

Lincoln Birchwood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120508
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358776
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Richard Marsden

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Allnutt
Headteacher	Tracey Bowman
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons taught by 10 different teachers. They spoke with parents and carers and held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation, attendance records, information on pupils' attainment and progress, the curriculum, the school's self-evaluation and planning, as well as responses to questionnaires from 71 parents and carers, three staff and 150 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Have the improvements in English and mathematics that started in 2009 been maintained by current pupils?
- How effectively do teachers use what they know about pupils' capabilities to tailor work to pupils' individual needs?
- Have the arrangements to help pupils settle in when they first join the school improved, as recommended at the last inspection?
- Are leaders other than the headteacher now contributing effectively to school improvement, as recommended at the last inspection?

Information about the school

The school is of average size. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage, and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is almost double the national average, and the number with a statement of special educational needs is three times as high as is found nationally. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is also higher than the national figure.

The school's learning support centre, maintained by the governing body, caters for pupils who have been excluded from other schools, as well as pupils from this school. The governing body also provides a breakfast club at the start of the day. The school has attained several awards, among them, Activemark and the Basic Skills Award, and has gained Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a rapidly improving school which provides a good standard of education for all. Pupils, regardless of their starting points, make good progress. The rise in attainment, which started in 2009, continues. Standards have risen more sharply in mathematics than in English. In mathematics they now exceed the national average.

The school has done much in recent years to improve pupils' behaviour. All staff now have high expectations of pupils. They reinforce these consistently through routines and procedures which pupils understand well, with the result that good behaviour now makes a major contribution to the effectiveness of pupils' learning.

The school has addressed the issues for improvement raised at the last inspection very effectively. Pupils are now given better support when they first join the school, so that they settle in and start to make progress from the outset. Responsibility for promoting the ongoing improvement of the school is now widely spread among the whole staff. The headteacher and staff have a keen insight into the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Consequently the school is well placed to improve further.

Pupils are very well known as individuals and promotion of their self-worth and confidence is paramount. The learning support centre (the 'Launch Pad') has been particularly successful in supporting pupils who are at risk of failure. It has successfully reintegrated pupils into education who have been excluded from other schools. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, including working in partnership with other agencies. As yet, however, attendance rates remain only average because of the poor attendance of a few pupils.

Lessons are vibrant and pupils engage actively in their learning. Teachers maximise their information about pupils' capabilities and use it well to spot underperformance and those who need extra help, while ensuring that tasks are appropriately challenging. However, on occasions the day-to-day marking of pupils' work does not always make clear enough how well they are doing and how they can improve. In some classes pupils would benefit from more opportunities to undertake extended writing in English and in other subjects.

Pupils readily undertake jobs and responsibilities within school although their involvement in the wider community is limited. They are thoughtful and considerate, and respond with interest and curiosity when out on visits or receiving visitors into school. However, the school recognises the need for pupils to have more face-to-face contact with their counterparts from contrasting communities in order to bring alive to them the diversity of modern society and to prepare them better to take their place in it.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in English, so that it equals or exceeds attainment in mathematics by
 - providing more opportunities in English and other subjects for pupils to practise extended writing
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work shows them more consistently how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Increase pupils' understanding of their place in the wider community by
 - seeking ways to increase pupils' contribution to the community beyond the school
 - providing opportunities for pupils to have first-hand interaction with their counterparts in a contrasting community.
- Improve attendance by giving greater support to families who do not yet appreciate the value of their child's regular attendance at school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics when they join the school is below that expected for their age. They make good progress so that by the end of Year 6 their standards overall are at least in line with national averages. It is higher in mathematics than in English. Boys and girls make equally good progress, as do pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because they are well supported by classroom assistants both within lessons, and in small group activities. The individualised support provided in the behaviour support centre enables pupils there to make good progress towards reintegration.

In lessons pupils made good progress because tasks captured their interest, were well matched to their needs, and kept them very busy. Teachers use visual aids and 'hands-on' tasks well to enliven their explanations and pupils enjoy opportunities to explore ideas with each other before starting to write. In one outstanding mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed using hand-held computer consoles on which the teacher had prepared challenging tasks adapted to the needs of each individual. They worked in absolute silence and made great strides in their learning. In a French lesson, by contrast, there was much fun and laughter as pupils dressed up in bizarre items of clothing and photographed each other. This provided a basis for speaking about clothes in French, and motivated the pupils very highly to learn more.

Pupils' good behaviour makes a major contribution to the effectiveness of their learning. They respond well to the warmth and encouragement of adults, and show courtesy to each other and to visitors. Older pupils show high levels of consideration towards younger ones. Pupils state confidently how they feel safe in school and do not fear bullying. They are confident that it would be appropriately managed by teachers if it occurred. They understand about such things as road safety and internet safety. They explain clearly what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle through exercise and eating the right kinds of food. Older pupils understand the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. Pupils enjoy

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making a difference to their school through the school council, or taking responsibility for many different jobs within school.

Pupils' attainment means that they are satisfactorily prepared for the workplace. They enjoy opportunities to question adult visitors about the world of work. Recent visitors such as a submarine officer, a mechanic (female) and a solicitor (female), have helped raise the awareness and aspirations of both boys and girls. Pupils often work in teams and groups and have opportunities to apply their basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT) to 'real-life' situations, as the school prepares them to take their place in the working world.

