

Lincoln Birchwood Junior School

Larchwood Crescent, Lincoln, LN6 0NL

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make good progress in all year groups as a result of teaching that requires improvement.
- Teachers' expectations are not always high enough about the quality and quantity of work pupils should produce, particularly in subjects such as science, history and geography.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.
- Marking does not always clearly tell pupils how to improve their work, and teachers do not check that comments are followed up by pupils.
- More able-pupils do not always have work that is hard enough for them.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching and achievement are consistently good. The checking of pupils' progress has not included checks in books other than English or mathematics.
- Plans for improving pupils' achievement do not identify precisely the actions to be taken, how success is to be judged, or when actions should be completed.
- Leaders of subjects are new to their role and do not have the necessary skills to check rigorously that pupils' achievement is good enough.
- Governors are not active enough in checking for themselves the effectiveness of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The achievement of pupils shown by the 2013 Year 6 national assessments was good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Their personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff work tirelessly to promote safety and pupils feel safe because relationships are good. They are adamant that staff care and will help them whenever they need extra support.
- As a result of effective action, attendance has improved and is above the national average this year so far.
- Staff morale is high and all are keen to improve their skills to ensure pupils' good achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching in all classrooms. They visited 14 parts of lessons, three of which were jointly visited with the headteacher. The headteacher was also involved in scrutinies of pupils' work.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, staff, the headteacher, and four members of the governing body. The inspectors also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Account was taken of the 20 responses to the online Parent View survey, and the 25 questionnaires returned by staff. Inspectors spoke informally to parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and analysed the work in their books.
- A wide range of documents was reviewed, including safeguarding documents, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' current progress, leaders' reports following lesson observations and the school's records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Stonier	Additional Inspector
David West	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lincoln Birchwood is an above average-sized junior school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and only a small number are from different minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at an early stage of speaking English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. However, the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding is well above average. This is additional government funding provided for pupils in local authority care, those from armed forces families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been several staff changes, including teachers and leaders, since the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013 when an assistant headteacher also joined the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement to consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of work in all subjects and allowing pupils to complete work from the previous day before starting new work
 - making sure more-able pupils have work that makes them think hard during all parts of each lesson
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects
 - focusing more, when marking pupils' work, on telling them how to improve and giving them time to respond to the comments made.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - checking regularly on pupils' progress in all subjects
 - identifying more clearly in improvement plans the actions to be taken, how success can be measured and the times by when actions will be completed
 - arranging training for all leaders who do not yet have the skills to check rigorously pupils' achievement
 - developing the role of governors in finding out for themselves about school effectiveness, and holding leaders to account for school performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics. In subjects such as science, history and geography pupils are not steadily building up their knowledge and skills of the subject.
- There has been an improving trend in pupils' attainment over the last three years and, in 2013, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was average in reading, writing and mathematics. This showed good progress from their starting points in Year 3. However, the same positive picture is not evident from current assessment information or from the work sampled in pupils' writing and mathematics books. The current Year 6 information does not indicate that the achievement seen in 2013 will continue.
- Over time, more-able pupils do not make the progress they should. This is because work is insufficiently challenging and does not enable them to apply their range of skills in different subjects, or deepen their thinking and knowledge. This is particularly evident in writing. Too often, pupils do not finish pieces of writing started the day previously and therefore teachers are not able to check that pupils have thoroughly understood any new learning. Pupils have too few opportunities to write longer pieces of writing.
- Reading attainment has been steadily improving over time and the majority of pupils are working at age-related expectations in all year groups. By Year 6, pupils have good attitudes towards reading. They speak about favourite authors such as David Walliams, and can explain why they like certain books. Younger pupils who are less skilled receive regular phonics (letters and the sounds they make) lessons which are helping them to become more proficient readers.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding was approximately one term behind other pupils in mathematics and writing, and half a term in reading. The school's own analysis shows that the currently eligible pupils are making similar progress to others in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress through the well-managed support provided for them. They receive a good range of carefully evaluated individual support sessions and well-directed help from teaching assistants in lessons. However, in subjects other than English and mathematics, their progress requires improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of pupils, including the more able, are sometimes too low. This is particularly evident in subjects other than English and mathematics. However, even in writing and mathematics, the amount of written work produced is not always sufficient.
- Not all teachers demand enough of more-able pupils. Particularly during lesson introductions, teachers do not always take into account their knowledge of what pupils already know and can do. This means pupils are involved in discussions that are often not challenging enough to move their learning on quickly.
- Marking and feedback to pupils in writing and mathematics represent an improvement since the last inspection. There are useful comments made in mathematics, where pupils are asked to apply knowledge in a different context. However, pupils do not always have a chance to

respond, and comments do not always lead to improved work.

