

Alford Primary School

Hanby Lane, Alford, LN13 9BJ

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The curriculum does not cover subjects such as science, geography, religious education and history in sufficient depth in some classes to make sure that pupils achieve well.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not used effectively. This means that the gaps between these pupils' attainment and that of other pupils are not closing quickly enough.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' work. Pupils have too few opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects.
- Marking does not consistently provide pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work including grammar, punctuation and spelling skills.
- The checking of pupils' work is not done regularly enough by senior leaders, and not all subject leaders have the skills to drive improvements in their area of responsibility.
- Leaders' including governors' view of the school is too positive because they have not understood the importance of weaknesses in achievement of some groups of pupils. The good teaching of the previous inspection has not been maintained.
- Provision for special educational needs has not been led and managed well over time and the school website does not provide the statutory information regarding the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Governors do not check carefully that information about teaching and learning is accurate.

The school has the following strengths

- Strengths in the early years ensure that children get a good start and achieve well during their first year in school.
- The teaching of reading is good in all year groups.
- Pupils are happy at school and, as a result, attendance is above average. Pupils feel very safe as a result of rigorous safeguarding procedures.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain.
- The most-able pupils are taught well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Members of staff are proud of their school and staff morale is high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all classrooms, two of them with the headteacher and two with the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils taught phonics (letters and sounds) by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised in all year groups and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work, their enjoyment of school and their opinions of behaviour and safety.
- Discussions were held with staff, parents, governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including those covering safeguarding and child protection, attendance, behaviour, and pupils' progress and attainment. They studied the school improvement plan, subject leaders' action plans and records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day to find out their opinions of the school and analysed the 35 responses on Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire. The 31 replies to the optional staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Capron	Additional Inspector
Anne White	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In this above average-sized primary school, most pupils are White British.
- Early years provision is provided in two full-time Reception classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, at 37%, is above average. This funding provides additional support for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Approximately 23% of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs, which is well above average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been many staffing changes. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and a new senior management team established in September 2014. Also in September, a new special educational needs coordinator was appointed.
- The school works in close partnership with five other local primary schools for the purposes of professional development and monitoring and evaluation activities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils' progress is accelerated, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work
 - ensuring that marking gives pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work and helps them to improve their skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - providing pupils with regular opportunities to use and apply their literacy skills by writing across a range of different subjects
 - improving the support given to pupils who are disadvantaged or have disabilities and special educational needs to ensure that they make consistently good progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders check regularly that the work in pupils' books show good progress in all subjects
 - the leadership skills of inexperienced subject leaders are developed
 - subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education are taught in sufficient depth so that pupils are able to make good progress in their learning
 - the identification of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is accurate and the resulting provision is appropriate
 - the website meets statutory requirements with regard to the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - governors check for themselves the accuracy of information about teaching and learning.

External reviews of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not ensured that teaching and pupils' achievement have remained good as identified at the last inspection. School self-evaluation is overgenerous because leaders do not consider well enough pupils' achievement in all subjects. Weaknesses such as the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, and provision for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs, are not taken sufficiently into account when evaluating school effectiveness.
- Significant staffing changes over time have meant that the senior leadership team has been 'spread too thinly' to keep a close enough eye on how all aspects of the school are progressing. For example, last year, due to the resignation of the special educational needs coordinator, the headteacher had to assume this role. Weaknesses were not addressed and some pupils who were actually underachieving were wrongly identified as having special educational needs. The new special educational needs coordinator quickly realised the criteria used for identification were not sharp enough and the resulting provision not always appropriate. An action plan is in place to improve this but there has been too little time for it to have had significant impact.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are in place, and this year's objectives for staff are linked closely to the national *Teachers' Standards* and to the school improvement plan. However, the impact of performance management is not yet fully evident in ensuring consistently good teaching and learning.
- The work in pupils' books is not checked often enough to ensure consistently good achievement in all subjects. It is better in English and mathematics where leaders have identified strengths and areas requiring improvement and have shared this information with staff. However, leaders of subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education are inexperienced and are having insufficient impact on pupils' progress. The English leader has not checked that these subjects are used to promote pupils' literacy skills.
- The need to close the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others is high on the agenda. Inspection evidence shows that, for pupils currently in school, these gaps are narrowing, although inconsistencies still remain, especially in mathematics and writing. The funding is effective in providing for pupils' social and emotional development.
- Senior leaders, supported by governors, ensure pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps to create a harmonious community. All staff are positive about the school's leadership and morale is high. Ensuring that pupils have equal opportunities, particularly in the way they participate in different activities, results in pupils valuing what the school offers. Leaders are less successful in ensuring equality of provision for disadvantaged pupils and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught but not always in sufficient depth to ensure good gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Extra-curricular clubs, including, film club, cheerleading, football, and choir are well attended. The programme for personal, social and health education provides pupils with good guidance. Core values, such as honesty, respect and tolerance are fostered throughout the school and so pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The school uses its additional sports funding effectively to promote pupils' physical education. A sports coach has been appointed to help train staff in gymnastics, and pupils benefit from improved provision. All children in early years have experienced football training. The school has established productive partnerships with local football clubs and funding has successfully targeted and engaged pupils in new sports clubs.
- Decisive action has also led to pupils' improved attendance. Unreported and extended absences are followed up rigorously. When parents have difficulties getting children to school, strategies such as the

