

The North Cotes Church of England Primary School

Sea Lane, North Cotes, Lincolnshire DN36 5UZ

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's drive and ambition have brought about rapid improvements. He is establishing a culture of high expectations.
- Outcomes are improving. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils behave and conduct themselves around the school well at all times of the school day. Pupils are polite and courteous.
- Pupils are kept safe and feel safe. Relationships are positive. Staff ensure that the school has a caring ethos of mutual respect that is shared by all.
- Leaders are outward-looking. They have ensured that staff benefit from external support and joint work with other schools.
- The governing body has improved its effectiveness in holding leaders to account.
- Parents and carers commented on many positive changes. They say the school is better organised and their children enjoy school.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and engage the pupils' interest. They skilfully question pupils to check and develop their understanding.
- Leaders make increasingly effective use of additional funding, including the pupil premium.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. Provision is well led and organised. Children make good progress.
- The headteacher has been creative in ensuring that leadership is effective. However, some roles are still at an early stage of development.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not as sharply focused as they could be. Some aspects of the school's work have not been prioritised sufficiently to help drive even more rapid improvements.
- Teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities for problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. However, some pupils have not been taught the skills they need to be more successful.
- Sometimes, teachers do not match work accurately to pupils' needs. Some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' use of accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation in their writing are not consistently high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance must ensure that:
 - their plans for improvement prioritise and set sharp targets for improvement for all appropriate aspects of the school’s work
 - they further develop the roles of middle leaders so that they are more effective in raising standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to further improve pupils’ outcomes by ensuring that all teachers:
 - refine their use of assessment information to more accurately match work to pupils’ abilities, particularly the most able
 - consistently teach pupils the skills they need to be effective problem-solvers and demonstrate their reasoning skills
 - require pupils to use spelling, grammar and punctuation accurately in their writing and appropriate to their ability
 - expect pupils to take pride in their work and produce work of high quality in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Over recent years, there have been inconsistencies in the quality of senior leadership. Since the appointment of the executive headteacher, leaders have made rapid progress in bringing about improvements in many aspects of the school's work. The headteacher is raising expectations of what pupils can achieve. He is establishing an ambitious culture and positive ethos for the school.
- Staff morale is high. They say that, after a period of uncertainty, the new headteacher has brought stability and challenge. His management of change is of a high quality. Some initiatives are at a relatively early stage of development. Leaders are clear in their view that there is still work to be done. Nonetheless, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are improving.
- The headteacher has ensured that staff have received effective training and support. This has included, for example, teaching mathematics effectively in the mixed-age classes, and developing teaching and the curriculum in the early years. The headteacher has ensured that newly qualified members of staff have received effective support. He has carefully managed the school's work with a teaching school alliance and the local authority, as well as utilising staff in other schools to support rapid improvements.
- Leaders have made improvements in the way they hold staff to account. They regularly check standards by looking at pupils' work and visiting lessons. The headteacher holds regular meetings with staff to review the progress made by pupils. The management of teachers' performance is more rigorous than previously and is supporting improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Leaders and the governing body have ensured that the pupil premium funding is now more carefully targeted. This has not been the case in the past. The careful review of the progress of disadvantaged pupils and specific support, including the role of the learning mentor, have significantly helped the majority of the small number of disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. The governing body is more effective in holding leaders to account and understand its responsibility to report on the impact of the funding.
- Leaders use the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport effectively to improve the skills of teachers in delivering lessons and to raise pupils' participation in school sporting events. Leaders have used the funding to widen the range of after-school clubs. This year, these have included gymnastics, archery and tennis.
- The additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used effectively. The new coordinator has considerable expertise. She has reviewed existing processes and is bringing greater rigour. A member of staff from the partner school contributes to the organisation of the support for pupils' specific needs.
- External support from the local authority has been effective. Through regular visits and meetings and the brokering of relevant training, the local authority has supported improvements in leadership planning, governance and the quality of teaching. Its

support for the early years teacher and leader has been particularly effective.

