

# The St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Boston

Woad Farm Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 0EF

## Inspection dates

10–11 July 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	Requires improvement
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

- Senior leaders have made significant improvements to the school. However, the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make are not consistently good in all year groups and subjects.
- Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not attain highly enough in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils are not well prepared for the next stages of education.
- Lower-attaining pupils do not decode words successfully or read fluently.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, the quality of pupils' work in the humanities and the arts is weak.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is increasingly effective. However, the leadership of other subjects is underdeveloped.
- Some pupils do not have a good understanding of fundamental British values. Some older pupils do not have a deep knowledge of different people, cultures and faiths.
- Some teachers do not explain learning well enough. Some pupils do not check and improve their work independently.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons is good. However, some pupils do not manage their own behaviour well at lunchtimes.
- The early years provision is improving. However, some children do not make the progress they are capable of and do not attain a good level of development.
- Pupils' attendance continues to improve. However, pupils who speak English as an additional language do not attend school regularly enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and members of the interim executive board are a strong and cohesive team. Together, they are quickly improving the quality of education that pupils receive.
- The school is inclusive and welcoming. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective.
- Pupils are tolerant, respectful and polite.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the curriculum for the humanities and the arts is further developed to ensure that pupils acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding of what has been taught by the time they leave key stage 2
  - the curriculum provides increased opportunities for pupils to learn about and understand fundamental British values and different faiths and cultures
  - subject leaders understand and develop their roles in monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
  - pupil premium funding is used more effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers:
  - improve the decoding skills of lower-attaining pupils so that they can read more fluently
  - explain learning carefully and sequentially so that pupils can understand what is expected of them and can complete tasks independently
  - develop pupils' abilities to check, correct and improve their own work
  - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in the humanities and the arts.
- Improve outcomes by ensuring that:
  - more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in key stages 1 and 2 achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics so that they are better prepared for the next stages of education
  - the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check increases and is at least in line with the national average
  - more pupils achieve well in the humanities and the arts.
- Improve the effectiveness of the early years by ensuring that staff have higher expectations of what children can achieve, particularly in numeracy, so that a greater proportion achieve a good level of development.
- Improve the effectiveness of personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
  - pupils who speak English as an additional language attend school more regularly
  - pupils have a greater understanding of people from other cultures and faiths so that they are better prepared to be active citizens in a multicultural society
  - pupils behave well throughout the school day.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school by example. They have worked with determination to rapidly address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Although some weaknesses remain, they have ensured that pupils receive an acceptable standard of education and that the capacity for further improvement is strong.
- Senior leaders are honest and reflective about the school's performance. They have a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses that exist. They have put plans in place that focus sharply on developing the quality of teaching and learning and strengthening leadership to ensure that the school quickly becomes a good school. While significant improvements have been made, some aspects of these plans have not yet been fully successful.
- Senior leaders are aspirational for all pupils. They are committed to ensuring that pupils enjoy school and that they achieve their very best. They have built stronger relationships with parents and carers. Parents trust leaders and recognise the improvements that have been made in the last year.
- Senior leaders provide extensive support for teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This support has been successful for some teachers, but not all. Nevertheless, staff value this support. They are proud to work at the school and recognise the impact of senior leaders in moving the school forwards. Staff morale is high.
- Over the course of the last year, the school has received a well-coordinated package of support from the local authority and the Boston Witham Academies Federation (BAAF). This support has been pivotal in securing improvements to teaching and learning and the development of middle leaders. There is a shared sense of responsibility for the school and a passion to improve the lives of its pupils and their families.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is improving. Middle leaders have made a positive start to their roles. They have a growing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. With the support of senior leaders, they are beginning to improve teaching in some classes. As yet, the impact of their work is not seen in pupils' outcomes.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is improving. Pupils with SEND are identified accurately and in close partnership with parents. The BAAF special educational needs coordinator analyses assessment information regularly and tracks these pupils to ensure that their specific needs are met. They plan targeted support and interventions for pupils so that they catch up. Skilled teaching assistants are deployed to work with pupils with complex SEND so that they can access the curriculum alongside their peers.
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding is used with increasing effect. Funding is used to provide a wide range of clubs, such as badminton, football, dodgeball and 'capture the castle'. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to competitive sports, with

both boys' and girls' football teams performing well in the county. Specialist PE coaches are deployed to teach lessons alongside teachers.

- Leaders ensure that there is a plan and strategy for the spending of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils. However, the use of funding to date has not been fully effective in ensuring that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improve in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped. Some subjects are not well led or are without a responsible lead. Consequently, the quality of teaching in these subjects is not monitored or evaluated effectively, and in some subjects it remains weak.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, leaders do not ensure that the curriculum for the humanities and the arts is planned in enough depth so that pupils acquire a deep knowledge and understanding in these areas. Learning in these curriculum areas is not sequenced well enough so that pupils can remember and recall what they have been taught.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is improving. Leaders ensure that pupils have varied opportunities to reflect on the school values, such as 'resilience', 'respect' and 'peace', and to develop a strong sense of 'right and wrong'. However, pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures is limited. Some older pupils do not understand fundamental British values. They are not as fully prepared for life in modern Britain as they should be.