'Walking Bus' collect pupils from their home.

- Links with parents are a notable strength. Those who responded to the online questionnaire were very positive about the way the school cares for their children, and inspection evidence agrees with these views.
- The early years leader has been effective in improving the issues identified at the time of the last inspection and, as a result, children make good progress in the Reception classes.
- The partnership work with other schools is useful and allows staff to share best practice. The local authority provides advice and additional training, including training for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors receive reports about the quality of teaching and acknowledge that teaching is not as strong as it was in the previous year. However, governors have not confirmed for themselves the accuracy of information they are given about the school's performance. They have not checked that pupils' work shows secure evidence of good teaching, although they know that staff should only receive a pay award if their pupils make good progress.
 - Governing body minutes show evidence of challenge and governors asking what has been the impact of spending such as the sports funding and the pupil premium. However, governors have not been successful in ensuring that pupils supported by the pupil premium funding make the necessary rates of progress they should, to narrow the gap between their attainment and that of others.
 - Governors understand their roles and responsibilities, including ensuring that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. They have helped the headteacher through a period of staffing disruption and in restructuring the senior management team.
 - Governors ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including checks on staff, fully meet statutory requirements. The school website, although mainly meeting statutory requirements, does not fulfil requirements regarding the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils speak positively about how much they enjoy and value being in this school and this is reflected in their smart appearance and good manners. They are friendly, polite and respectful towards all adults and respond quickly to any instructions given to them.
- Good attitudes towards learning are fostered well in the Reception classes. Pupils behave well in classrooms and around school. They are eager to co-operate with each. In lessons, pupils sustain good concentration and try hard with their work. In English and mathematics, pupils usually take care with their presentation, but in other subjects this good-quality presentation is not always evident.
- Attendance has improved over time and is now above the national average. Punctuality is good. Staff keep a close check on the attendance of individual pupils so that any issues can be addressed quickly by the education welfare officer.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective and fully meet current requirements. Child protection procedures are thorough and sensitive.
- Records show that there are few concerns about behaviour and safety for any groups of pupils and, if these occur, strategies are in place to deal with them effectively. The special educational needs coordinator, alongside the learning mentor, very effectively supports the very few pupils with behaviour issues so there is little disruption to the learning of other pupils.

