

Fortuna School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134229
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	328860
Inspection date	18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	George Derby

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Josephine Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2005
School address	Kingsdown Road Doddington Park Lincoln LN6 0FB
Telephone number	01522 705561
Fax number	01522 705563

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The overall effectiveness of the school was evaluated and the following issues investigated: pupils' progress across the whole school and the impact of staff's work, especially on creating the right climate and ensuring activities match pupils' needs; the impact of the extended curriculum; and how leaders at all levels across the school are improving the school's work, especially those who have responsibility for subjects and other areas.

Evidence was gathered from the school's data, evidence of pupils' progress, observations of teaching and school life, analysis of parental questionnaires, discussions with staff and evidence from displays around the school.

Description of the school

Fortuna School, a school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, opened five years ago. At the time of its last inspection, only a small number of pupils were on roll. Now full with 48 pupils, it draws its population from the whole of Lincolnshire. The school puts on a breakfast club each day, managed by the governors, and an after-school club also operates most days.

Although the school can take pupils from the age of four, it has never admitted such young children. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin and all but two are boys. Many pupils have learning or language difficulties, as well as considerable gaps in their attainment. Some have not attended school in the recent past because they have been excluded or refused to attend. All have a statement of special educational needs and they mostly start school with attainment levels which are considerably behind those expected for their age.

A social care team has recently begun to work on the school site, as part of a pilot project, to undertake preventative work and support families.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Fortuna School is a good school that has gone from strength to strength since its last inspection. Most parents have overwhelmingly positive views of the school and so do the pupils. Many parents say how happy their children now are; one stated that 'my child had a difficult time at his previous school. I feel very strongly he has made huge progress'. Another feels that 'every aspect of the child is catered for; children's interests are nurtured'. A few feel that communication with parents could be better, although many praise this aspect. Inspection evidence shows that the school generally goes the extra mile to work and communicate with parents. Now that the social care programme is up and running, family work is of even higher priority and is already making a positive impact.

The school offers an outstanding nurturing environment where staff, many of whom are in their first few years of teaching, have developed excellent skills in the management of some very difficult pupils. Consequently, the school is a calm place to be and one which has a markedly calming effect on the pupils. Teaching is good overall and teachers bring an excitement and enjoyment to learning through an interesting range of activities. Occasionally in lessons however, teachers do not always fully check that pupils have understood what has been covered in the introduction and not enough use is made of questioning or demonstration by pupils at the end of lessons to check their learning. While work is planned well for different groups of pupils at their own ability level, teachers miss the opportunity to assess the pupils against what they are expected to learn. Instead, a whole class, broad objective, is set. The breakfast club and after school, 'Sunset Club', have a good effect on the pupils because these follow the school's routines and expectations and extend pupils' learning

Standards by the time pupils leave the school remain well below average and reflect pupils' learning difficulties and the other challenges they face. Nonetheless, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science because the work they undertake is well matched to their needs. Pupils' writing skills have improved well over the past 12 months. They achieve best in science because it is practical. In mathematics, pupils do well with their number skills, although problem solving and investigation are areas for improvement, partly due to staff needing a clearer understanding of how to teach these particular elements of mathematics. In all subjects, while most pupils attain well below the expected level for their age, some achieve the expected level and in mathematics and science a few occasionally exceed it.

Assessment is satisfactory. Senior staff and coordinators analyse assessment data carefully and have a clear understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. They are working together to agree their assessments of pupils' work and are also keeping a more regular track of how pupils are progressing. At present, only English, mathematics, science and personal development are assessed, although it is planned to extend this to other subjects over the course of the year.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. Breakfast arrangements provide an excellent start to the day, and the clear expectations and guidance from staff commence as soon as the pupils enter the front door. Through staff's outstanding relationships, firm direction and guidance, their sensible use of clear routines, rewards and consequences and considerable understanding of pupils' learning, social and emotional needs, pupils' behaviour improves and is excellent. The transformation in pupils' personal development is exceptional. For example, whilst attendance at their previous schools has often been poor, at Fortuna it is excellent, showing how considerably pupils enjoy this school.

Pupils know well how to keep healthy, through eating the right foods, as well as through physical education in the excellent sports barn. They respond positively to 'Activate', a short class-based exercise programme, which takes place each afternoon. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe through learning to manage their anxieties and get on with one another. The school's emphasis on personal safety, and the high level of support given to them, means that they feel they can trust staff implicitly and share their worries.