## **Governance of the school**

- The interim executive board replaced the governing body in February 2019. Since their appointment, members of the board have been relentless in ensuring that leaders are held to account effectively for the school's performance.
- The interim executive board consists of members with varied skills and experiences, including those from education, civil services and the local community. They use their wide and varied knowledge to ask thoughtful and challenging questions.
- Members of the board receive detailed reports from leaders about the impact of actions to improve the school. They make regular visits to the school to meet with leaders and check first-hand the impact of these improvements on teaching, learning and outcomes. Consequently, they have quickly secured a precise understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The member of the board responsible for safeguarding is well trained and knowledgeable. She undertakes regular checks of the school's recruitment and vetting procedures and completes thorough audits of safeguarding procedures. For example, she reviews anonymised case files for pupils at risk of harm to check that leaders have taken timely action to keep these pupils safe.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. Staff are well trained and their knowledge is regularly updated. Staff are vigilant and aware of the signs of abuse and how to access help for pupils.
- Leaders know pupils and their families well. They build effective and respectful relationships with vulnerable families and are tenacious in seeking and providing support for them from a wide range of external agencies, such as independent domestic violence advisers and women's aid.
- Leaders contribute effectively to plans for pupils who are at risk of harm or who are on the child protection register. They liaise and share information with external agencies, including local authority social care and early help professionals.
- Most pupils say that they feel safe in school and are well cared for by staff. Leaders provide a range of 'in-house' support for vulnerable pupils, including talk time, 'toast club' and 'friends' nurture programmes.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe and can effectively identify and manage a wide range of potential dangers and risks, including when online. Parents agree that the school is a safe place for their children. A typical parental comment was, 'Staff always keep my child safe. They have gone above and beyond to meet their needs.'

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Although teaching and learning are improving, particularly in English and mathematics, they are not yet consistently good across all year groups and all subjects.
- When teaching is weaker, teachers do not model or explain learning clearly. They do not give pupils enough time to understand the information they are given before moving on to more challenging work. When this happens, some pupils do not understand the tasks they are given and they cannot access learning independently.
- Some teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in English and mathematics. They attempt to provide suitably challenging work to stretch and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, there are occasions when this is not successful. Teachers move pupils on to challenging work that does not match what has previously been taught in the lesson. When this happens, pupils can struggle to rise to the challenge and are unable to complete their work independently.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are often too quick to spot errors in pupils' work. They overly support some pupils to write in English or to complete calculations in mathematics. As a result, some pupils do not possess the skills needed to check and improve their own work.
- Phonics is typically well taught. However, on some occasions, pupils are given books to read that are not well matched to their abilities, particularly lower-attaining pupils. Sometimes these texts are too easy or too difficult. Consequently, some of these pupils do not have the skills needed to successfully decode words or to read fluently.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in the humanities and the arts. The quality of teaching and learning in these areas is inconsistent. Some pupils do not produce work of a good standard.

- Teachers and teaching assistants have positive relationships with pupils. They know pupils well and work hard to ensure that pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and learning.
- When teaching is stronger, teachers use secure subject knowledge to ask questions that check and deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in one English lesson, the teacher asked, 'What does optimistic mean?'
- Teachers increasingly use assessment information effectively to plan lessons. As a result, most pupils receive work that is well matched to their abilities in English and mathematics. More pupils now have the knowledge and skills expected for their age.
- Some teachers skilfully use their understanding of pupils' prior learning to encourage pupils to think and debate. For example, one teacher asked, 'If you can't answer the question, think back to yesterday, when we examined the viewpoints of the author.'
- Teachers provide feedback which is consistently in line with the school's marking policy. This feedback is well considered and supports pupils' learning and development.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively. They provide a high level of support to pupils, particularly pupils with SEND. They tailor learning for these pupils so that they can participate fully in lessons.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils say that they are resilient. A typical pupil comment was, 'We never give up and always try our best.' However, some pupils are unable to persevere with work in the absence of adult support.
- Pupils are tolerant and respectful. However, very few pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of fundamental British values. Some pupils do not know enough about the different people, cultures and faiths in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy being together in school. Most pupils are friendly and kind. A typical pupil comment was, 'Everyone is welcome in our school.'
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they have in school. For example, pupils spoke enthusiastically about being 'mini police'. They check behaviour at lunchtimes, support younger pupils to play games and work with community police officers to check for dangerous driving around the nearby roads close to school.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They know the importance of eating fruit and vegetables and about getting enough daily exercise. Pupils understand the importance of oral hygiene. Leaders work with the 'Smile Project' to ensure that pupils receive toothbrushes and daily practice of brushing their teeth.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a secure understanding of how to stay safe. They are taught how to keep safe when online and know not to speak to strangers. They know how to cross roads safely and the importance of wearing a

