

The Holbeach St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Main Road, Holbeach St Mark's, Spalding, PE12 8DZ

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The executive headteacher provides strong and effective leadership to the school. She is well supported by other leaders, who share her high expectations. This has led to consistently good teaching and improved achievement by pupils, particularly in writing.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan the work they set pupils carefully so that it matches the needs of pupils of different ages in each class. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. As a result, by the time they leave in Year 6, standards are well above average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they show consideration and care for each other. Pupils say they feel safe and like being in a small school because everybody knows and looks after everybody else.
- Children in Reception settle in quickly and happily when they start school. As a result of good teaching, they make good progress and are well prepared for starting in Year 1.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled and have special educational needs make progress that is at least as rapid as that of other pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and makes an important contribution to their positive attitudes to each other and their work. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and for life in modern Britain.
- The very large majority of parents greatly value the work of the school and appreciate the increased opportunities and benefits that being within the federation has brought about.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always insist upon high enough standards in the presentation of written work.
- Errors in spellings are not always identified and corrected by teachers.
- In a few lessons, particularly in Year 2, teachers do not set work that is sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. When this happens, pupils' concentration can sometimes falter.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons or parts of lessons, two of them jointly with the head of school.
- The inspector looked at work in pupils' books and listened to some pupils in Year 1 read. He met with a group of pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the beginning of the school day. He also attended an assembly led by a group of older pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, records of how teaching is managed and the school's improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other staff including senior and middle leaders. The inspector also met with six governors, including the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, talked to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered letters from parents. He also looked at the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Adam Hewett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holbeach St. Mark's Church of England Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-aged classes. Pupils from Reception and Year 1 are taught in one class, pupils from Year 2 and Year 3 in another, and pupils from Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 are taught together in the third class.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend full time.
- Most pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below that in most schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is one in six. This is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium, (additional government funding) is one fifth, which is below the national average.
- In 2014, there were too few pupils in Year 6 for the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, to be applicable.
- The school is part of a federation of three primary schools, together with Gedney Drove End Primary School and Sutton Bridge Westmere Primary School. They share the same governing body and executive headteacher. Each school is led on a day-to-day basis by a head of school.
- Gedney Drove End Primary School and Sutton Bridge Westmere Primary School were inspected separately but at the same time as Holbeach St. Mark's Church of England Primary School.
- Pre-school provision in the form of a Nursery which some children attend part-time and some full-time, which is run by the governing body and formed part of this inspection, operates on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure consistently high rates of progress and the highest levels of pupils' achievement by:
 - providing the most able pupils, particularly in Year 2, with work that is sufficiently challenging and which maintains their levels of concentration at all times.
- Improve the presentation of pupils' written work by:
 - ensuring teachers set high expectations for the presentation of all work and insisting that pupils meet these standards
 - ensuring that errors in pupils' spelling are identified and quickly corrected by all teachers.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is extremely well led by the executive headteacher. She divides her time across the three schools within the federation but ensures that she has a deep knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of each school. She knows each pupil as an individual and has high expectations for them all.
- The executive headteacher has set a clear direction for the school and uses the expertise of the leaders across the federation to provide high levels of support for all pupils that matches their needs. This has resulted in improvements in teaching, higher standards of attainment and consistently good behaviour. The head of school manages the school on a day-to-day basis and is highly effective in this role due to her knowledge of the pupils and their families.
- Subject and other leaders, including in the early years, lead their areas of responsibility well. They rigorously analyse the results of effective monitoring and evaluation and set challenging targets for the progress each pupil is expected to make. The school has effective systems for collecting data on pupils' achievement and tracking their progress and these are used extremely well to set high expectations of what each pupil is expected to achieve.
- The school's involvement in a federation with two other local primary schools has been very beneficial to pupils and staff. The executive headteacher has ensured that teachers have regular opportunities to plan with and share expertise with colleagues from across the federation. An example of how this has been successful is in the introduction of the new primary curriculum. This has provided pupils with more opportunities to work with children from the other schools and has increased the number of visits and visitors who help to make learning interesting and exciting.
- The local authority provides good support and challenge to the school. It recognises the improvements that have taken place and has used school leaders, including the executive headteacher, to provide support to other schools beyond the federation.
- The range of subjects taught in the school provides pupils with exciting learning opportunities and varied experiences. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together and with pupils from the other two schools in the federation. This helps them to develop their understanding of other subjects and to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in these subjects well. For example, a recent prehistoric discovery day enthused children in Reception and Year 1, and encouraged to construct their own models of dinosaurs and reflect on what the world was like without people.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developed particularly well through the subjects they study and in assemblies. Pupils have a very good understanding of key British values, including tolerance and mutual respect. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. During the inspection Year 5 and 6 pupils led an assembly on thinking about the needs of others and encouraged all the pupils to reflect on what they could do to help people in the wider society.