- Classrooms are attractive and tidy with stimulating displays that support learning well. Pupils look smart in their uniforms and there are good relationships between pupils and staff. The use of praise and encouragement is a strong feature of all teaching, resulting in pupils who want to learn. Pupils say, 'Our teachers are, really, really nice and we want to do our best for them.'
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well to ask probing questions. This was seen in Year 3, as pupils were encouraged to think about how many egg boxes were needed to store 53 eggs, for example. Through the teachers' skilful questioning, pupils realised that nine boxes would be needed, rather than their original answer of eight.
- Teaching assistants typically provide valuable support for individual pupils and small groups which helps them to learn. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs generally make better progress than their peers due to the effectiveness of the additional support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Both behaviour and safety are good because leaders have made sure there are clear school policies which both pupils and staff can follow. In classrooms, teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour well. The few pupils who sometimes find it difficult to manage their behaviour are dealt with effectively by skilled adults who ensure the learning of others is not disrupted. This means pupils show positive attitudes and are keen to learn. They are proud of their school and eager to take responsibility such as being members of the school council.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is true when in class, when working with visiting sports coaches or with teaching assistants in small groups around the school. Pupils try their best, work co-operatively with each other and are eager to learn. They respect their teachers and willingly follow instructions. During the inspection pupils said that this is what behaviour is typically like. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and behave well at playtimes and in the dining hall.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel entirely safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They trust adults to support them if they need additional help. Parents feel their children are kept safe. Pupils feel free from bullying and have a good grasp of different types of bullying because the school has a good programme of social and personal education to teach them about it.
- Attendance has been steadily improving and is currently above the national average. Pupils are punctual in getting to lessons. Behaviour and safety are good but not outstanding because those pupils spoken to were not absolutely clear about safe use of the internet.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher ably leads a united staff team but carries too much of the responsibility for checking on the school's work. The role of other leaders, including governors, in checking on pupils' achievement is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Not all leaders have the skills to check that teaching and pupils' learning are good enough. They look at teachers' planning and work in books but are not experienced in holding teachers to account for pupils' performance. Weaknesses, such as the progress of more-able pupils, are known, but improvement plans do not refer to them. Plans do not show when actions will take place, how leaders will judge if the actions are effective or how their impact will be checked.

Despite this, the improvement shown in Year 6 pupils' achievement in 2013 shows the leadership has the capacity to improve further.

- The leadership of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. The leader uses data effectively to check on the effect of support programmes and to make changes when necessary. The good links with the two infant feeder schools make sure the leader has a good knowledge of the pupils before they arrive at this school.
- Performance management is used to hold teachers to account for the achievement of pupils. Targets are clear, linked directly to the standards set out nationally for judging the quality of teaching, and to the progress pupils should make across the year. These targets are reviewed during regular meetings. Teachers are positive about the training they receive to support their development.
- Pupils' positive view of learning results, in part, from the interesting approach to linking subjects through themes. However, these themes not planned well enough so pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise their writing skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are respectful of others and have a clear sense of right and wrong.
- The additional sports funding is used well to increase existing opportunities for pupils and develop staff expertise in the delivery of sports and physical education lessons. There has been a positive effect on staff confidence, and on pupils' enjoyment and physical well-being.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide one-to-one support and small-group activities for eligible pupils. This support was effective in narrowing the gap in attainment of Year 6 pupils in 2013.
- The school engages well with parents through regular newsletters and events. All parents who completed the Ofsted on-line questionnaire expressed support for the school and would recommend it to others. Leaders make sure that there is no discrimination of any kind and that all pupils, regardless of background or need, can play a full part in all that the school offers.
- The local authority has provided 'light touch' support to the school in the recent past, due to the improving trend in Year 6 outcomes. However, an officer does visit the school regularly and has provided leaders with helpful advice about how to improve teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school and the staff. They have received training to help them understand performance data and receive regular updates from the headteacher about pupils' progress. However they have not held leaders sufficiently to account to ensure pupils achieve well and do not visit the school enough to check for themselves what is going on in school.
 - Some governors have recently joined and some have taken on new responsibilities. They are aware that training is not up to date and that this needs to be tackled. The governors spoken to know the strengths and weaknesses of the school but are not aware that writing and the progress of more able pupils is not mentioned in school improvement action plans.
 - Governors make sure that national requirements are met, including those for safeguarding and check the school site is safe and secure. They set suitable targets for managing the performance of the headteacher and staff. They have an adequate idea of how well staff are carrying out their responsibilities through this process. They are up to date in linking teachers' pay increases to the progress of pupils.
 - Governors are familiar with how the pupil premium funding is used and manage the primary sports funding to good effect.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	120508
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	440570

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Main
Headteacher	Tracey Bowman
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2011
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