

The Lincoln St Christopher's School

Hykeham Road, Lincoln, LN6 8AR

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All pupils do well from their different starting points, with some making exceptional progress.
- Most teachers make sure lessons are fun and interesting so pupils are keen to join in.
- The sixth form is good and prepares students well for life after school.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school.
- The school provides much appreciated support for parents. One said, 'They take care of the children and take care of the parents too'.
- The school keeps pupils safe by having the right procedures in place as well as helping them learn to look after themselves.
- The new headteacher has re-energised the school since the merger and has made sweeping improvements to the way pupils are taught, as well as improving the school building.
- Governors have given the headteacher all the help he has needed to bring the two schools together and have started to build a bright, new future for everyone.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- It is too early to see the full impact of all of the headteacher's improvements.
- A little teaching still requires improvement.
- A few teachers do not stretch the most able pupils to do their very best.
- Pupils who are able to, do not always understand what to do to improve their work.
- Older pupils need to be able to take more courses that lead to recognised qualifications.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not have enough opportunities for outside play.
- Information about the pupil premium published online lacks specific detail about its impact.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 28 lessons, of which five were seen jointly with the headteacher. Some short visits to lessons were also made. Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them at break and lunch times. Both sites of the school were visited and one inspector went with a group of pupils to college.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teaching assistants, teachers, parents and three sets of pupils. The lead inspector also met with governors, a representative of the local authority and the outreach teacher.
- Inspectors looked at records about attendance, behaviour, health and safety and pupils' progress as well as the school's checks on teacher's performance and the quality of teaching. They looked at pupils' current work and collections of work they had done in the past.
- Inspectors considered 13 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents). Some parents did not receive the letter from the school explaining about Parent View in time to respond. Inspectors also looked at the school's own questionnaire to parents

Inspection team

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Murrell

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Lincoln St. Christopher's School is a large special school for pupils with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, many of whom have autism spectrum disorders. All have statements of special educational needs apart from some pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage who have assessment places.
- The headteacher was formerly headteacher of Queen's Park School and became executive headteacher of both Queen's Park and St. Christopher's Schools in April 2013. In September 2013 Queen's Park closed and merged with St. Christopher's to form a combined school.
- Pupils attend the school from Lincoln and surrounding areas. Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for funding from the pupil premium (extra government funding to help pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or who have a parent in the armed forces).
- The school offers an outreach service to local mainstream primary schools to support pupils with behaviour, social and communication difficulties.
- Some pupils attend St. Francis' School, Lincoln College, Enterprise House and North Kesteven School for work-related or academic courses including GCSEs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by making sure that all teaching is at least good and more is outstanding and that:
 - pupils have a better understanding of how to improve their work
 - teaching is planned so that less-able pupils have enough time to finish their work, but the more-able are stretched as much as they can be
 - older pupils have more opportunities to gain recognised qualifications that will help them in the next stage of their lives
 - children in the Early Years Foundation department make the most of both indoor and outdoor spaces, in order to further develop their skills, understanding and achievement.
- Make sure information about the pupil premium published online includes the required detail about its impact on the achievement of eligible pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Because the schools have recently merged, the headteacher has had to join together two different sets of pupil records on achievement and decide the best way to record this. The data show that most individuals and all groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, do equally well in all subjects. This is backed up by inspectors' observations showing pupils making good and sometimes outstanding progress in most lessons.
- Pupils' work is neatly presented and shows the progress they make. It also shows how pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work. Teachers' comments are positive and encouraging, but occasionally they forget to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- The school uses pupil-premium funding effectively to help those eligible to catch up in English and mathematics and uses a variety of checks to make sure pupils are doing as well as they can. In Key Stage 1 they have almost caught up and in Key Stage 2 and 3 they are doing better than their classmates. However, in Key Stage 4 there is still a little way to go.
- The school does not receive Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics and have lots of opportunities to practise these skills in lessons and in practical day-to-day tasks around the school. Pupils learning to communicate make good progress in using alternative ways of expressing their needs or making choices.
- Although they do not have access to a full range of outdoor activities, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage generally make a good start in school. Their progress is carefully recorded.
- Older pupils can choose from a range of courses at college and other schools that prepare them for life after school. They are keen to do well and say they would like to be able to gain more qualifications in some subjects. Inspectors found that more could be done to bring this about.
- The school makes sure all pupils have the opportunity to gain useful qualifications and some more-able pupils take GCSEs at a local secondary school, with some gaining pass grades in English, mathematics, science and history. They have good opportunities for work placements and to learn about the world of work.
- Students in sixth form are sometimes taught alongside other pupils in the senior annex with similar abilities, such as other pupils with severe learning difficulties, which helps them learn from each other. Carefully planned programmes of study ensure they make good progress.
- The school makes sure there are no barriers to pupils' achievement. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to communicate using their senses, while pupils with autism spectrum disorders learn the routines and understanding needed to build on their social and academic achievement.
- The school uses the primary sports funding to enable all pupils to access more sport. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties visit Lincoln Football Club, play tennis or go swimming.

