

Horncastle Community Primary School

Bowl Alley Lane, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 5EH

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning across key stage 1 and key stage 2 is inconsistent. Recent improvements are not yet effectively embedded across all classes.
- Too few pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- The difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is too great by the end of key stage 2 and in some year groups.
- Until recently, leaders have not ensured that the additional funding received by the school for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively.
- Some teachers do not set work for pupils that is sufficiently challenging. Some pupils do not spend enough time developing a thorough understanding of subjects, particularly mathematics.
- Teachers are occasionally too slow to deal with pupils' misconceptions in their learning. This hinders their progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in order to practise and develop their writing skills.
- Middle leaders are in the early stages of developing the necessary skills to lead their areas of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have brought stability and renewed energy to the leadership of the school. They are leading necessary improvements well.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement are sharply focused and evaluated.
- The large majority of pupils attain the expected standards at the end of the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are developed well through the school's curriculum. Relationships between pupils and staff are caring and positive.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their school lives. They are nurtured and make good progress in their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - teachers using assessment information to set work that is well-matched to pupils' abilities, especially for the most able
 - further developing pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics to extend and deepen their understanding
 - ensuring that improved teaching strategies for reading, writing and mathematics are effectively implemented across all year groups and classes
 - providing pupils with opportunities to practise their writing skills in extended pieces of writing
 - ensuring teachers promptly address pupils' misconceptions so that they can improve their work and make strong progress.
- Further develop the roles of middle leaders to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders' actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are evaluated to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress and attain the standards of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, the school has been through a significant period of turbulence. For several years, there was considerable instability in senior leadership, which had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. However, during the last year, a new highly skilled headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed to the school. They are effectively building a strong leadership structure and establishing a cohesive team of staff who share leaders' ambition to improve the school.
- Senior leaders have worked tirelessly to bring rapid and necessary change to the school. They are successfully driving improvements and raising aspirations for all pupils. Changes to staffing and improved approaches to teaching, learning and assessment are improving outcomes for pupils and raising expectations for staff and pupils. For example, a new assessment system is enabling leaders to evaluate more precisely the progress of different groups of pupils in their learning.
- School leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They have worked with a specialist consultant and the local authority to develop strong improvement plans. These plans are well targeted and checked regularly for their impact in order to secure sustained improvements.
- Systems for managing the performance of teachers are linked to school improvement priorities. Leaders are now able to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress, and teachers clearly understand what is expected of them.
- Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They swiftly identified that some pupils, for example pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), were not supported well. They appointed an inclusion leader to improve the provision for these pupils. Teachers are now quick to identify pupils' needs and barriers to learning. Additional adults and targeted activities support pupils well in different areas of need. Although still in the early stages of implementation, these actions are having an increasingly positive impact on the progress that pupils with SEND are making from their starting points.
- Members of the senior leadership team set high expectations for staff and lead by example. They provide good-quality support for teachers, including those new to their careers, to improve the quality of their teaching. Staff talk positively about leaders encouraging them to 'unshackle' their approaches to their teaching. They feel empowered to use a variety of teaching methods to interest and engage pupils in their learning. Although still inconsistent, the quality of teaching and learning across the school is quickly improving as a result of leaders' actions.
- Leaders access good-quality training for staff, brokered through the local authority and from the Wellspring Academy Trust. Leaders and teachers greatly appreciate the partnerships with colleagues working in other schools, which enable them to learn and share good practice.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the current curriculum to ensure that it is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs and interests well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development is promoted well through a variety of topics of learning and extra-curricular experiences. These include taking part in the Young Voices concert, being a member of the 'mini police' and participating in a community sponsored walk for charity. However, leaders are not complacent and have identified that there are areas where the curriculum can be improved to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the school community. They are in the process of devising plans for a new curriculum which is to be trialled later in the academic year.

- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the new leadership and of the improvements made to the school over the last year. Those who spoke with inspectors praised the headteacher for being approachable and spoke positively about the improvements in behaviour, teaching and communication.
- The pupil premium funding has not been used as effectively as it should have been in the past in order to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. School leaders have reviewed their current plans to ensure funding is more accurately targeted. They have commissioned an external review of the pupil premium funding. Leaders plan to use the findings from the review to improve the provision for disadvantaged pupils and support them to make better progress in their learning.
- Many middle leaders are new to their roles. They are well supported by senior leaders through coaching and external training to develop their understanding of their responsibilities. Middle leaders are passionate about their curricular areas and have a good understanding of the actions needed to drive continued improvements. However, these actions are in the early stages of development and middle leaders' impact on improving and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is limited.

Governance of the school

- Governors have accessed appropriate training and ongoing support to improve their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They check how well leaders allocate and monitor any additional funding received by the school, such as the funding for pupils with SEND. They recognise that funding has not been used well in the past to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They are supporting leaders to improve provision through the commissioning of the review of the spending of the pupil premium.
- Members of the governing body visit school regularly to meet with leaders, staff and pupils to assess the progress of plans to improve the school. These visits enable governors to learn about the impact of leaders' actions and have supported the rapid improvements made in areas such as the quality of teaching and learning and attendance.
- Governors have an accurate view of the school's performance and they provide leaders with appropriate challenge and support. They have a realistic understanding of the areas in need of further improvement. They share the ambition and vision of senior leaders to ensure that the school provides an aspirational and inclusive education for all pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a good culture of safeguarding. Pupils feel and are kept safe by well-trained and knowledgeable staff. Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors during the inspection all agreed that the school keeps their children safe.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's employment checks are in place in line with statutory requirements.
- Records for safeguarding are well maintained. They demonstrate that leaders thoroughly follow-up concerns about pupils. Leaders work in partnership with a variety of external agencies where necessary, to ensure the well-being of pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across key stage 1 and key stage 2. While some pupils do well, this inconsistency contributes to others not learning and progressing as well as they should.
- Some teachers do not use the information they collect about pupils to set work that is well matched to pupils' abilities. For example, some pupils do not receive the right level of challenge to enable them to deepen their understanding, while other pupils receive work that is sometimes too difficult for them.
- Teachers do not ensure that misconceptions in pupils' learning are promptly addressed. Pupils often repeat the same mistakes in their work. When pupils' misunderstandings are not swiftly dealt with by teachers, pupils find it difficult to move on in their learning.
- Recent developments in the teaching of reading are increasing pupils' enthusiasm for reading and writing. The use of good-quality texts that are matched to pupils' interests is raising the profile of reading and increasing pupils' motivation to write for different purposes. Teachers focus on developing pupils' understanding of vocabulary in order to improve their comprehension of the texts they read and the use of language in their writing. At present, these approaches are not yet consistently effective across all classes.
- Most teachers ensure that pupils have a purpose for their writing through links made to other subjects. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils regularly practise and apply their skills over extended pieces of writing in order to consolidate their learning.
- Not all teachers plan lessons in mathematics which would enable pupils to practise and apply their skills in-depth to solve problems and consolidate their learning. Some teachers do not allow time for pupils to explain their understanding in a way that sufficiently extends their learning and deepens their understanding. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Over recent years, the teaching of English and mathematics has not enabled all pupils to make strong progress. However, the recent restructuring of classes and ongoing

improvements to the way teachers plan for different pupils' needs are beginning to have a positive effect. Teachers have raised their expectations for what pupils can achieve.

- Teachers and teaching assistants develop good relationships with pupils. They give pupils encouragement and praise. This has a positive effect in keeping pupils motivated in their learning.
- In most lessons seen by inspectors, teachers used their secure subject knowledge to model appropriate subject-specific vocabulary for pupils. They encourage pupils to work together and present their work in a variety of different ways. Teachers use questioning well to encourage pupils to explain their understanding, particularly in English.
- The teaching of phonics is good. The large majority of pupils acquire a good knowledge of phonics. This helps them with their reading and writing. Pupils who read their books to inspectors were confident and used their phonics skills well. They showed genuine interest in their books, and they enjoy reading.
- Pupils enjoy learning. When the teachers match work appropriately to pupils' abilities and maintain high expectations, pupils respond very positively. For example, pupils in Year 5 were enthused in their mathematics lesson when they were learning how to test different combinations of numbers to solve a problem. There was a buzz of excitement as pupils tried different ways to achieve their final goal of purchasing 43 chicken nuggets in boxes of six, nine and 20.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are encouraged to be confident and self-assured. They are proud of their school and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the local community and are aspirational for all pupils. Pupils have lessons and experiences which encourage them to think about issues such as the use of social media, as well as local and wider world issues. For example, pupils told inspectors about their roles as 'mini police officers'. Some pupils explained how they have education to teach them about the dangers linked with smoking. Other pupils explained how they take part in charity fundraising events such as a recent sponsored run, which raised a considerable amount of money for Save the Children.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. The school has a friendly and calm atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Pupils are interested in their learning and take pride in their work.
- Pupils can explain the choices that they should make to live healthily. They have regular opportunities to develop their physical fitness through exercising regularly. They appreciate the many clubs and sporting activities offered by the school, including the good-quality provision offered by JB Sports. Recent and ongoing improvements to pastoral care have meant that leaders provide increasingly effective bespoke care and

support to help pupils manage their emotions and maintain good mental health.

