

The Fishtoft School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120547
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380056
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Keith Williams

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Vickers
Headteacher	Susan Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Williams

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed nine lessons taught by four teachers. He listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and looked at the work in their books. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and a representative of the local authority, and informal discussions were held with some parents and carers. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its school improvement plan, assessment and tracking records and documents relating to the school's evaluation of its work, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils. Questionnaires returned by 27 parents and carers were analysed, as well as those returned by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Most of the pupils at this much smaller-than-average primary school are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly pupils from other White backgrounds, has increased in recent years, as has the proportion learning English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. None have a statement of special educational needs. More pupils than in most schools join or leave partway through their primary school education, and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also above average. The school did not meet government floor standards in 2010 and 2011. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes, with children in Reception joining pupils from Year 1. There is a privately run after-school club on the school's site, which is inspected separately. The headteacher joined the school in January 2011, following a number of years without a substantive headteacher.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching.

- The school is not satisfactory because attainment has declined since the last inspection, and weaknesses in teaching led to many pupils underachieving. Better leadership and teaching are beginning to turn the school round, but there is much still to do. Consequently, the school’s effectiveness remains inadequate.
- The rate of progress made by most pupils is accelerating and levels of attainment are beginning to rise from the low levels seen in the last two years. More pupils are now on track to reach the levels of attainment expected of them given their starting points, particularly in Key Stage 2, but across the school many still have gaps in their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Teaching is inadequate because of the past weaknesses that contributed to pupils’ underachievement. Leaders and staff are working successfully to tackle these weaknesses and the quality of teaching is improving. Inconsistencies remain, however, and there is not enough good teaching to enable pupils to make consistently good progress.
- The school is a calm and safe place for pupils to learn. Pupils behave appropriately, are interested in lessons, and their rate of attendance is rising from the low levels seen in recent years. A few pupils are persistently absent.
- Leaders have an accurate view of what needs to be done because improved systems to assess pupils, track their progress and monitor teaching and learning are providing them with the information they need. Their success so far shows the school has the capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of attainment and accelerate pupils' progress further by:
 - improving pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics)
 - promoting reading as a pleasurable activity
 - improving the accuracy of pupils' spelling
 - increasing opportunities for them to write in other subjects
 - improving their speed and confidence in mathematical calculation.

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching to at least two-thirds by July 2012 by:
 - providing a more consistent challenge for more-able pupils
 - ensuring that marking is used more consistently to inform pupils of their next steps and to improve their writing in other subjects
 - improving teachers' knowledge of the teaching of phonics.

- Improve levels of attendance by working more closely with families whose children are persistently absent.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The number of pupils in each year group is small, so the analysis of national test results must be treated cautiously as the performance of individual pupils can have an exaggerated effect on the results. Nevertheless, the school's results in the national tests in recent years have declined. In 2011, the attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 6 was low: the equivalent of around a year behind the national average in both year groups. This represented inadequate progress from their starting points. Too few pupils reached the higher levels. Steps are being taken to tackle this underachievement and this is beginning to bear fruit, particularly in Key Stage 2.

Most parents and carers who consulted with the inspector report that they feel their children are making good progress. The inspector agrees that gaps are closing and the school's assessments, and the work in pupils' books and lessons, confirm that the rate of progress for most pupils is accelerating. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive appropriate support in lessons, and in groups withdrawn from the classroom, and they make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils new to the school, including those learning English as an additional language, settle well in the supportive environment, are fully included and make a sound start. As a result of this improving picture, more pupils are now on track to reach the levels expected of them, given their starting points. However, many pupils have considerable amounts to catch up, so there are still gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding that mean that, overall, pupils' progress remains inadequate and attainment is still too low.

Children join Reception with skills and capabilities that are broadly typical for their

age. Improved teaching and planning mean that children now make satisfactory progress. This has not always been the case, and children have joined Key Stage 1 without many of the expected skills. This has contributed to the decline in attainment at Year 2. The legacy of underachievement means that many pupils do not spell accurately enough when they write. Although improving, attainment in reading at Year 2 remains below average because too many pupils do not have a secure enough foundation of early reading skills to enable them to tackle unfamiliar words. This is also the case for pupils in lower Key Stage 2 but, this year, almost all pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach or exceed the expected level in reading by the time they leave, and their attainment is broadly average.

Quality of teaching

Most of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire feel that teaching is good and were unanimous that their children's literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well. The inspector found that teaching is improving and that pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit from consistently good teaching. However, past weaknesses, for example in teachers' knowledge of teaching early reading skills, have contributed to pupils' underachievement. Although no inadequate lessons were seen during the inspection, the work in pupils' books and the school's assessment records show that teaching has not been satisfactory over time and there is not enough good teaching to enable pupils to catch up on previously lost ground.

