

Grantham Spitalgate CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120523
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327302
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	184
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Anderson
Headteacher	Mrs Trudy Brothwell
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Trent Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7XQ

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Grantham Spitalgate is smaller than the average primary school. It is part of a federation of schools that work in close partnership to serve the community of West Grantham. The proportion of pupils known to qualify for free school meals is exceptionally high, and many families experience challenging social and economic circumstances. Most pupils have White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with minority ethnic heritage is similar to that in schools nationally and a small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language, although this number is rising in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school experiences a high turnover of pupils in any given year. When children enter the Nursery, most have levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that are below those typical for their age. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is exceptionally high. The range of difficulties is widespread and includes moderate, social and emotional difficulties.

The school has gained Investors in People and Healthy Schools status. It also holds the Activemark and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Grantham Spitalgate Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory education. It is improving rapidly, as membership of the West Grantham Federation brings benefits to staff and pupils alike. The school has the approval of most parents. One parent commented, 'All aspects of teaching have gone from strength to strength. My children enjoy school and enjoy learning.'

From exceptionally low starting points, children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. New approaches to teaching and learning are improving children's progress during this phase of their education, particularly in their independence and readiness to learn. While children's progress is good, standards on transfer to Year 1 remain below national expectations. Many find the work they are expected to do in Year 1 too difficult because they are not yet equipped with all the skills that they need. Standards at Year 2 have risen in recent years and were close to the national average in 2008. Pupils in Year 2 are making good progress and most are set to attain standards normally expected of seven-year-olds in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards for older pupils are considerably lower in these subjects because many pupils are still making up for historic underachievement in earlier years. However, even though standards in Year 6 are exceptionally low, pupils' achievements over time are now satisfactory. There is evidence of pupils' rates of progress increasing as initiatives to improve teaching embed and higher standards feed through from Key Stage 1.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory and both are strengthening rapidly. Systems for managing pupils' behaviour work consistently well. Teachers' expectations are suitably high and lessons are calm and purposeful. Staff have strengthened assessment procedures and their use of assessment information to match work to pupils' prior attainments. Consequently, most work meets the needs of pupils across the ability range and there is well-targeted support for pupils who find learning difficult. In this respect, teaching assistants do a particularly good job. However, current curriculum planning does not give older pupils enough opportunities to make up for lost ground by reinforcing basic literacy and numeracy skills through work in other subjects. Furthermore, despite enjoyable, practical activities, pupils do not always get the full benefit from lessons. This is because, at times, the timing and monitoring of activities are not sharp enough to ensure that pupils fully meet teachers' learning objectives.

Care guidance and support are good overall, and pastoral care for the most needy is a significant strength of current provision. The school's caring ethos reflects in pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils' awareness of how to live safely and healthily is good. They make a positive contribution to school and the wider community and their satisfactory progress in the development of basic skills and positive attitudes are a sound preparation for their future lives. Academic guidance is satisfactory, although marking is sometimes inconsistent in showing pupils how to improve their work.

These rapid improvements result from the vision and determination of the executive headteacher. In just two years, this outstanding leader has introduced measures that have transformed pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning. In doing so, she has created the conditions in which effective learning can take place. She has also built an effective leadership team, put in place rigorous monitoring procedures and is actively developing leaders of the future. Consequently, self-evaluation is accurate, targets are challenging and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have led to improvements to teaching, learning and to the organisation in Nursery and Reception. Provision for children's welfare is good. They settle well because there are supportive routines and staff establish good links with parents. Staff place a priority on children's personal, social and emotional development and this results in good behaviour and great interest in learning. They gain confidence, become increasingly independent, and work and play well with others. Planning provides a good range of activities for children to choose from and takes full account of their interests. Teaching is good because staff work as an effective team and have a clear understanding of how young children learn. Through regular observations and assessments, staff gain an understanding of children's needs. They usually match activities closely to children's previous learning, although some outdoor learning activities lack challenge. The phase leader is rightly planning to strengthen this provision. In relation to their very low starting points, children's learning and development are good. Children who find learning difficult or who speak English as an additional language receive effective support. This ensures that they are fully involved and results in good progress, both socially and academically. Nevertheless, on transfer to Year 1, most are working at levels below those expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Restructure the curriculum in Year 1 so that it more effectively supports pupils' transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 by giving pupils more opportunities to reinforce basic literacy and numeracy skills through work in other subjects.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that all teachers time and monitor lesson activities more sharply.