- Pupils feel very safe and know how to keep themselves safe as a result of being taught about potential dangers; for example, the risks involved in taking drugs or in smoking. Pupils have an excellent understanding of computer safety and know that they should not disclose personal information.
- Pupils have a very good knowledge about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Those who spoke to inspectors were adamant that bullying does not happen in their school. They say that if bullying did occur, they would know exactly what to do and are confident that it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school's records of incidents confirm pupils' views.
- All parents who completed Parent View highly praise the school and are happy that their children are safe and very well cared for. The staff questionnaires also say there are no concerns regarding behaviour and safety. These very positive responses reflect the inspection findings.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and the work seen in books and in lessons highlights the current inconsistencies. Most pupils produce good-quality work in English and mathematics but, in other subjects, the same pupils produce too little, make careless mistakes and presentation is untidy. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of the quality or quantity of pupils' work across all subjects, and therefore progress is variable.
- Observations of teaching and analysis of pupils' work reflect a number of strengths, including in mathematics and phonics and in promoting good learning for some disadvantaged pupils. However, these strengths are not consistent. Currently, teaching is not reliably promoting the rapid progress needed to enable gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others to close quickly. This is in most year groups, including in the early years.
- The quality of teachers' marking is variable. There are examples of effective marking, particularly in pupils' English and mathematics books, where most teachers give clear feedback to pupils about what they have done well and how they should improve their work. However, in some books, usually other than English or mathematics, comments are unhelpful and do not identify how to improve. Simple spelling errors – for example, 'steal' instead of 'steel' or 'alwase' are not picked up. In some year groups, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write at greater length, especially in subjects other than English.
- The teaching for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs ensures they gain reasonable basic levels in key skills. Like other pupils in the school, however, teaching for these pupils requires improvement. This is because the support given to them is not always appropriate to ensure good progress.
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils are skilfully taught phonics from an early age, and this helps them to read unfamiliar words. This means that pupils quickly develop the skills to read texts that are appropriate for their ability. Teachers ensure that pupils read frequently and that they read regularly to an adult in school. Pupils have good opportunities in all subjects to develop their reading comprehension skills.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' oral work and they are given sufficient practice during lessons to speak in complete sentences and to use technical vocabulary, particularly in mathematics, to explain their thinking. The work in books show that opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding of mathematics through problem solving is improving in most year groups.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and relationships are positive so pupils want to please their teachers. Good attitudes towards learning start in the early years. In all subjects, pupils learn to take turns and to respect each other's views.
- The most-able pupils are usually taught well in reading, writing and mathematics and the work they are given is suitably challenging.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Achievement requires improvement because teaching varies in quality and this affects the progress of the pupils. This is confirmed by classroom observations and the work in pupils' books. The work in pupils' books show that, in classes where teachers do not expect enough of pupils, productivity is low and progress therefore slows. Work scrutinies show that, in a few classes, subjects are not taught in sufficient depth to ensure pupils' good progress in acquiring subject-specific knowledge; for example, in science.
- National test results and assessments for Year 6 pupils in 2014 showed attainment was broadly average in mathematics, reading, writing, and the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. Progress was good for most groups of pupils, apart from disadvantaged pupils and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Although an average proportion of disadvantaged pupils made expected progress, too few of them made better than expected progress, especially in mathematics and writing.
- By the end of Year 6, in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was approximately a term behind pupils nationally in mathematics, one and a half terms behind in reading and writing, and more than two terms behind in grammar, punctuation and spelling. When compared to the attainment of their classmates, the gap was much wider. Disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind their classmates in reading and they were around four terms behind them in writing, mathematics and in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Although the gap is narrowing in some year groups, this is not consistent. For example in early years, only 33% of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development in comparison with 73% of other children at the end of the school year. At the end of Year 2, in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were attaining approximately one year behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and the gap had widened from the previous year. Disadvantaged pupils are still not making as much progress as they should.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not achieve as well as they should as the support they are given is not consistently targeted to their specific learning needs. However, within this general picture, some individual pupils make good gains in their learning and development.
- Children start in the Reception with knowledge, skills and understanding that are mostly typical for their age. Most make good progress in all areas of learning because the teaching is consistently good, and the majority reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Standards in phonics have risen from average to above average. The pupils both break down words and pronounce them accurately because teaching is skilful. In Year 1 and Year 2, the pupils who did not attain the expected level were mainly disadvantaged pupils. In other year groups, reading achievement is good and, by Year 6, most pupils read well and speak enthusiastically about a range of different authors.
- The most-able pupils generally achieve well. The recent national test and assessments for Year 6 pupils showed that even though these pupils began Key Stage 2 with above-average attainment, they made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attained highly by time they left the school. An above-average proportion of them attained Level 6 in mathematics, reading, writing and in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Pupils who start school at times other than is usual are quickly integrated into the school and make progress similar to that of their classmates.

The early years provision**is good**

- The quality of early years provision has improved since the previous inspection. By the time children move into Year 1, the majority are prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Good arrangements to introduce children and their parents into Reception results in children settling in quickly. They are happy, secure and ready to learn. There are also strong links with pre-school providers,

so staff know a great deal about the children who are starting at school.

- All staff are very caring and establish warm and friendly relationships with the children. This ensures that the children behave well, feel safe and quickly gain confidence. Well-established routines help children to move between activities on their own, to develop their skills and choose whether they work in the indoor or outdoor learning areas.
- During adult-led activities in which staff work with groups of children on literacy and mathematics, staff make a good contribution to children's learning. There is good teaching of phonics in these sessions. The checks on children's achievements in adult-led sessions and during play activities are effective in helping to determine the next steps for children's learning. This means children learn continuously well throughout the day. They make good progress as a result of consistently good teaching.
- The good leadership of the early years ensures that activities are well organised, resources are used effectively and children's progress is carefully monitored. The leader is knowledgeable about how to teach early years children and effectively supports the staff working with her. Through her monitoring, she has identified that disadvantaged children were not attaining as high as others and this year, these children are receiving specially targeted support which is proving effective.
- Children's 'Learning Journeys' on tablet computers provide valuable insight into the achievement of individual children. Staff and parents are able to carefully track each child's progress over the year and add comments or pictures to record significant learning.

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	120440
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	449240

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	341
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Parsons
Headteacher	Debbie Forster
Date of previous school inspection	October 2010
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