

The National Church of England Junior School, Grantham

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 120598 |
| Local Authority | LINCOLNSHIRE LA |
| Inspection number | 313689 |
| Inspection dates | 27–28 March 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Lynne Blakelock |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 479 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rev Eric McDonald |
| Headteacher | Mr John Gibbs |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 March 2003 |
| School address | Castlegate Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 6SR |
| Telephone number | 01476563895 |
| Fax number | 01476563801 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school, which serves a wide area of the town and surrounding areas. It is situated adjacent to the parish church, in a conservation area. The accommodation, most of which dates back to the Victorian era, has been significantly improved in recent years. Most pupils start here with levels of attainment that are in line with the national average. A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, although this is rising. An above average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs are above the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.

The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the fourth time and was re-awarded Investors in People status in 2005. It holds the Sports England Activemark Gold, Arts Council of England Artsmark Gold, the Healthy Schools Award and the Rock Challenge Award.

Harrowby Infant School was federated with the school in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The National Church of England Junior School is a good school. Pupils make good progress, learning and playing in a happy and inclusive environment, which is supported by an ethos of Christian love and respect. Parents write with pride, saying that the school, for example, 'happily embraces children from all sorts of backgrounds and brings them together in a friendly environment, full of richness and colour.' Particular strengths are pupils' personal development and well-being, and the care, guidance and support of pupils, both of which are outstanding. All pupils know that they are valued and this leads to confident young people who enjoy school greatly, behave outstandingly and respond with enthusiasm to the responsibilities with which the school entrusts them. The school helps them to appreciate the social, cultural and religious backgrounds of each other, providing wonderful opportunities for them to understand and appreciate the realities of living in a diverse society.

The clear vision and leadership of the headteacher in responding to the changing nature and needs of the school and its pupils have enabled it to move forward well since the last inspection. In particular, greater efficiency in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance has been effective in raising standards. Good leadership and management at all levels, with strong support from the senior team and the governors, ensure that the school is well placed to improve further.

The good progress and above average standards that pupils are attaining in English, mathematics and science owe much to consistently good teaching. Together with great academic support, it explains the higher percentage of pupils than nationally who reached higher levels in English and mathematics in 2007 national tests. However, in some lessons observed during the inspection, tasks for more able pupils were not always sufficiently challenging to raise standards as quickly as possible. In the best lessons, enjoyment and involvement of students are striking features. Pupils get a positive start to their learning, as teachers make the purpose of lessons clear and regularly revisit learning objectives. They know their subjects well and their questioning encourages pupils' thinking skills. Marking of pupils' work is variable across subjects and year groups. Whilst it generally tells them what they have achieved, pupils are not regularly given specific enough advice about how to move forward in their learning.

All abilities and groups of pupils are supported exceptionally well. Careful thought, for example, has been given to the learning and social needs of Eastern European pupils. They are guided and encouraged excellently from the moment that they start here so that they make rapid progress in speaking English. It is one aspect of the exceptional care, guidance and support offered to pupils. Challenging targets are proving effective in motivating pupils to achieve well because they are a regular part of learning. The school's procedures for health and safety are well organised, regularly reviewed and strengthen pupils' sense of security in school.

The good, well thought out curriculum aids pupils' good achievement and their exceptional personal development. Literacy remains the basis of all learning and through features such as themed weeks and partnerships with other schools, pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop and use skills that will help them in the world of work. Their excellent understanding of how to stay healthy is influencing their actions, so that many take part in extra sport and exercise. A very broad range of extra-curricular activities, including the very talented orchestra, provides outstanding enhancement of learning and contributes to the all-round development of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable standards to rise further by ensuring consistency of challenge for more able pupils in all lessons.
- Ensure that marking always tells pupils the next specific steps in their learning, to enable them to move forward.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities are achieving well in English, mathematics and science through the school. The standards that they reach at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average. A greater percentage of pupils than nationally reach higher levels, particularly in English, but also in mathematics, because of good provision. Pupils in recent years have attained average standards in science at the end of Key Stage 2 because the school has previously given more emphasis to English and mathematics. However, standards have risen due to improved provision and careful monitoring of learning. A growing number of pupils are from Eastern European countries. They are making rapid progress in speaking English because the school identifies their learning needs quickly and puts excellent mechanisms in place to support them. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and gifted and talented pupils are also guided exceptionally well to enable them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school greatly and say that the staff are very welcoming and make learning fun, as shown by the 'Egyptian Day' that fired the pupils' imagination. One parent wrote, 'Each child is encouraged to shine and achievements are recognised and celebrated.' Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Christian values shine through the daily life of the school and encourage pupils' excellent behaviour and consideration. Attendance is good and the school works well with parents to maintain this. The warm, friendly atmosphere within school ensures pupils feel secure and safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily. The very active and influential school council takes on responsibilities, such as monitoring roles, and has had ideas for improvement that have been implemented, such as the 'Playground Buddy Area'. All pupils have opportunities to make significant contributions to the local and wider community through, for example, charity fund raising, music events and excellent links with local schools, all of which contribute very well to their good preparation for senior school. Their cultural development is good and improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are planned effectively, giving a good regard to making pupils' work enjoyable. The use of computers and interactive white boards make a significant contribution to pupils' engagement in learning. Very good relationships with staff and skilled classroom management encourage their positive attitudes to learning. They respond in lessons with interest, make valuable contributions and work hard. Teachers use good assessments of pupils' progress to match work closely to each pupil's capabilities, particularly in English. Most work challenges