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

Even though many children find the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage difficult, standards at the end of Year 2 have risen steadily, from exceptionally low in 2005 to broadly average in 2008. Pupils' scores in the 2008 national assessments represent good achievement in relation to below average starting points in Year 1. The school's tracking of pupils currently in Year 2 indicates that they too are making good progress. Most are on course to attain or exceed nationally expected standards by the end of the school year. These improved standards are providing pupils with a much firmer foundation for their work in Key Stage 2 and this reflects in improving rates of progress. Most pupils throughout Key Stage 2 make at least satisfactory progress and, in some classes, progress is accelerating to good. However, despite meeting challenging targets, standards in English and mathematics at the end Key Stage 2 remain exceptionally low because many pupils carry a burden of underachievement from Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, pupils who find learning difficult make similar progress to their peers, as do pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and the small number who are at an early stage of learning to speak English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff instill a strong moral code, so pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Behaviour has improved significantly over the last two years and is now good. Bullying is rare because, pupils say, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and have confidence in the staff who help them. They enjoy school and work cooperatively with others. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles well, and this is influencing their enjoyment and participation in the many sports activities provided through the Federation. Pupils contribute effectively to the school by taking on responsibilities as school councilors, prefects and young leaders. They also contribute well to local and wider communities by supporting charities, performing in the choir or by participating in events such as the 'Swimarathon'. Pupils understand that some people have different beliefs and ways of life from their own. They form positive attitudes to diversity and their global awareness develops satisfactorily through their work in religious education and in personal, social and health education. Pupils' satisfactory progress in literacy, numeracy, together with their good social skills, provides a sound basis for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory because they result in satisfactory achievement on the part of most pupils. Teachers apply the school's procedures for promoting good behaviour consistently and, as a result, most pupils respond well during lessons. In the best lessons, lively, up-beat teaching and practical activities sustain pupils' interest. Teachers make good use of their interactive whiteboards to reinforce learning or to present exciting resources, such as video clips that engage pupils' attention and motivate them to join in fully. Tasks are generally well matched to pupils' prior attainments and teaching assistants give good support, especially to those with additional learning needs. In some lessons, however, the timing of activities is not sharp enough to ensure that pupils complete all the tasks planned for them. Furthermore, the monitoring of pupils who are working independently is not always sufficiently frequent to ensure that they stick to the task and get a suitable amount done. On these occasions, pupils' progress slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils, although the 'diet' for pupils at the beginning of Year 1 is not always suitable, because many are not ready for the demands of the National Curriculum. The curriculum has improved recently. For example, the school provides modern foreign language learning for Key Stage 2 pupils. Personal, social, health and citizenship education permeates the curriculum and reflects in pupils' good standards of personal development. Staff also place a suitable emphasis on hands-on activities and organise a good range of educational visits and special events that make learning more enjoyable. As one pupil said, 'Hard work and fun don't have to be separate.' Cooperative work with other schools in the Federation is strengthening provision for pupils with additional learning needs, for those who are gifted or talented and the small number of pupils who are at early stage of learning

to speak English. Curriculum leaders are beginning to take curriculum development much further by linking subjects creatively, in order to reinforce basic literacy and numeracy skills through work across the curriculum. At present, however, much of this work remains 'on the drawing board'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school engages effectively with hard-to-reach sections of the community. Highly effective arrangements for pastoral care and nurture support the school's most vulnerable pupils and ensure that all benefit from what the school offers. Staff use good systems for tracking pupils' progress to identify those in danger of falling behind and to target the additional help they need well. They work very effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils with learning and behavioural needs get good support. Clear expectations and guidance have improved pupils' behaviour significantly so that they are now ready to learn and want to do well. Rigorous procedures for monitoring attendance and effective work by the mentor have reduced occasional and persistent absence. Its impact is such that the school is currently exceeding its attendance target. Pupils are clear about the importance of lesson objectives and their individual targets. However, while teachers' marking of work is regular and full of encouragement, the quality of advice on how pupils can improve varies from class to class and between subjects. Staff take pupils' well-being seriously. Safe routines are established and safeguarding procedures fully meet current requirements at the time of inspection. Work with the high school prepares pupils well for their move to secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The outstanding vision, energy and commitment of the executive headteacher have been instrumental in creating the conditions necessary for effective learning and in strengthening the school's drive to promote community cohesion. Pupils' behaviour and levels of attendance, systems for tracking progress, the overall quality of teaching and learning and the school's rapport with all sections of the community are all considerably better than they were. Professional development has been extensive and focused on the school's priority areas for development, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This approach empowers staff and promotes the strong team spirit that has been another key factor in driving the school forward. Even though recently appointed leaders are still developing their roles, they have made a strong and effective start in helping monitor the work and performance of the school. This approach to sustainable leadership gives it a good capacity for further improvement. Governance is satisfactory. The recently appointed governing body is in the process of aligning policies across the Federation and in agreeing procedures for re-establishing governors' monitoring role. The wealth of experience that governors bring to this task ensures satisfactory oversight during this transitional period.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	2
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 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?	2

Leadership and management

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

30 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grantham Spitalgate Church of England Primary School, Grantham, NG31 7XQ

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago, along with my colleague, Mrs Frith. Thank you for making us so welcome and for taking time to talk to us and to answer our questions. We enjoyed talking to you because what you told us about your school was interesting, and showed how highly you rate your school. I particularly enjoyed seeing the Year 5 mathematicians in action and Mrs Frith had fun in Nursery and Reception too. I thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school.

There are a number of good things happening in your school.

- Most of you make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science and standards are rising steadily.
- You enjoy school because teachers try to make learning interesting. You think that school is so good that 'it's like playtime all day.'
- You get on well with one another and your behaviour is good.
- All of the adults help you when you have problems and they are particularly kind when somebody is having a tough time.
- The headteacher, the staff, governors and pupils work hard to improve the school.

Because everybody wants Grantham Spitalgate Church of England Primary to be as good as it can possibly be, I have made a few suggestions that should help it to improve further. I have asked staff in Years 1 and 2 to work closely with Reception staff to make sure that children transfer smoothly and continue to learn and progress well. I have also asked staff in Years 3 to 6 to give you more chances to strengthen your reading, writing and number skills, even when you are working on other subjects. Finally, I have asked everybody to try to make sure that lessons go to plan, so that you all get every possible benefit. You can help by remembering your targets and trying really hard to follow the advice that teachers and other adults give you.

I hope that you will all continue to work hard and enjoy your time at Grantham Spitalgate Church of England Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector