

The Viking School

140 Church Road North, Skegness, Lincolnshire PE25 2QJ

Inspection dates

11–13 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders lack some understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the school's action planning lacks some of the detail and focus needed to ensure rapid improvement.
- The checks carried out on teaching and learning lack precision, and weaknesses are not clearly identified or followed up rigorously.
- The school's appraisal process does not focus sufficiently on how teachers can improve outcomes for pupils. The proprietor does not ensure that all teachers receive the professional development and training they need to ensure that teaching is of a consistently high standard.
- Leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve. Some pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' work in books is not well presented and does not fully reflect pupils' abilities. There are too few opportunities for pupils of all ages to write independently for different purposes.
- Teaching does not routinely help pupils to develop reasoning skills in mathematics and to apply what they know in a range of contexts.
- The proprietor has ensured that all independent school standards have been met.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff have a strong commitment to the school and the pupils. They create an environment where pupils are happy and feel safe.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and have confidence in the school to look after their children and support their learning effectively.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years.
- The curriculum themes interest pupils and cover a range of subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. They are respectful of others and develop good social skills.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in order to increase the pace of improvements by ensuring that:
 - the school has an action plan which clearly shows what needs to be improved and how this will be achieved
 - the monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out regularly and clearly identifies the points for improvement
 - the proprietor provides teachers with the support, professional development and training needed to secure consistently effective teaching
 - the proprietor uses appraisal to hold staff to account for their contribution to raising standards and improving provision.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan learning which challenges pupils, particularly the most able
 - pupils make sufficient progress to achieve the standards of which they are capable
 - pupils' work is well presented and they routinely apply the basic skills of phonics, spelling, grammar and punctuation in their written work
 - teachers provide opportunities for pupils of all ages to write independently, for different purposes and audiences
 - pupils develop and use reasoning skills and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in a range of contexts.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor and headteacher have taken action to address the previously unmet independent school standards. They acted in a timely manner to ensure that all the required welfare, health and safety standards were rectified quickly.
- Leaders do not have a fully clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and this is reflected in the school's improvement planning. Although leaders generated an action plan based on the recommendations of the previous inspection, there is insufficient detail to ensure that the necessary improvements will take place.
- The local authority's early years team has provided strong support for the school to ensure that the statutory welfare requirements for the early years are met. It has also provided advice on teaching and learning. As a result, staff have gained confidence, and provision in the pre-school and for two- and three-year-olds has improved.
- The proprietor and headteacher regularly monitor the quality of teaching in the main school. However, records of monitoring activities indicate that there is a lack of focus, and so weaknesses are not clearly identified or followed up rigorously. Therefore, improvements have been slower than in the pre-school setting.
- Leaders have introduced a new assessment system which tracks pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is still at an early stage, but leaders are now able to identify pupils at risk of falling behind or who could do better.
- The curriculum is taught through half-termly themed topics. Medium-term plans show what will be taught in different subjects. This helps teachers to plan sequences of lessons that build pupils' knowledge step by step. Pupils say that they enjoy a wide range of subjects and are enthusiastic about their learning. They talk about topics they have enjoyed previously, remembering aspects of particular interest.
- Leaders' promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequate, although there are limited opportunities to extend pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding or for them to be involved with the wider local community. Pupils show an awareness of other religions and demonstrate tolerance and respect for the views and beliefs of others. Older pupils, discussing the importance of British values, agreed with one pupil who said that such values 'can help shape the person you are'.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They praise the commitment of the teachers and have confidence in staff to look after their children and keep them safe. Leaders report regularly to parents about their children's progress, and parents say that they are kept well informed.

Governance

- The proprietor maintains a constant presence in the school. She plays an active part in the day-to-day life of the school and knows the children and their families very well. She has worked with many of the staff over a long period of time, maintaining a team that are supportive of each other and have a strong commitment to the school and the

children it serves.