- The pupil premium funding is used very effectively. It provides additional one-to-one support for pupils to develop their social and emotional development and to narrow gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the others in mathematics and English. Staff are very aware of the particular needs of these pupils and monitor their progress closely.
- The school makes good use of the additional primary sports funding to extend opportunities for pupils and to develop teachers' confidence and skills in teaching a wider range of sporting activities. A sports coach works alongside teachers each week and all pupils have access to swimming lessons. Opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sports against other schools have increased, and after-school clubs, including football and multi-skills activities, are now available to, and much enjoyed by, all pupils.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are good. They meet statutory requirements and ensure that all pupils are well cared for.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are an effective force in ensuring that the school continues to improve. They have a good understanding of how the school is performing and know its strengths and weaknesses. They fully understand the data on pupils' achievement that they receive as well as other information that is available to them. They provide appropriate levels of challenge to the executive headteacher and other leaders. They make regular visits to the school and these visits are linked to identified priorities for the school. They know about the quality of teaching. They have good systems in place for sharing the information gathered from these visits across the whole governing body. Governors ensure that teachers' performance is well managed and that there are clear links between this and their pay progression. They manage the finance and resources that are available to the school, including the pupil premium, very well and measure the impact of spending on pupil achievement. Governors ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and when they are out of classrooms is of a high standard. Children in Reception settle in quickly to the school's routines. They form good relationships with each other and behave well.
- Pupils display positive attitudes towards learning and participate enthusiastically in lessons, and this helps them to make good progress. Pupils say they enjoy school and this is reflected in above their average attendance.
- Pupils are polite and caring. Older pupils support and show consideration for the youngest children in school. They also provide good support for children who are new to the school that helps them settle in happily and quickly.
- The school has good systems in place for identifying and recording any incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying. School records show that such incidents are rare and that when they do occur, they are dealt with effectively.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility. They recognise and value their involvement in helping the school to run smoothly and understand that everyone has a part to play in the school community.
- On occasions, the work set does not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils. As a result, they sometimes lose concentration and do not then make the progress that they should. Consequently, behaviour is not yet outstanding.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when using the internet and when walking close to the road, because of the good guidance they receive from teachers and other adults. They appreciate the good systems that are in place within school to ensure that they are safe in the buildings and around the school grounds.
- Pupils, parents and staff all agree that there is virtually no bullying. Pupils are confident that if it were to occur, it would be swiftly dealt with. Pupils could explain the different forms of bullying and why it was unacceptable.
- The very large majority of parents have an extremely positive view of the school. They believe that their children are well-looked after, safe and happy. Parents commented on the warm and safe environment and the family atmosphere that exists across the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. It focuses on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics and on providing opportunities for pupils to apply and extend these skills in other subjects. Teachers usually set high expectations for all pupils. They generally plan lessons that develop the skills that pupils need to improve very well, although this is not always as true of the provision for the most able.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are extremely positive in the three classes. Teachers ensure that pupils are keen to learn and that they settle quickly to the tasks that are set for them.
- Teachers use questions skilfully to gauge what pupils have understood well and what misconceptions about their learning may have occurred. Teachers match their questions well to the needs of the different age-groups within each class. However, there are occasions when the questions and the tasks set for the more able pupils are too easy and this slows their progress.
- The school provides good support to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support these pupils and this helps them to make good progress. There is a strong focus from all staff on ensuring that all pupils have access to all the activities and subjects that are available in school.
- Reading is taught very well through a combination of daily lessons in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and regular opportunities for pupils to read to teachers and other adults. This results in pupils quickly developing a love of reading and achieving high levels of attainment.
- The teaching of writing has improved since the last inspection and there are now more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work and for pupils to apply and extend their writing skills in other subjects such as geography and science.
- Marking and feedback to pupils on how well they are doing are generally effective. Teachers' marking of pupils' work in mathematics in particular is used very well to indicate to pupils how well they have achieved and to show them how they can improve their work. However, errors in spelling are not always identified systematically and this slows pupils' progress. Whilst pupils are taught how to write with joined-up writing, teachers do not always challenge pupils about the presentation of their work, and this sometimes leads to a lack of care and errors in some pieces of work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception year with skills that are broadly developed for their age. Pupils progress well through the school and attain levels above those nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave school. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The attainment of pupils varies sharply from year to year. This is because the individual results of the very small number of pupils can easily distort the overall picture of results for any one year-group, and because there is a higher than average number of pupils who move into and out of the school during their primary education. In 2013, for example, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 was above national averages. However, in 2014, overall attainment was below average. School data indicates that current pupils in Year 2 are building on the good progress they made in Year 1 and are attaining standards above those expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014 pupils by the end of Year 6 had all made at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and had reached standards that were above those expected for their age. Official data suggests progress was much faster than expected in reading and mathematics but not in writing. However, the very small number of pupils involved makes it very difficult to draw reliable conclusions based on such a small sample. Current school data indicates that in 2015 pupils in Year 6 are making good progress from their starting points.
- There is a strong focus on helping pupils to use and apply their phonic skills accurately in their reading and writing, with daily sessions for all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. The proportions of pupils who passed the Year 1 phonic screening check in both 2013 and 2014 were below average but school