- Pupils say that they are well looked after in school and that staff help them with any worries that they may have. They highly appreciate the provision of worry monsters and boxes in case their concerns need to be dealt with in a more discrete way. Pupils are taught how to keep safe in a range of different situations, including how to keep safe when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school and during lessons is good. At breaktime and lunchtime, they play sensibly and cooperate well.
- Pupils have a good understanding about the expectations for their behaviour. Leaders' improvements to the way behaviour is managed by staff throughout the school has led to significant improvements in some pupils' behaviour. They recognise how senior leaders have raised expectations for how pupils should behave.
- Pupils are clear about the different forms that bullying can take. They say that incidents of bullying or poor behaviour sometimes happen but, when they occur, staff deal with them quickly and fairly.
- In lessons, pupils work well together and show mutual respect. In some lessons, pupils lost concentration if their work was not well matched to their needs.
- Attendance is just below the national average. Leaders are taking rigorous and effective actions to improve the persistent absence of some pupils, including the employment of an education welfare officer, who works closely with vulnerable families and senior leaders. Leaders demonstrate significant improvements for some individual pupils who have previously had low attendance. Nevertheless, improving attendance remains a high priority for leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over recent years, the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics during their time at the school has declined. In 2018, the progress made by pupils in these subjects was below national averages.
- Over the last two years, too few disadvantaged pupils have made good progress in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make in some year groups is not as good as that of their peers.
- Some pupils, including the most able, do not make the progress that they are capable of in a variety of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- Pupils with SEND make inconsistent progress in different subjects.
- Attainment across the school has been historically strong. An above-average proportion of pupils attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. However, as a group, disadvantaged pupils attain less

well than their peers.

- Improved teaching strategies and the introduction of a more precise assessment system are demonstrating an increasingly positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The large majority of pupils attain the required standard in the phonics screening check. The proportion who do so has been above national averages for at least two years.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have ensured that good practice is cascaded across the newly formed early years team of staff. Staff demonstrate their passion for all children to access stimulating learning experiences through the high-quality provision across the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Children in the Nursery Year make a good start to their school life. They settle quickly because staff build good relationships with parents. This ensures that children's learning and care needs are met.
- Relationships between adults and children across the early years classes are strong. Well-structured routines mean that children enjoy school and are kept safe. They play and learn well together. Their behaviour is good.
- Leaders have ensured that the early years classes are inclusive. Teachers closely monitor the progress of children's learning. They use the range of evidence they collect from their assessments to ensure that children are making good progress in different areas of the curriculum. Disadvantaged children and children with SEND are well supported. Additional adult support and activities are precisely planned to meet children's needs. Along with other children in the early years, children with SEND and those who are disadvantaged enjoy their learning and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Good teaching and nurturing enables children to make good progress. The majority of children start the Nursery Year with skills typical for their age. Over recent years, an above average proportion of children have attained a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. In 2018, the proportion increased. Scrutiny of children's work, current school assessment information and observations during lessons show that good teaching strategies are having a positive impact on children's learning. The majority of children are making good progress from their starting points in the different areas of learning.
- Adults in the Nursery and Reception classes use language well to support children in their learning. Good-quality questioning challenges children to extend their vocabulary. Additional support is specifically focused to help children with their early language acquisition.
- Children's reading, writing and mathematics skills are taught well in the early years. Teachers plan for children to develop their skills through motivating learning activities that are designed to match children's needs and interests. For example, children's enjoyment of reading the book 'Stick Man' was used to inspire them to write posters to help find Stick Man when he was lost. Children also played Stick Man themed number games to develop their understanding of the order of numbers.

- The stimulating indoor and outdoor environments provide children with various opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding and imaginative play in different areas of the curriculum. Children embrace new learning experiences and challenges because they feel safe and excited in their learning. For example, children used sign language to help retell a story, they climbed trees up to the red tape 'safe' area, and enjoyed 'freeing' dragons from ice blocks and then building dens for them to live in.
- Communication with parents is good. Parents praised the approachable staff and caring relationships that have helped their children to quickly settle into school life. A typical comment from parents to inspectors was, 'I think the Nursery and Reception classes are amazing. The staff are fantastic because they really know the children.'

School details

Unique reference number	120507
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10092029

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	533
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Christie
Headteacher	Steve Bladon
Telephone number	01507 522 662
Website	www.horncastleprimary.co.uk
Email address	steve.bladon@horncastleprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2009

Information about this school

- Horncastle Community Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is just above the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of pupils who speak English as an additional language are below those seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The school receives support from the local authority and accesses training and guidance for staff from the Wellspring Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school has nursery provision for children from the age of 3 years.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all year groups, including some joint observations with senior leaders. In addition to observing the teaching of reading, inspectors listened to pupils read. They talked to pupils about their school and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers and middle leaders, including those for English and mathematics. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation of current performance and plans for improvement; the school's most recent information on the achievement and progress of pupils; information relating to safeguarding; information about behaviour management; information relating to the school's use of the pupil premium funding and funding for pupils with SEND; the school's most recent information relating to the attendance of pupils; and minutes from meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

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Joanna Hall	Ofsted Inspector
Jackie Thornalley	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca King	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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