pupils, although higher attaining pupils are not always stretched sufficiently. Work is marked regularly. While teachers' comments praise pupils' good efforts, and point out what they have done well, there is often a lack of constructive advice on how pupils could improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils have a broad, interesting and enjoyable variety of work and activities. They are hugely enthusiastic about the excellent range of opportunities, including many clubs, visits and residential activities, which enrich their curriculum. The arts and sports are strengths, helping to fulfil the school's aspiration to provide pupils with as complete an educational experience as possible. Team sports, the orchestra and choir are keenly supported by pupils and all achieve considerable successes.

The planning of teaching is being continually refined to ensure that the curriculum is kept up-to-date and is relevant to pupils' needs. This includes introducing new requirements for literacy and numeracy and the teaching of French, which is in place through the school. To raise standards higher, provision is improving, such as in the opportunities for investigative science and problem solving in mathematics. Strong provision for literacy contributes much to pupils' good standards. Equally, it ensures that Eastern European pupils rapidly learn to speak English. Good information and communication technology (ICT) resources contribute significantly to enhancing pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school has excellent arrangements in place for ensuring pupils' safety and health. Child protection and health and safety procedures are clear and well known by staff. Requirements for checking staff, visitors and safety are fully in place. Very careful preparation for pupils starting here, and leaving the school for the next stage of their education, ensures they can settle quickly to learning.

The school has excellent knowledge of pupils' academic progress. Targets for all pupils are challenging and staff promptly provide additional support where appropriate, including excellent help for those Eastern European pupils with little or no English speaking skills, gifted and talented pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Excellent partnerships beyond the school provide opportunities for enhancing learning. All pupils have their own targets for improvement and respond well to the challenge of achieving them. This enables pupils to make good progress during their time in school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's vision and his effective planning is enabling the school to constantly evolve and to adapt successfully to its changing circumstances. The increasing diversity of the school's intake, for example, is celebrated and used to broaden the education that the pupils receive. The senior team supports the headteacher very strongly. Their regular monitoring and evaluation of school practices and performance ensures that they have a good idea of where the school is, leads to a greater consistency of teaching and learning practices and has resulted in pupils making good progress through the school. This is supported by a very relevant staff training

programme, based on the school's evaluation of pupils' performance. The role of subject leaders is developing well, with the strong team work of staff strengthening their impact and ensuring the school's good capacity to improve. The experienced governing body helps the school to move forward through continual questioning of its performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

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**

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

31 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The National Church of England Junior School, Grantham NG31 6SR

Thank you for making us feel very welcome when we visited you recently. Mr Lemon, Mr Grimshaw and I enjoyed watching you learn and play during the two days we spent with you. This included the very successful Year 4 Egyptian Day, which provided you with unusual and fun learning opportunities. We send special thanks to those of you who gave up part of your lunch break to talk to us about your school. This letter will tell you what we found out.

Your school is a good school. You are happy here and work hard. You know that Mr Gibbs, who is a good headteacher, and all the staff, care about you and look after you very well. You are making good progress and reaching above average standards. This is because teaching is good and you get outstanding support and help from staff. Your teachers are preparing you well for when you are older by giving you excellent opportunities to work in teams, to be leaders and to take on responsibilities. You tell us that your teachers make learning interesting and let you learn for yourselves regularly. We also like the many activities that allow you to discover your talents. The orchestra, for example, shows the skills that you are developing.

We know that your school can be even better. Although we are pleased that your teachers mark your work regularly, it is not often made clear what you have to do to reach the next steps in your learning. Knowing this will help you to make quicker progress. Also, the work that you are given isn't always challenging enough for those of you who are working at higher levels.

Do keep working as hard as you can and enjoying your time here.

Very best wishes

Mrs Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector