

The Lincoln St Peter at Gowts Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120563
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313673
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Merryweather
Headteacher	Mrs E Niblett
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Pennell Street Lincoln Lincolnshire LN5 7TA
Telephone number	01522 880071
Fax number	01522 880072

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Inspection number	313673

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a high proportion are from minority ethnic groups. A fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language and eleven other languages are spoken. Many arrive at the school speaking no English. Mobility is high as many pupils enter and leave the school part-way through this phase of their education. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average and in some year groups it is exceptionally high. A high proportion of pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes have speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People accreditation. The headteacher has been absent since September 2007 and since then an acting headteacher has been in charge. Staff turnover has been high.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school is emerging from an exceptionally difficult period caused by a series of long-term staff absences. Because of this, a significant number of temporary teachers were employed. Although this has been managed well, it interrupted pupils' learning in some classes. The leadership of the school was also disrupted and a succession of acting deputy headteachers was employed. The current acting headteacher has been in post for nearly three terms. Her exceptionally good leadership has helped the school to maintain stability and she has succeeded in making major improvements. The learning environment has been transformed by internal decoration, refurbishment and investment in new resources. Leaders have generated among staff and pupils a renewed enthusiasm for learning and for raising standards. The recent appointment of a new deputy headteacher and a new senior teacher, to join the senior leadership team, has proved highly successful. Senior leaders give clear direction and have had a positive impact on improving pupils' progress and raising attainment. Across the school standards are rising in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The roles of subject leaders are still being developed.

Standards are well below average in literacy and numeracy. Although there are clear signs of improving progress and achievement is satisfactory, there are gaps in pupils' prior learning. The teaching of phonics has not been rigorous enough to give pupils a secure foundation on which to build their early reading and writing skills. Similarly, pupils have not made as much progress as they should in numeracy because skills have not been taught thoroughly enough. Teaching and learning have improved and are now satisfactory with much that is good, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2 teachers' expectations are not always high enough and there is not enough urgency in the drive to accelerate pupils' progress, fill gaps in prior learning and raise standards.

The school has recently adopted a good system for measuring pupils' progress. Progress is monitored frequently and any pupils who are not doing as well as they should are identified. Extra support is provided according to pupils' particular needs. Pupils who find learning difficult make satisfactory progress and some make exceptionally good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly settle into school routines and are soon making as much progress as all the others. Pupils become confident learners and they are willing workers, which helps to prepare them for moving to secondary school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school. They are polite and sensitive to the needs of others. They are lively and keen to be involved in all school activities. Opportunities are missed to develop their independence and enable them to use their initiative. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy life styles. They know how to stay safe and look after themselves. Staff make sure that pupils are very well cared for and they receive good guidance about how to stay safe. Academic guidance is improving.

The school has recently introduced a new marking policy to help pupils to understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are also set targets to help them to understand how to reach the next stages in their learning. This is not effective enough because targets lack precision and are not closely linked to pupils' individual learning needs.

The curriculum is satisfactory and includes a good range of visits and after school activities. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation is

accurate and identifies exactly what needs to be done to improve provision. The school has a realistic picture of its stage of development and is aware that much needs to be done to raise standards further. It has sound capacity to do so. The governing body has begun to monitor the school's performance more rigorously and has worked in close liaison with the headteacher to improve the climate for learning. Governors are committed to building on the good improvements that have been made this year and to securing the school's continuing development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter school with standards that are well below those expected for their age. Progress is good in both the Nursery and Reception classes. By the time children enter Year 1, standards are still below those expected, particularly in mathematics and communication, language and literacy. Teachers have recognised the need to place a strong emphasis on developing children's speaking skills. For example, the newly developed outdoor areas provide good opportunities for exciting role play that is helping to develop language. There is also a strong emphasis on teaching children the links between letters and the sounds and these skills are taught systematically. Writing skills are not yet developed fast enough because there are not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to write purposefully. The curriculum is planned well and teaching is good. Teachers and assistants plan a good balance of activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves, promoting independence and enjoyment in learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in literacy and numeracy.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the progress that pupils make in Key Stage 2.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to exercise independence, use their initiative and take more control of their learning.
- Review the target setting procedures so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how to reach the next stages in their learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The amount of progress they make has improved significantly during this school year. This is because leaders have taken decisive action to accelerate rates of progress by analysing pupils' performance, identifying underachievement and giving extra support where required. Also, greater stability among teaching staff has been established and this is helping to create more continuity in pupils' learning. The school noted that standards in science were particularly low and took swift action to raise them. Daily lessons and shared leadership of the subject helped to raise standards so they are now much closer to national averages. Standards in literacy and numeracy are still too low but the school is intensifying support for all groups in an effort to improve performance. This is already bearing fruit and standards are rising. Good work was seen in art and design and information and communication technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have good attitudes towards their work. Their attendance is satisfactory because the school has put into place good procedures to ensure that absence is kept to a minimum. Pupils develop a strong moral code and are fiercely opposed to any injustice or unfairness. Pupils from diverse backgrounds get on well with each other and respect cultural differences. They are spirited and capable of using their initiative. However, there are too few opportunities for them to exercise independence and take responsibility for their learning. Pupils behave well, both in classes and in the playground. They make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council. They wholeheartedly support charitable fund raising events, demonstrating their growing understanding of their responsibilities to the wider community. Pupils enjoy the Young Enterprise Scheme, which helps to prepare them for their future lives by developing a sound understanding the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is a groundswell of improvement developing in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are receiving clear guidance on good practice and there is some exemplary teaching in the classes for younger pupils. There is a renewed vigour about the teaching and a tighter focus on helping all groups to make as much progress as possible. In some classes in Key Stage 2 there is still not enough attention to making sure that the new skills to be taught in a lesson are defined precisely. Consequently, some lessons are not sufficiently purposeful and pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Highly skilled teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has recently been reviewed to incorporate more creativity, so that pupils are more interested in their learning. It is too early to judge if standards are rising as a result, but pupils' enthusiasm is apparent. Many new resources have been purchased, including interactive white boards in all classrooms, which give pupils good opportunities to learn new techniques, such as film making. The provision for pupils who find difficulties with language and literacy is organised well and enables them to progress satisfactorily. A good range of special theme days, well-attended clubs, day and residential visits and visitors enriches the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for ensuring health and safety and for keeping pupils safe and secure are rigorous and child protection arrangements are robust. In liaison with external agencies, the school has built up good support for pupils whose home language is not English, so that they progress well in language acquisition. The school assesses pupils' skills regularly and is measuring progress and tracking achievement effectively. Pupils have learning targets for reading, writing and mathematics but these are not used consistently well by teachers because they are often not specific enough. Not all pupils are confident in knowing and understanding their targets. There

are some good opportunities for pupils to gauge how successful they have been in their learning, but this is not yet a consistent picture across the school. Pupils report that they would have no hesitation in sharing any worries with staff, confident that problems would be quickly resolved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has had a major impact on school improvement during the past school year. The majority of parents are very pleased with the education provided for their children. One comment was typical, 'All the staff are very approachable and they are always willing to listen. My children love school.' Some parents are concerned about the high levels of staff turnover and regret that some classes have had frequent changes of teacher. This has undeniably interrupted the continuity of pupils' learning. However, the school is entering a period of greater stability. The senior leadership team has been highly effective in regenerating a purposeful and productive climate for learning. Leaders provide good role models of high quality teaching. The school is poised to make further improvements in provision and the standards that pupils attain. The roles of subject leaders are still being developed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Lincoln at Gowts C of E Primary School, Lincoln, LN5 7TA

I thoroughly enjoyed the short time I spent with you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. I particularly like the way that you help new pupils to settle. Some of them are very nervous when they arrive at school, especially those who can't speak much English but you welcome them warmly and help them to make friends. The school has been through a difficult time, mainly because so many staff have been absent but it is now becoming much more settled. You told me that there have been many big changes this school year and that things are getting better and better. I agree.

I think that the school gives you a sound education. Your behaviour is good and you like learning new things. You work willingly but also enjoy having fun. Those of you who find it rather difficult to learn new things get lots of help to make sure you can do your work. Those who speak languages other than English at home get good support and are soon making as much progress as the rest of you. You are now making satisfactory progress but standards in literacy and numeracy could be higher. You are good at sport and keep yourselves fit by having plenty of exercise. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves and others. You told me that one of the best things about the school was the teachers and I agree. All the grown ups do their best to help each and every one of you to feel happy and to learn successfully. Mrs Niblett and all the staff are keen to carry on improving your school and to make your lessons even more exciting.

I think that there are four main things that would help your school. I think that you should aim to do even better in literacy and numeracy. Some of you could be helped to make faster progress, in Years 3 to 6. You are so sensible that I think you could be given more opportunities to use your own initiative and take more charge of your learning. I also believe that you need clearer targets for learning so that you know exactly what you have to do to improve your work. I know that you want to do your best and I am sure that if you continue to work hard you are capable of reaching high standards.

I wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead inspector