data and evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the pupils in Year 1 are expected to be above expectations by the end of the current academic year. Pupils develop a love of reading across the school and, by the time they leave, they have achieved standards that are well above the national average.

- The small number of disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least in line with their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013 and 2014, there were too few pupils in the cohorts to compare their attainment with others without risk of identifying the individuals. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to help these pupils to do well in their learning and their personal development.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. They receive the right level of individual support, including from external agencies. Their progress is very closely monitored and additional help is provided as required.
- The most able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they could. In 2014 too few pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of Year 2. This is due to the level of challenge for these pupils not always being sufficiently high in all lessons.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership of the early years is good. The leader has a very good understanding of the needs of the children and plans activities that are carefully matched to their developing abilities as the year progresses. She leads the early years across the three schools within the federation and ensures that she supports and challenges the staff to share their expertise so that they can learn from each other. She also provides leadership of the separate pre-school provision that operates on the school site.
- Teachers and other staff work closely with parents and involve them in their children's learning. They contribute to the initial assessments that take place when the children start at school and this helps staff to have a good understanding of each child's individual needs and abilities. Parents appreciate the information that is provided on how their children are progressing and say they have benefited from the training that the school has provided about how they can help their children with their reading.
- Children settle quickly into the routines within the Reception class. They form good relationships with each other and the older pupils in the class. They listen attentively to their teacher and are confident in expressing their own ideas and thoughts. They show consideration and respect for each other.
- Teaching is consistently good. Activities are planned to match their ages and abilities with different provision from the older pupils in the mixed-aged class. There is a good balance of activities between those that are adult-led and those children choose for themselves. In all cases, learning is carefully matched to the needs of all pupils, including the most able and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Children make good progress in all areas of learning. They acquire good speaking and listening skills and develop secure basic reading and writing skills. By the end of Reception, the majority have reached or exceeded the level of development that is expected for their age. As a result they are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.
- Safeguarding is effective, with good procedures in place to ensure children are safe at all times, whether using the indoor or outside spaces.
- The pre-school provision that operates at the school provides children with well-planned activities that helps them to be well prepared for school when they start in Reception.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 120549 |
| Local authority | Lincolnshire |
| Inspection number | 453410 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 47 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Cooper |
| Executive Headteacher | Karyn Wiles |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 May 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01406 701266 |
| Fax number | 08444 432692 |
| Email address | enquiries@st-marks.linc.sch.uk |

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