In the best lessons, for example in a mathematics lesson in Years 4, 5 and 6, the teacher keeps a close check on pupils' understanding by questioning carefully and tackling misconceptions as they arise. In this lesson, expectations were high, learning was brisk and pupils were able to recall multiplication facts quickly and accurately. This emphasis on swift and accurate mental calculation was extended further in an assembly, where older pupils successfully calculated percentages related to pupils' attendance levels. Across the school, however, many pupils lack this confidence.

Planning has improved and, for most pupils, there is now a much better match of work to meet pupils' needs. In some cases, more could be expected of more-able pupils, who are either asked to do similar work to other pupils, or are given too few opportunities to make decisions about how they might tackle a piece of work. In the best examples, particularly in English and mathematics, teachers provide pupils with clear feedback about how well they have done and what to do to improve their work. When this happens, pupils understand their targets and their next steps. This is not consistent across the school, however. Pupils have too few opportunities to write in other subjects and teachers do not always put enough emphasis on pointing out errors of spelling or punctuation when they mark this writing. A key strength is the way that teachers promote a positive and supportive atmosphere and there is now a satisfactory impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and this contributes to their accelerating progress. Children in Reception enjoy building walls or planning journeys together, linked to *The Three Little Pigs*, and readily take turns and share equipment. Across

the school, relationships are positive. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those learning English as an additional language, are fully included by their classmates in lessons and when at play. Most pupils listen attentively to the teacher and are respectful when other pupils speak. They concentrate well and work hard, although their interest wanes when they find the work too easy. A few parents and carers do not feel that behaviour is good enough. Most pupils report that behaviour has improved and say that, while bullying has been a problem for them in the past, this is no longer the case. This is reflected in the school's records, which show that instances of racism or harassment are extremely rare, and there have been no exclusions in the past year. Most children, endorsed by their parents and carers, say that they feel safe in school. They know what to do should a problem arise and are confident it will be dealt with swiftly by staff. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet and have appropriate regard to the safety of others when they play.

Attendance rates have been low in recent years. Much has been done in the past year to promote and celebrate good attendance and, for most pupils, the rate has risen to close to the national average. There has been too little success in improving the attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent.

Leadership and management

A lack of continuity in leadership has contributed to pupils' underachievement but most parents and carers are supportive of the school and the steps being taken to secure improvement. This is because the headteacher has provided a clear and robust steer that is firmly focused on improving teaching and raising achievement. A combination of improved assessment, rigorous monitoring and teachers' increased accountability for the performance of pupils has resulted in recent improvement to the quality of teaching. Better use is made of the information gleaned from monitoring to plan well-targeted staff training, and judicious use is made of the national arrangements for managing the performance of teachers. Consequently, progress is accelerating, and more pupils are now on track to reach the expected levels than was previously the case. The size of the challenge means that there is still much more to do to ensure that teaching is good enough to secure the good progress that pupils need to make to catch up.

Although the school is not as effective as it was at the time of the last inspection, key aspects are improving and leaders are well placed to sustain further improvement. Governance has improved since the last inspection and members of the governing body are increasingly involved in checking on the quality of provision and pupils' progress, and holding leaders to account. At the time of the inspection, all safeguarding requirements were met. Robust steps are taken to ensure the suitability of adults to work with children.

The curriculum has been overhauled to ensure it meets pupils' different needs. As a result, planning for literacy and numeracy is more effective and pupils report their enjoyment of a wide range of subjects. There remain too few opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects and, particularly in Years 2 and 3, an over-reliance on worksheets which limit opportunities for pupils to set out their own work. Similarly, too few pupils see reading as an enjoyable activity. Nevertheless, the curriculum now

promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. Pupils of all backgrounds, including those learning English as an additional language, are fully included and discrimination is tackled well. Equality of opportunity is now promoted satisfactorily. Consequently, the gaps between the performance of groups of pupils, for example disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and all pupils nationally are beginning to close.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Fishtoft School, Boston, PE21 0SF

Thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school recently. A special thank you goes to those of you who met with me to give me your views. You were very helpful. This is what I found out.

- You told me that you feel safe in school and that behaviour is better than it used to be. I was pleased to see this for myself. You get on well with each other.
- Your work shows that your learning is improving and many of you are getting on better than you were last year. One of the reasons is that you work hard and have positive attitudes to learning.

Your headteacher, staff and governing body want the school to improve. They have made many changes that are beginning to work, but there are still many important things that need to improve. Because of this, I have given the school a 'notice to improve'. These are the most important things they need to do. I want your headteacher and staff to:

- help you improve your reading skills and your enjoyment of reading; improve your spelling and give you more opportunities to write in other subjects; help you to be more confident and speedy when you calculate numbers in your head
- make sure that the work is hard enough for those who find learning easy; give you more information about how to improve when they mark your work and check your spelling and punctuation when you write in subjects like science or history; find out about the best ways of teaching reading
- make sure that everyone comes to school regularly.

You can help by doing your best at all times and by taking more care with your spelling and punctuation. Tell your teacher if you find the work too easy and, please remember, you will only learn well if you come to school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams
Lead inspector

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