

Cherry Willingham Community School

Croft Lane, Cherry Willingham, Lincoln, LN3 4JP

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Students do not make fast enough progress in most subjects to raise standards above the average.
- Teaching varies too much. Activities are not always pitched at the right level for all students in the class. Students do not always know what to do to improve their work.
- Some students slow the learning of their classes with low-level disruptive behaviour. Teachers are not consistent when they deal with this.
- High levels of absence have affected results in recent years. The school is starting to tackle these more robustly.
- The changes in leadership in the last five years have led to a lack of coherence in the school's management systems. Too little use has been made of available data to pinpoint priorities for improvement.
- It is not always clear to leaders and governors how additional government funding has been used to help the students who should be supported.

The school has the following strengths

- In English, students make good progress. They reach above-average standards at the end of Year 11.
- Standards have mostly risen while the governing body has steered the school successfully through several changes of leadership.
- Better ways of managing more challenging behaviour have led to a much smaller number of exclusions.
- The current headteacher has established a clear vision of high achievement for all students. Their target levels and grades are now much more challenging.
- This year has seen a much higher level of rigour in checks on teachers' performance and students' progress.
- Specialist teaching for hearing impaired students is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 30 lessons taught by 27 teachers and a teaching assistant. Six of the lessons were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors looked at students' work and one listened to students reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students, and three members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including its self-evaluation, development plan, policies and notes of meetings. They also took account of the school's analysis of assessment data, records of behaviour and other incidents, and records relating to safeguarding.
- In coming to their conclusions, inspectors also took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View) and letters from parents. They also considered questionnaire responses from 21 staff.

Inspection team

Frank Knowles, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector
David Martin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It serves a rural area to the east of Lincoln, with a few students coming from further away.
- Nearly all students come from White British backgrounds, with very few from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special education needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. It has an eight-place unit for hearing impaired students, with five students currently on the school's roll. They are mainly taught in mainstream classes with other students, with some specialist teaching taking place in the hearing impaired unit.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of students are educated off the school site for part or all of the week. Currently, the school has placements at Build a Future in Lincoln, Pilgrim Hospital's Education Centre in Boston and the Teaching and Learning Centre in Horncastle.
- The school has been through a number of changes in leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - planning activities and resources that challenge students of all abilities at the right level
 - giving clear feedback when marking students' work on what they need to do to improve it
 - increasing the amount of time in lessons that students are actively engaged in learning activities
 - training teaching assistants in the specific skills needed to support students' reading.
- Improve students' behaviour in lessons by applying the school's behaviour policies and practices consistently in all classrooms.
- Improve attendance by focusing more attention on reducing persistent and frequent absence.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - sharpening the systems used to analyse data on students' progress, attendance and behaviour to take more account of patterns and trends for the whole school and for the full range of different groups of students
 - recording in more detail the use of pupil premium funding and its impact on students' achievement
 - complying with the requirements for the publication of information on the school's website.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards have been rising steadily since the last inspection and, in 2012, they were broadly average. Students have made steady progress overall. In English, good progress led to above-average standards at the end of Year 11 in 2012. Science results saw a dip in 2012 after some years of improvement, largely linked to a move to more academic science courses.
- Students have been set much more challenging targets this school year. They are now challenged to make at least the progress expected nationally, and to reach higher levels and grades than in previous years. Most students are fully aware of their targets but often do not know in sufficient detail how they should improve their work to achieve them.
- In lessons, students learn enthusiastically when they play a full part in challenging activities. In an information and communication lesson, for example, students in Year 7 made rapid progress when designing an on-screen interactive quiz. Students in Year 8 made rapid progress when acting out contrasting roles of master and servant. They are less enthusiastic when they participate only by listening or by working individually on exercises from textbooks.
- A smaller proportion of students achieve grades A* and A in their GCSE courses than nationally and, although many students make the progress expected, few make more rapid progress than that. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make slightly less progress than other students.
- Students supported through pupil premium funding left the school in 2012 with GCSE results in English and mathematics just over a grade below other students. They make similar progress to their peers and the gap between their attainment and the rest of the school is not yet narrowing.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to support students who arrive at the school with below-average English skills. A teacher with experience in primary schools has brought a new focus on phonics (the sounds that letters make) and early signs show this is proving effective.
- Students supported through the hearing impaired unit make similar progress to other students in their mainstream classes. Specialist support from staff in the unit is good, and sometimes outstanding. The students educated off the school site are making secure progress towards their target grades.
- Students from Years 9, 10 and 11 study optional GCSE and other courses intensively for one year in mixed classes. The school's data analysis does not yet show whether this arrangement advantages or disadvantages students compared with traditional two year courses. The school does not routinely enter students earlier than Year 11 for other GCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching observed during the inspection varied from outstanding to inadequate, with the vast majority good or requiring improvement. It did not match the quality recorded by senior staff from notified visits earlier in the school year. Senior staff, however, had an accurate view of teaching in the joint observations undertaken.
- This variation in teaching is reflected in students' work and in the views of older students.

Parents responding to the online survey (Parent View) also felt teaching was weaker than other aspects of the school.