- The large majority of parents are positive about all aspects of the school's work. They comment on improved communications, the approachability of staff, better organisation, school events and the positive atmosphere. They say their children are making good progress and enjoying school. Pupils speak of positive changes to their lessons, assemblies and playtimes. They say, 'The headteacher has changed the whole school. It's a lot better now.'
- Leaders have developed a clear view of how the curriculum should support pupils' academic and social development. The broad curriculum, supported by a widening range of enrichment activities, as well as extra-curricular clubs, ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is effective. School displays reflect the many opportunities pupils have to develop their understanding of British heritage. However, some pupils not as confident as they should be for their age in their understanding of British values.
- The headteacher has skilfully and creatively ensured that a secure middle leadership structure is in place to support school improvement. He has effectively focused on developing appropriately the leadership skills of the small number of staff. This is supplemented by leadership expertise from the partner school. However, some of this work is still at an early stage. Middle leaders' expertise in raising standards is still not as secure as it could be.
- Leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and the aspects in which it can improve. They are able to bring about improvements in areas on which they focus. Their improvement plans, however, do not prioritise some key aspects of the school's work. Sometimes, their plans are not as sharp as they could be in helping to drive even more rapid improvements in some areas.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's actions and initiatives to improve standards. The minutes of its meetings show that governors ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account in relation to all aspects of the school's work.
- Governors regularly undertake focused visits to the school to meet with leaders and staff to deepen their understanding of the school's work, for example in relation to safeguarding, provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the early years, assessment and attendance. Their reports of visits are often evaluative and are shared at meetings of the full governing body. They are increasingly asking for evidence of impact.
- In the past, the governing body has not been effective in holding leaders to account for pupils' attainment and progress or for the impact of the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium and funding for PE and sport. It is now much sharper in checking and reviewing the impact of this funding.
- The governing body has rapidly improved its effectiveness in both supporting and challenging leaders. It has acted upon the external advice provided from a national leader of governance. The governing body has a secure overview of the school's

strengths and priorities for improvement. However, it is less involved than it should be in the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders are thorough in ensuring that all required recruitment checks for staff, governors and visitors are completed and carefully recorded. The governing body regularly checks that arrangements to safeguard pupils are in place.
- Leaders ensure that all members of staff receive regular training so that they are clear on the procedures for reporting any concerns about pupils' welfare and they are kept up to date with the latest guidance on keeping pupils safe in education.
- Leaders record all concerns carefully, including the actions they have taken. They are tenacious in involving external agencies where this is required.
- Many parents who spoke with the inspector commented positively on the improved arrangements at the beginning of the school day to ensure that the school site is secure.
- The school's caring ethos is evident in pupils' positive interactions with teachers and with each other. Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including when they are online. Pupils say they feel safe and the large majority of parents who spoke with the inspector say their children are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers are positive, reflective practitioners. The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons that are well organised, sustain pupils' interest and support their learning. Teaching assistants are often deployed well. The majority of pupils make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teaching is focused and positive and keeps pupils interested. Teachers teach pupils to be confident readers who have a range of strategies for reading words about which they are not sure.
- Teachers encourage pupils to have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen to do well. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are confident sharing their ideas, working and collaborating together. Pupils in key stage 1, for example, discussed and shared their understanding of division, using mathematical language and supporting each other's learning. This effectively supports their learning and progress.
- Parents commented positively about the homework which teachers regularly set to consolidate or extend pupils' learning.
- Teachers encourage pupils to increasingly write at length in a range of subjects and genres. Standards of writing are improving. However, sometimes, teachers do not require pupils to use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation appropriate to their ability.
- In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils understand the most important ideas and

develop their calculation skills well. Teachers often use visual imagery and apparatus well to support pupils' learning. Teachers ensure that pupils have increasingly frequent opportunities to tackle problem-solving and reasoning tasks. However, they do not consistently ensure that pupils securely have the skills they need to tackle these problems or demonstrate their reasoning.

- Teachers work with staff in other schools to ensure that the assessments of pupils' learning are accurate. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to meet pupils' needs. For example, in key stage 2, staff organisation of learning and their skills in questioning effectively involve all pupils in evaluating the quality of a piece of writing. However, teachers do not use information about pupils' learning as well as they could to more consistently match work to pupils' needs so that they, including the most able, fully make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers and staff have a shared set of values which are promoted throughout the school. For example, the inspector observed an assembly in which a member of staff explored with pupils a national sporting event. Pupils' cultural awareness was skilfully linked to a message about the importance of respecting others, the school's value of friendship and the importance of showing kindness on the playground when playing games with others.
- Pupils work well together and collaborate effectively. The inspector saw several instances in which pupils in all classes supported each other's learning. Older pupils take a responsible attitude to younger pupils. Relationships are very positive and staff promote an ethos of mutual respect. Pupils explained the friendship tree in the hall, on which they had hung positive messages on leaves, such as 'In friendship you have to show respect, otherwise it's not a proper friendship.' One parent told the inspector, 'My child regards the whole school as her friendship group.'
- Staff ensure that the school provides a safe environment where pupils learn to be confident, self-assured and keen to answer questions and offer contributions.
- Pupils enjoy the roles and responsibilities the school offers them, such as the influential school council. The council has led a range of charity fundraising events and recently successfully campaigned for a school 'camp craft' day.
- Staff promote well pupils' physical health and well-being. Pupils are very positive about the wide range of physical activities available to them at playtimes. Pupils show a good understanding of healthy eating and are positive about the increased sporting activities available to them.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils say bullying is very rare and most are very confident that adults will rapidly resolve any concerns they have. Leaders carefully record incidents and the actions they have taken in their efforts to resolve issues. A small number of parents did raise concerns but the inspector could find no evidence to support these.

