section explain what early years providers must do to: safeguard children; ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records, policies and procedures.

3.54. Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (including fire safety and hygiene requirements).

3.55. Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency, and must have an emergency evacuation procedure. Providers must have appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which is in working order. Fire exits must be clearly identifiable, and fire doors must be free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.

3.64. Providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to ensure that staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk

assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.

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