- The weaker teaching did not offer students the levels of challenge that matched their ability or needs, with some students finding the work too hard and others doing work that was too easy for them. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve were not always high enough.
- Minor disruptions in lessons slowed the pace of learning in some lessons. Often, this was when the teacher expected students to listen for long periods without becoming actively engaged in a learning activity. Teachers do not manage students' behaviour consistently, a point also noted by older students.
- Marking of students' work is not always regular and does not always show students what they need to do to improve it. Where suggestions are made, these are not always followed up by teachers to check that students have made improvements.
- The teaching of reading for the weakest readers varies. Some teaching assistants have not been trained to support reading through phonics (the sounds that letters make) and this means that students are not being supported by consistent approaches they can use in different subjects. Mathematics teaching has been affected by recent staff changes and a new lead practitioner is due to start at the school in July 2013.
- The better teaching led to a brisk pace of learning. Students contributed well in pairs or groups and showed great enthusiasm for the topics they were studying. Teachers in these lessons used students' extended responses to build on work already learnt and used probing questions to assess how much students had learnt.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, and they have good relationships with their classes. Teaching in physical education is consistently good, with very positive responses from students. The school is aware that teaching in science is currently weaker than in other subjects and is taking action to bring about improvement.
- Support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is generally good. Their progress is similar to that of other students, however, because teaching varies as much for them as for other students in their classes. Hearing impaired students are well integrated in mainstream classes. Specialist teaching within the hearing impaired unit is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students generally behave sensibly and courteously around the school. Most students have positive attitudes to learning. Some lessons, however, are affected by low-level disruption that is not adequately checked by teachers. Discussions with older students and responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire placed behaviour as one of the weaker elements of the school.
- The school's records of behaviour and use of rewards and sanctions in different contexts do not link together well. For example, the recorded use of 'The Keep' on paper is separate from the electronic logging of behaviour incidents. This limits the school's ability to maintain an overview of patterns of behaviour and take action where it is needed.
- Students feel that there is little bullying in the school and that any instances are followed up effectively. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including the use

of social media and homophobic bullying. The school's records, however, do not always show the action taken or how the situation was resolved.

- Attendance has been below average but shows signs of improvement in 2013 and is now broadly average. The role of the school attendance officer has recently been revised and a new education welfare officer gives improved support. These changes have contributed to the improved attendance. Although persistent absence has reduced, it is still higher than average.
- Numbers of exclusions were high in 2011 but have reduced substantially since then, with only one permanent exclusion in the last year. The use of 'The Keep' is thought by the school to have had the greatest impact on bringing exclusions down to average levels.
- Students have good opportunities to take responsibilities as heads of school, faculty captains and form captains, as sports leaders or through the school council. Nevertheless, some students feel that the school does not take as much account of their views as they would like.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The changes in leadership of the school in the last five years have brought about some positive changes but have also seen a decline in the use some important administration systems. The current headteacher has brought a clear vision for the future of the school and a degree of rigour that insists that all staff make more extensive use of the school's available data.
- The move to three faculties has been completed successfully, with their heads having a clear view of their role. The analysis of assessment data has been strengthened to give much better information about the achievement of different groups of students and is now being developed to provide similar in information about progress.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have accurately identified where improvements are needed. Lead practitioners have had some success in supporting individual teachers but less of an impact on teaching across the whole school. The school's evaluations of achievement and teaching identify the right areas for improvement, although they view these as better than they are.
- The school has a clear plan for improvement, focusing on the most important areas such as achievement; teaching, including in science; attendance; and behaviour. Senior leaders hold faculty heads to account for the performance in their faculty, although there are some inconsistencies of practice.
- The school has responded to the expectations that more students will study GCSE courses in the future. In Years 9, 10 and 11, core subjects are taught conventionally. Other optional GCSE and other courses in these years are taught as one-year courses to give students wider choice. Students cover the full range of subjects in Years 7 and 8.
- The school's use of off-site placements to support health and behavioural needs is monitored carefully. The placements are effective in maintaining continuity of education for these students.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is built adequately into subjects, tutor group time and assemblies, although spiritual development is not as strong as the other areas. The school tackles all forms of discrimination robustly.
- The use of additional funding through the pupil premium is not well documented or analysed.

This means it is not possible for leaders to evaluate effectively its impact on those students targeted for support. Information about the use of pupil premium funding, and many other required areas, is not yet present on the school's website.

- The school has close links with the local authority. The school is challenged and supported effectively by its School Improvement Partner. The local authority has provided interim leadership when it was needed and has supported a range of staff disciplinary measures in the last year. These situations have now been resolved.
- Checks on the performance of staff have suffered during recent changes of leadership and the current headteacher has strengthened the process significantly. Targets have been made more precise, with clear criteria for success and clear links to students' progress and the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has faced a much more challenging time than is usual over recent staff disciplinary issues and several changes of leadership. Governors have successfully managed these difficulties and the school has continued to raise standards during this time. Governors have a clear view of the performance of the school and the areas most at risk, and are working with the headteacher to bring about improvements, particularly in science. The governing body has ensured that all safeguarding requirements are met and that staff have undergone the necessary training.
 - The necessary focus on major staffing and budgetary issues has meant the governing body has not paid as much attention to other matters that it oversees and where it relies on staff to manage. Governors do not have a good understanding of the way pupil premium funding is used, for example. Until this year, it has not had sufficient input into the award of pay increases, although these have not been awarded unless performance targets have been met.

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	120654
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	412813

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Jones
Headteacher	Elaine Stiles
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2009
Telephone number	01522 751040
Fax number	01522 595368
Email address	info@cwcs.lincs.sch.uk

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