

St Botolph's C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132251
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	315991
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Taylor

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 on roll	
School	382
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Coulson
Headteacher	Ms C Wright
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2003
School address	Rookery Avenue Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 7FE
Telephone number	01529 302698
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Botolph's Primary School was opened in 2002 in an attractive, modern building built through the Private Finance Initiative. It is located in the Quarrington district but serves a wider Sleaford community. The school has grown in size since its opening and 'came of age' in 2005, when all year groups were finally in place. Attainment on entry to the Reception unit is average. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including an extremely small number of Eastern European pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. There is a slightly higher proportion of girls in the school than the national picture. St Botolph's has gained the NACE, information and communication technology (ICT) mark, the Football Association Charter Standard, and has the Sports Activemark. It is recognised by National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA), as a Centre of Good Practice in the management and development of support staff.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is proud of its history in Quarrington, working successfully within a strong Christian framework. It provides a good standard of education, resulting in pupils' leaving with above average standards.

It is well led by the experienced headteacher who has successfully taken the school through a period of considerable growth and change. The school has a firm foundation upon which it is building, because effective new systems and procedures have been established as the year groups have increased. These changes and growth, including quite a lot of staff movement in previous years, have resulted in an uneven rate of satisfactory to good progress between classes and key stages. Nevertheless, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress by the time they leave school.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. Good tracking and assessment systems are in place, which give a detailed picture of how well pupils are doing. Effective additional support is then put in to overcome weaker areas. The management skills of subject leaders are not so well advanced.

The headteacher has a very clear vision for what she wants to achieve; she has always had expectations of high Year 6 standards clearly in her sights, from the early days when there were only Year 3 pupils here. This has ensured that right from the very first Year 6 group in 2005, standards were average, and have improved to above average since then. The school knows itself well, has shown it can cope skilfully with challenges and change, and so has a good capacity to improve further.

Parents are generally positive about the school. However, a significant number expressed their dissatisfaction about communication. A major consultation exercise with parents was held over a year ago. A follow-up was being planned before the inspection was announced but the Ofsted questionnaire superseded the school's own version.

Pupils' personal development is good and pupils are happy in school because of the strong, supportive ethos. Prolonged efforts to offer hot meals have been time well spent. As a result, pupils are gaining a better idea of how to eat healthily and are more adventurous in trying new foods, because they are sensitively and patiently encouraged by lunchtime staff. Care and guidance are good. Pupils enjoy the impressive play equipment outside which ensures that they get a fair amount of exercise. Behaviour is also consistently good because pupils are kept fully occupied. The good curriculum has been adapted to help improve standards in writing, especially through the new 'visual literacy' initiative for pupils at key stages 1 and 2. Older pupils are using multi-media equipment, to make films, for example.

Teaching and learning are generally good, but occasionally only satisfactory. ICT is used well for teaching and learning and pupils really enjoy this. Highly skilled teaching assistants provide good additional support for pupils, both in the classroom and through focused teaching in small groups. The marking of pupils work is satisfactory and improving.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage team have worked hard to implement significant improvements over the last year. Confusion over assessments last year have been a catalyst of change for the better.

Provision is now good. Early reading and writing skills have improved, especially for boys, because chances for them to write (such as the estate agents' work on houses) are carefully planned. Efficient organisation, by operating both classes as one fluid unit, means that there are equal chances for all children to benefit from all the exciting opportunities provided. Children are largely confident and self-assured individuals who show a real interest in visitors and enjoy explaining what they are doing. An example was when they were gathering their own props for a station and train, in response to a child's request to learn about 'trains and rockets'. The school's view of pupils' knowledge and skills assessed during their induction days and initial arrival into the Foundation Stage does not capture fully their true potential. This has implications for how accurately their progress is judged.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress pupils make so that it is consistently good in all year groups.
- Follow up the initial consultation and work with parents to improve their satisfaction with the school's communication.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation role of subject leaders, in order to raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave the school. There has been considerable movement of staff in recent years and the majority are new to their year groups. This accounts for the unevenness in progress between year groups and key stages.

Children start in the Reception classes with average attainment compared to national expectations. Last year they made satisfactory progress and were in line with national expectations by the time they entered Year 1. However, reading and writing skills, especially for boys, were weaker. Current data on how well Foundation Stage children are progressing shows an improvement. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, where standards are average and have been so for some years.

There have only been two years of test data demonstrating how high standards are at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in 2007 saw a rise over those in 2006, with mathematics and science being above average and English being exceptionally high. This represents good progress. Reading was better than writing. Current standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science, confirming that a good rate of progress is continuing. The school has set increasingly challenging targets for itself since it first had Year 6 pupils, and they have been met.