Pupils raise money for charities and have links with the local community through, for example, the church, the police, and local businesses. They are thoughtful and reflective, and show consideration to others. However, the school recognises that opportunities for them to interact face-to-face with their counterparts from communities further afield are under-developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Classrooms are busy places where pupils apply themselves well and engage deeply with their work. Lessons proceed at a good pace and topics engage pupils' interest well. Teachers plan well to ensure that work is correctly matched to pupils' needs. Pupils often

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discuss ideas with partners and have many opportunities to work together in groups. Both teachers and pupils use ICT competently and effectively to promote learning.

Relationships in the classroom are good. Teaching assistants are very well organised and are proactive in offering support. Their contribution ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well. The school's highly developed tracking system identifies clearly pupils who fall behind, so that support can be given to help them catch up. Teachers provide good ongoing feedback in lessons. They mark work regularly, although there is some inconsistency in the degree to which this shows pupils clearly how well they are doing and how to improve.

The curriculum provides well for the development of core skills, including ICT, across subjects. Participation in out-of-school activities, including music and sport, is high. All pupils learn French, and all Year 6 have a part in the school's annual musical production. Pupils enjoy regular visits and theme weeks, and all are given the opportunity to take part in a residential visit where they enjoy adventurous, confidence-building activities. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals, have the opportunity to take part. The breakfast club is well attended and provides a purposeful start to the day for those who come.

Good care, guidance and support are a strength of the school. Pupils are highly valued as individuals, and the school's emphasis on raising their self esteem and self belief allows pupils to thrive. Every adult in the school regularly takes a 'chatter group' in which they converse with 10-12 pupils on matters of shared concern and interest. Having their views taken seriously in this way makes the pupils feel valued and increases their confidence. Teachers ensure that children settle in well when they first join the school, and older pupils told inspectors how well they feel the school prepares them to move on to secondary school. The learning support centre makes an outstanding contribution to the care and support of pupils whose circumstances put them at risk of failure. In its calm and purposeful environment expectations for work and behaviour are made very clear. It has had a marked impact on behaviour across the whole school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear insight into the school's strengths and areas for development, and the challenges it faces. There has been significant improvement in areas highlighted at the last inspection, as well as in priorities identified by the school's self review and from questionnaires which the school gives to parents and carers. Leaders regularly monitor the

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quality of teaching. Staff have high expectations of themselves and are supportive of each other in their ambition to improve outcomes for pupils. The governing body is well organised and knows the school well. Members have a high profile amongst parents and carers and in the local community. They are not afraid to offer challenge to the headteacher in order to secure the best for pupils. Safeguarding and the safety of pupils are given high priority at the school. At the time of the inspection, all statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils were met.

Parents and carers are quick to say how approachable the school is if they have concerns. The school communicates well with them. It welcomes parents and carers in to observe sample lessons and to help them understand modern teaching methods so that they can support their children. The school gives high levels of support to pupils and families who are facing challenging circumstances.

The school draws on a wide range of partners to enhance its provision and promote pupils' development. Teachers work with colleagues from other schools to ensure that they have a common understanding of national standards. Partners from the local community, including businesses, the church and the police, contribute towards pupils' good personal development. A close link with a school which caters for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has helped staff understand and manage challenging behaviour very successfully.

In promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, teachers monitor the school's work rigorously to ensure that no pupils miss out on what the school has to offer. The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's context and the contribution it makes to community cohesion locally. Opportunities for it to make a contribution more widely, for example, through links with communities in other parts of the United Kingdom or overseas, are not fully exploited. Because the outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are good, the school offers good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

Responses to the questionnaire show very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school, particularly the quality of teaching, the leadership and management, and the way in which the school keeps children safe. A very small minority did not agree that their child enjoyed school or that behaviour was good, so inspectors looked at these areas very carefully. However, detailed inspection evidence, including talking with pupils themselves, led inspectors to conclude that behaviour is good and that that pupils do enjoy coming to school.

Several parents and carers added comments of their own, almost all of them praising the school very highly. The following were typical:

'I have never seen a school staff handle discipline and behaviour issues as well as this one does.'

'Very pleased with all areas. I feel the school provides a safe, fun place for my child to learn.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lincoln Birchwood Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	45	33	46	5	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	48	68	23	32	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	42	59	27	38	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	56	29	41	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	63	25	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	48	34	48	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	41	39	55	1	1	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	54	27	38	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	46	35	49	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	45	31	44	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	41	37	52	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	59	28	39	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	69	19	27	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



17 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lincoln Birchwood Junior School, Lincoln, LN6 0NL

A big 'thank you' to everyone for the lovely warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school. We came to find out what your school does well and how it might be improved. This is what we found.

Your school is a good school. You make good progress and by the end of Year 6, the standard of your work in English is in line with that found in most schools, and in mathematics it is higher.

Your behaviour is good. It plays an important part in helping you to learn effectively.

Your teachers plan interesting and fun lessons which keep you busy and help you make good progress.

Your teachers look after you very well. You told us that you feel safe in school.

You enjoy going on trips and receiving visitors, and you like having the opportunity to take on responsibilities in your school.

Your parents and carers are very pleased with your school.

We have asked your teachers to help you to make even better progress in English by giving you opportunities to write more. We want them to show you more clearly, when they mark your work, what you can do to improve. We have also suggested that they give you more opportunities to mix with children from places other than your estate, so that you can learn from each other about how different people live. We have said too that teachers should help some of you attend school more regularly.

Thank you, again, for making our visit so enjoyable. You can all help to make your school even better by continuing to behave well and by always trying your hardest.

Yours sincerely

Richard Marsden

Lead Inspector

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