helmet when cycling.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behave well in lessons. They are polite and well mannered. Most listen attentively to adults. However, some pupils' behaviour at breaktimes is not consistently good. In the absence of teaching staff, some pupils do not regulate or manage their own behaviour well enough.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve attendance. They have established clear systems and expectations for pupils' attendance. These are comprehensive and effective in improving pupils' attendance, in most cases. More pupils attend school regularly, and persistent absence has fallen significantly in the last 12 months. However, some pupils who speak English as an additional language do not attend school regularly enough.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Leaders ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently applied. Leaders, supported by teaching staff, have high expectations of pupils' conduct.
- Leaders ensure that those pupils who are at risk of exclusion are well supported. Leaders, supported by staff, provide bespoke support and personalised curriculums for these pupils. There have been no fixed-term exclusions this year, compared to previous years when the exclusion rate was significantly higher than the national average. There is a strong commitment to inclusion threaded throughout the school's pastoral leadership.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Although pupils' attainment is improving steadily this year, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 are typically below the national averages. Some pupils are not fully prepared for the next stages of education.
- Current pupils, including those with SEND, make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than has previously been the case. However, over time, they have not made consistently good progress in all year groups. Some pupils have not achieved what they are capable of in English and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics is improving. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check remains below the national average. Lower-attaining pupils are sometimes given reading books that are not well matched to their phonics knowledge. This limits their progress.
- Current pupils' outcomes in science are improving. However, in the humanities and the arts, their work is not of a good standard. Pupils' knowledge and understanding in these areas are limited.
- Most disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics this year. However, these pupils do not attain as well as other pupils in these subjects. Historical weaker teaching has inhibited pupils' attainment over time.
- More pupils than has previously been the case read widely and often. Pupils say that



they enjoy reading. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read fluently and have a secure understanding of what they read.

## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- While leaders have improved the quality of the provision and the learning environment in the early years, progress has been hindered by unsettled staffing during the autumn term. Consequently, some children have not made the progress they are capable of and are not well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Staff expectations of what some children can achieve are too low, particularly in numeracy. Some activities are not well matched to children's abilities and provide very few opportunities to develop mathematical understanding. Some children do not make the progress they are capable of and do not attain a good level of development by the time they leave the early years.
- Some staff do not use questions effectively to check or extend children's knowledge and understanding. As a result, some children's play and thinking are not as well developed as they could be.
- The early years leader has made a positive start to her new role. She has a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses that exist in the provision. The teaching of phonics has vastly improved under her leadership. Children can read and write phrases and sentences with increasing accuracy.
- Children enter the early years with skills well below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. Effective teaching and helpful additional support enable children to improve their speech and language skills. For example, leaders use additional funding to provide extra staff to support one-to-one speech and language interventions and additional phonics groups.
- The curriculum is designed to promote awe and wonder. Children enjoy the many opportunities to find things out for themselves. For example, children have relished learning about worms by studying a wormery, blowing bubbles in the outdoor area and holding chicks that have hatched from an incubator. Children's engagement is typically high.
- Staff establish routines and model high expectations for behaviour. Most children listen and concentrate well. As a result, most children are calm, well behaved and ready to learn.
- Staff work hard to develop children's personal, social and emotional development. Children play well together. Most children can take turns, share toys and cooperate well.
- Staff receive training in safeguarding, and designated staff receive paediatric first-aid training. They are knowledgeable about procedures to keep children safe from harm.
- Teaching assistants provide sensitive and nurturing support for children with social and emotional difficulties. They manage and support children's behaviour effectively and encourage them to join in with indoor and outdoor activities.
- Staff draw upon the expertise of external agencies when needed. This includes, for

example, health visitors, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists to provide timely support for children with SEND.

- The partnership between staff and parents is beginning to improve. Staff provide a range of workshops for parents, such as phonics. Staff use online 'learning journeys' and give parents access to these so that they can contribute to their child's learning and assessment. However, many parents are yet to take up this offer.

## School details

Unique reference number	120593
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10087388

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Helen Richardson
Executive Headteacher	Rachel Hydes
Telephone number	01205 363210
Website	<a href="http://www.bostonstnicholas.co.uk/">www.bostonstnicholas.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:rachel.hydes@bwaf.net">rachel.hydes@bwaf.net</a>
Date of previous inspection	21–22 November 2017

## Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is currently receiving support from The Boston Witham Academies Federation and the local authority. The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- An interim executive board replaced the governing body in February 2019.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The school is designated as having a religious character and received a Section 48 inspection on 10 February 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching across all key stages and year groups. Inspectors listened to pupils read in key stages 1 and 2. Inspectors met with groups of pupils to talk about their learning and experiences in school. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with the leaders for English and mathematics. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the leader of the early years, middle leaders and two governors. They also met with two representatives from the local authority.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including those relating to safeguarding, recruitment and vetting, behaviour, pupils' performance and attendance, and records of the school's monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education. Inspectors also examined the school's plans for improvement, plans for the use and impact of the additional funding, minutes from meetings of the governing body and information available on the school's website.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the day. Inspectors also considered the four responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 14 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Steve Varnam, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Carter

Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

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