A very strong sense of community has been built upon these principles throughout the school, something that school leaders have worked hard, and successfully, to foster. However, there is little work done on developing local, or even global, community understanding. There is also little contact with mainstream schools, to support reintegration, and so nearly all pupils transfer to special schools when they leave. The school council makes a strong and insightful contribution, for instance, identifying how they would like to learn about people in the workplace and take part in enterprise activities. The school works hard to raise pupils' self-esteem and moral understanding and achieves excellent results. It also ensures that pupils' basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics improve well, and that pupils' achievements are good. However, the development of their economic understanding is only satisfactory because less attention is given to work place and enterprise activities, which promote this.

The headteacher, supported by the excellent work of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers, has worked unstintingly to create just the right environment for learning. The senior staff have been the 'glue' which have held the school together during its development and have clearly steered it in exactly the right direction. Their focus on getting the ethos and the behaviour right has clearly bred success. The school is now building the skills of the staff with responsibilities for the areas of learning. Key coordinators are starting to take on a wider brief in relation to monitoring and evaluation, although they do not yet take on board all aspects of their roles sufficiently or fully contribute to the development of their areas and the school as a whole. This delegation is important if the school is to release senior managers from this work and enable them to develop assessment, tracking, and target setting techniques further, as well as a new 'satellite' nurture group, planned in another school.

The school is well placed to improve further, based on its successes thus far and the focus of its future plans. It knows the key areas where it needs to improve, and its evaluation of how it is doing is satisfactory overall; it is based on the use of a reasonable range of ways of checking the impact of its work. However, when considering how effective this is, it does not always draw on all the evidence that is available and governors are not well placed to support school self-evaluation.

Target setting has proved problematic and while whole school targets have been set they have been far too ambitious and based on a fixed rate of progress for all, despite the pupils' complex and varied needs. Pupils' records clearly show they have made good academic improvement and excellent progress in their personal development, but last year's targets were not achieved. The school now has a better understanding of the process and is better placed to set sound, realistic targets in the future.

Although there is much to praise about the school and to celebrate in relation to its pupils' academic and personal achievements, leadership and management are only satisfactory. This is because some requirements are not met in relation to safeguarding. For example, while personal guidance and support are key strengths of the school, overall, care, guidance and support are only satisfactory. This is because the school has not kept up with reviewing its policies, especially for safeguarding which is now out of date. It has also resulted in the staff

with key responsibilities for child protection, as well as school staff generally, not having recent training, although dates for this have now been arranged. In addition, some staff checks were incomplete at the time of the inspection.

The chair of governors provides much support for the school and all the important committees are now in place. However, governance is unsatisfactory. The school struggles to recruit governors, and there are a number of vacancies. Although governors have ensured the school has a good grip on its finances, they have not ensured that the school meets all legal requirements. They undertake little monitoring in relation to pupils' progress, target setting or improvement planning and rely heavily on the headteacher for information from her detailed reports to them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that senior staff delegate responsibilities effectively and that subject leaders and governors undertake rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work.
- Strengthen the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and devise a target setting system which provides challenging, yet realist, targets for pupils of different abilities.
- Make certain that the headteacher and governors ensure that all aspects of safeguarding meet government requirements.

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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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	3

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	4
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**

19 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fortuna School, Lincoln, LN6 0FB

What a wonderful atmosphere you have in the school. It is a calm place to be and you certainly enjoy your breakfast time, lessons and the Sunset after-school club. What a change this is for you and you do your very best to be good. I think your behaviour is excellent!

Yours is a good school and Mrs Richardson and the senior staff have worked wonders to make it the place it is now. It is hard to believe that many of you had such bad experiences before you came for Fortuna and that some of you did not attend school. I think your attendance is excellent!

You learn well, make good progress and really enjoy learning. You told me how exciting your topic work is, especially learning about hieroglyphics in your activities on the Egyptians. Your teachers work hard to make all this happen; they teach you well. I think their relationships with you are excellent!

I have asked Mrs Richardson and the governors to improve the school even further by:

- giving some of the important jobs in the school to other staff to carry out
- ensuring those who are responsible for subjects check on all aspects of how well you and the school are doing
- making assessment even better and keeping an eye on your progress so that the accurate targets can be set
- ensuring the school does all the things it should to ensure your total safety.

Best wishes

George Derby

Lead inspector