- Pupils are proud of their school and generally take pride in their work. However, leaders are aware that this is not consistent in all subjects.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are confident and well mannered. Staff consistently reinforce expectations of behaviour. Pupils know what is expected and understand the school's rules and systems for promoting positive behaviour. They conduct themselves well at all times of the school day – in classrooms, in corridors and on the playground.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils only lose focus when work is not matched carefully enough to their learning needs.
- Attendance is improving but remains below the national average. A small number of absences have a significant impact on overall figures. Leaders take a wide range of actions to emphasise the importance of attendance to parents. They check attendance carefully and work with the families of pupils who have persistent absence. Leaders and the governing body recognise that improving attendance is an ongoing area of focus.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' work and school information show that, in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, the majority of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils complete work of a good standard in a range of subjects.
- Leaders and teachers quickly identify pupils who need help to catch up. The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.
- Teaching enables pupils to make good, and sometimes better, progress in phonics. Pupils apply their skills effectively in their reading and read confidently, fluently and with good comprehension. Staff identify and provide additional support for pupils who are not secure in their skills. Staff ensure that all pupils who are able meet the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Teachers help pupils to develop a secure understanding over time of the most important ideas in mathematics. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills, sometimes effectively in subjects other than mathematics. However, some pupils' progress is not as strong as it could be because they are unsure about strategies they could use to solve a problem or demonstrate their reasoning.
- Pupils make progress in writing, which is often at least good. Teachers ensure that pupils improve their spelling, handwriting and their use of vocabulary, and write increasingly sophisticated sentences. However, greater progress is possible. The often strong content of pupils' writing is sometimes let down by less accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. Furthermore, the quality of pupils' work in some subjects is sometimes not as high as in their English books.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader for the early years joined the school in September 2017. She has ensured that children make good progress from their starting points in the early years. The majority of children join the early years with skills similar to those typically seen for their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average. Children make a good start to their education in the early years.
- Leaders have ensured that consistent, effective assessment practices are in place. The leader of the early years carefully checks children’s learning and development across the different areas of learning and effectively identifies what is needed to help children make good progress. The leader is encouraging parents to contribute information about children’s learning and development.
- Teaching is effective in the early years. The leader of the early years has swiftly developed a secure understanding of teaching and the curriculum. Leaders ensure that there is a sufficient breadth of opportunity for children to learn across the different areas of learning, including outdoors. Teachers and other adults use questioning effectively to take children’s learning forward. However, sometimes activities provide insufficient challenge and do not stimulate children’s curiosity and perseverance, particularly for the most able.
- Staff ensure that children understand systems and routines. Children behave and cooperate well. Children are confident and enthusiastic. The inspector observed, for example, children taking turns when enthusiastically playing a counting game.
- Leaders manage transition arrangements well. Children are prepared well as they move into the early years and into Year 1 in the mixed-age class. The early years leader is encouraging the involvement of parents in contributing information about children’s learning and development. Parents who spoke with the inspector or who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, are very positive about the start to their children’s education.
- The leader of the early years has benefited from effective support to rapidly improve her expertise. There have been clear improvements in leadership, the quality of teaching and the curriculum in the early years. However, leaders’ analysis of the impact of teaching and the curriculum, and plans to further improve teaching and the curriculum, are not as sharp as they could be.
- All the early years safeguarding requirements are effective and statutory requirements are met. Leaders ensure that children are safe.

School details

Unique reference number	120579
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10048216

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marilyn Bell
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Grant
Telephone number	01472 388 379
Website	www.northcotes.lincs.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@northcotes.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher was appointed to his post in September 2017. Prior to this, he was the interim headteacher from May 2017. Since the previous inspection, a new coordinator of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been appointed.
- In September 2018, the school will form the Fulstow Federation of schools with another school.
- North Cotes Church of England Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The school is currently organised into two classes. One comprises the early years and key stage 1, the other key stage 2.
- 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 disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school has a breakfast and an after-school club, which are run by the governing body.
- Due to the small number of pupils, the government's floor standards do not apply in this school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, a senior leader, the deputy headteacher of the partner school in the new federation, middle leaders, including the leader for the early years, and the coordinator for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. Discussions explored a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector observed five lessons jointly with the headteacher, including the teaching of phonics. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work with the headteacher and a senior leader, and spoke with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. The inspector met with a group of pupils and listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2, 3 and 5.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress and staff performance. The inspector looked at plans for improvement, as well as leaders' evaluation of the school's performance. The inspector also considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.
- The inspector spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. Account was taken of the eight responses to the Parent View free-text responses. There were two responses to the staff questionnaire and no responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Lawson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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