- Although the proprietor ensures that annual appraisals are carried out with staff, the process does not focus sufficiently on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The proprietor has not provided training and professional development for teachers of key stages 1 and 2 that focuses on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leaders are well trained and knowledgeable. Staff have received a wide range of safeguarding-related training.
- Staff know the procedures that are in place for child protection and pass on any concerns to the designated safeguarding leaders. Such concerns are followed up and documented in detail. The school works effectively with external agencies when necessary.
- The proprietor is trained in safer recruitment and ensures that all the necessary checks have been made before a new member of staff starts at the school. Records of staff suitability checks are carefully maintained.
- The safeguarding policy is available on the school website and contains up-to-date government guidance for child protection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent throughout the school. At times, teachers' expectations are not high enough and there is a lack of challenge, particularly for most-able pupils. A number of pupils, of varying abilities, said that they enjoy being challenged, but their work is 'sometimes easy'.
- When teachers plan sequences of lessons, pupils say that they find it helpful when they have the opportunity to briefly revisit earlier learning. For example, in a history lesson, the initial part of the lesson was used to check what pupils had remembered and probe their understanding. A lively, focused discussion set the scene for the next steps in learning and prepared pupils to move on quickly and with enthusiasm.
- Teachers use questioning to check pupils' knowledge and also to extend their learning. Teachers frequently provide pupils with feedback on their work. This is often verbal, so pupils receive individual support to improve their work.
- Teachers carry out termly assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do. Regular reviews of assessments help teachers plan for pupils' next steps in learning.
- Pupils say that they are well supported in their learning and know what to do because there are objectives introduced at the beginning of a lesson. They also say that the 'I can' statements help them know what they need to achieve in their work. However, learning objectives are often too broad, so pupils are not sure which are the most important parts of what they need to learn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships are good and pupils describe the school as 'very safe' and say that there is no bullying. Pupils have an understanding of different types of bullying and can explain how bullying differs from 'falling out' with a friend. Pupils know that they can go to a teacher if they have any worries and have confidence that concerns will be followed up and resolved.
- Older pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities, for example helping younger pupils at lunchtime or helping to move and set up physical education (PE) equipment for their lesson. They value the 'family' atmosphere in the school, saying that they have lots of friends.
- Pupils value their learning, and all pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils are keen to try hard and do their best. They have positive attitudes to school life in general and are confident learners.
- Pupils learn about healthy, active lifestyles. For example, they swim regularly and also learn about water safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct is good. They behave well in lessons and at other times of the day. They say that they enjoy the social times of the day, when they can chat and play with friends.
- Pupils are respectful towards each other and to adults. They use the school's resources and amenities with care. There are very few recorded incidents of poor behaviour.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Any unplanned absences are followed up thoroughly and in a timely manner.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The work in pupils' books shows some improvement since the previous inspection. Work in English and mathematics is broadly at standards appropriate to pupils' ages, but does not demonstrate additional challenge for the most able pupils.
- Pupils develop sound basic skills in number and calculation. They also use these skills to tackle mathematical problems. However, they are less adept in mathematical reasoning skills and applying their knowledge in a range of contexts, or in explaining and justifying their answers.
- Older pupils read fluently and widely, often choosing books that both interest and challenge them. They have good comprehension skills and can use evidence in the text to find information and speculate about plot lines and character traits. Younger pupils enjoy reading, but are less confident when tackling unfamiliar words because their

phonic knowledge is not secure.

- The standard of pupils' writing is variable both in English and more widely in a range of subjects. This is because pupils do not develop effectively their skills to write for different purposes. Much work is focused on recording information rather than developing pupils' understanding of the features of different types of writing. Younger pupils in particular complete much of their work on printed worksheets, copying answers rather than writing their own sentences.
- Work in pupils' books is not well presented and often does not reflect pupils' abilities. Handwriting is not consistently neat and well formed. Punctuation is not routinely accurate.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- All statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements for the early years are met. The recent support from the local authority's early years team has been valued and its advice put into practice.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. The pre-school manager is experienced, knowledgeable and has a sound overview of children's progress and their individual needs. The school's assessments have been moderated by the local authority and found to be accurate.
- When children join the school, sometimes as young as two years old, they settle quickly and enjoy their new surroundings. They soon become accustomed to the expectations for behaviour and develop positive attitudes to their learning. Consistently effective teaching in the pre-school ensures that children are well prepared for starting in the main school.
- Initial baseline assessments show that most children have the skills and knowledge expected for their age. Children's progress is tracked methodically and recorded in individual learning journeys. Parents are encouraged to contribute information and take an active interest in their children's learning. Throughout the pre-school, progress for all groups of children is strong.
- Adults in the pre-school setting know the children very well and address children's individual learning needs through carefully planned activities. For example, a phonics session focused on helping children at various stages of their learning distinguish different sounds. Children were enthusiastic in their use of musical instruments, listening to different recorded sounds and identifying the initial sounds of words. Adults also promoted new vocabulary and developed children's speaking and listening skills.
- Progress for children in the Reception class is slower than in the pre-school. For example, in phonics, the pace of learning slows because teaching is not well matched to the needs of the children. Therefore, children do not make good progress overall during their time in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	120739
DfE registration number	925/6033
Inspection number	10094046

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	81
Number of part-time pupils	45
Proprietor	Sandra Barker
Headteacher	Laura Middlebrook
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,800
Telephone number	01754 765749
Website	www.vikingschool.co.uk
Email address	principal@vikingschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–9 November 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is situated in the coastal town of Skegness. Pupils are drawn from the town and the wider local area.
- Approximately half the pupils attend part time in the pre-school setting. Reception children are taught alongside Year 1 pupils in the main school.
- This inspection also included a progress monitoring inspection to check on the progress made by the school since it was judged inadequate in 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes during the inspection and observed pupils at other times of the school day. Some lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the headteacher, the pre-school manager and members of staff with specific responsibilities. They also spoke informally with pupils and a number of parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' books alongside school leaders and considered a range of assessment information relating to pupils' academic progress.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including policies, safeguarding records and action plans.
- Inspectors carried out activities to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. They reviewed a range of information specifically relating to previously unmet standards.
- Inspectors considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and took into account seven responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

Janis Warren

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