The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good overall, although the rate fluctuates to a degree, slowing to satisfactory in a couple of year groups. The extremely small number of Polish and Lithuanian pupils, who are at an early stage of learning English, are making good gains in their ability to speak and understand the language because they are being supported well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good enjoyment of school is strengthened by numerous opportunities for them to become leaders and to work together to improve their learning environment. The 'school parliament', in particular, encourages an early understanding of the democratic process and fosters pupils' ownership of their school. Pupils generally keep to school and class rules, often because they have been involved in making them. Their above average literacy and numeracy standards, together with their good teamwork skills and confident use of ICT ensure good preparation for secondary school. Pupils also play an active part in the life of the school and community by organising fund-raising for charities and by suggesting imaginative ideas for improving the grounds. From the time that pupils' start here, the care and respect they show towards each other and to school reflect its Christian ethos and confirm pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development. Consequently, their attitudes towards each other and to learning, their attendance and behaviour, are good. Pupils' cultural understanding is developing and is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan their lessons well and have high expectations of pupils' academic and personal development. The best lessons have a swift pace and make exciting use of visual and practical activities to stimulate pupils' excitement in learning. There is a tendency for some events, such as assembly and physical education, to overrun, thus cutting the time in lessons. Positive relationships between pupils and adults are important in creating a strong enjoyment in learning. Highly trained teaching assistants make a particularly good contribution to learning, by recording observations of pupils during the teaching. The assessment of pupils' work is improving. It is already effective in literacy and numeracy, but is less developed in helping teachers to plan the next steps of learning in other areas. The minority of lessons which are satisfactory, tend to be slower-paced, and expectations for the quality of work are not high enough. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and improving, in line with a new and developing marking policy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A recent initiative linking literacy and ICT has produced good developments which are improving the quality of writing for some of the older pupils. Plans are in place to extend and create even stronger links between subjects. Pupils take very good advantage of their personal, social and health education, at the heart of which is a very worthwhile curriculum for healthy living. Resources for teaching are of a consistently high quality for both indoor and outdoor learning. ICT provision is especially impressive. Although ICT is used well, teachers do not yet assess the pupils against national standards, making it hard to judge their progress. The curriculum is enriched by a range of clubs for the older pupils, although there are a limited number for the younger ones.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

High quality care is provided in a supportive atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Pupils have great confidence in the help available if they need someone to talk to. The transition arrangements, from playgroups to Reception, then as pupils move up through the school and finally to the secondary phase are all good. Procedures for health and safety and safeguarding pupils are all of a high quality. Academic guidance is good, especially in relation to literacy and numeracy. In these areas it is developing effectively as target-setting improves. The 'traffic light' system, whereby pupils mark their own and each other's work is better used for the very oldest pupils than for the younger ones.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The Headteacher's experienced leadership ensures that pupils make good overall progress in relation to their starting points. This is a school which has continually coped with change as it has matured. It has significantly grown in size and the resultant challenges and introduction of new practices have been an intrinsic part of its makeup. Although provision is now good, this has resulted in some unevenness in what is being provided. There is now a strong platform upon which to consolidate systems which provides more consistency to bring practice up to their highest standards. Part of the success of this school has been its ability to work with outside organisations and turn potential restrictions on the building's use into positive outcomes for the pupils. As a result, the stunning building is a real catalyst for learning. Senior managers, some of whom have responsibility for English and mathematics, have a good understanding of where the school is and what needs to happen to secure further improvement. Subject managers are at an earlier stage of development. Some are new and, whilst all are enthusiastic, it is still early days in their role in monitoring and evaluating what is being provided, and in taking action in order to raise standards further.

Governors, many of whom are also new, are growing into their roles. They support the school well, and are developing their understanding and ability to provide challenge for the school's work through focused training.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 February 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of St Botolph's C of E Primary School, Rookery Lane, Sleaford NG34 7FE

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave Mrs Blakelock, Mr Brown and myself when we visited. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found and how you can help your school.

We think you are lucky to attend St Botolph's because it is giving you a good education. You have a wonderful school building with lots of impressive outdoor play equipment - better than many children have! You behave well and work hard and we were pleased with your friendliness and politeness.

Ms Wright and everyone look after you really well. We were impressed with the way in which you can all use all the computers confidently and also how much you know about what they can do. The teachers and teaching assistants work hard to make your lessons fun and interesting so that you reach higher than normal levels in English, maths and science, when you leave Year 6. We have asked the teachers to help you all make good progress in every class, as at the moment some classes do better than others. We have also asked the school to work at helping those teachers who look after certain subjects to develop into really good managers.

Your parents are pleased with the education you are getting, but a few of them would like better contact between home and school. We know that the school has already made a start at looking at this, following on from a big questionnaire sent out last year. You can help by making sure you take school letters home straightaway.

I hope you all have a lovely Easter break and come back to school wanting to work hard!

With best wishes

Mrs A Taylor Lead inspector