The quality of teaching is good

- In September 2013 the school decided to group pupils according to their ability as well as their age. This has helped improve how teachers plan their lessons.
- One of the hallmarks of teaching at St. Christopher's is the very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are keen to please their teachers and want to learn. Most of the time they are encouraged to do their best and shouts of joy were heard in one English lesson for Key Stage 4 and 5 pupils when they were successful.
- Teachers mostly prepare interesting, fun lessons for pupils, such as in one outstanding Key Stage 2 English lesson about 'wow' words where pupils buzzed with excitement. Even though there was so much happening around them, pupils took no notice, as they were so enthralled by their own activities, enhanced by exciting and relevant resources such as the teacher's 'Power Rangers' costume.
- Generally teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils have learnt previously and the best teachers are skilled at doing this as they go along. They also use teaching assistants very well to help pupils learn as much as they can.
- Very occasionally work is set that some pupils struggle with while the more able finish quickly and then have nothing to do. For example, some more-able pupils were only required to colour in a diagram when they could also have labelled it.
- Recently introduced ways of teaching reading are already having an impact on how well pupils are learning to read, particularly younger pupils. This is also true of the new way of teaching mathematics which is helping pupils learn in a more practical way.
- Teachers use a range of teaching methods to help pupils learn in the way that suits them best, such as working in pairs to share ideas, small groups or sometimes one to one.
- There is invariably a calm, purposeful atmosphere in lessons apparent when observing the youngest children in the Early Learning Foundation Stage taking turns and exchanging pictures at snack time, or sixth formers having a prompt start to lessons first thing in the morning instead of breakfast club, to prepare them for the world of work. Pupils in the class for pupils with autism spectrum disorder use picture timetables to help them calmly prepare to go out shopping to buy ingredients for snack time.
- Pupils' learning extends beyond the usual subjects one would expect to find as they are helped to learn about each other's emotions by recognising them in pictures displayed on the interactive whiteboard. Another group of pupils role-playing peasants in a lesson about the French Revolution were asked how they felt about being taxed by the aristocracy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave really well around the school and in lessons. No disruptive behaviour was observed during the inspection and on the few occasions when lessons were not as interesting as they could be, pupils still paid attention.
- This is because most staff have high expectations of behaviour and provide good role models. There is a 'zero tolerance' of bullying so that although a few pupils say they have experienced a small amount of bullying they also say staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

- Pupils are clear about what bullying is, including cyber bullying, and some were able to explain to inspectors exactly what they needed to do if they had a worrying text message or a problem on a social media site.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils during the inspection. At each meeting pupils were polite and welcoming and keen to talk about their school, of which they are obviously proud. They say their teachers are good and caring and that they feel safe.
- Some pupils do have problems with their behaviour when they arrive at the school but school records show they are helped to make significant progress in overcoming this, so that they can concentrate on their education. Exclusions are extremely rare as are incidents of restraint which are meticulously recorded.
- Most staff, especially the more experienced, manage difficult behaviour confidently and effectively. 'High fives', stickers, stamps, house points and other rewards provide incentives to improve behaviour and pupils could explain how the system of rewards and sanctions worked.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff have the correct training to keep pupils safe and to help pupils learn how to do this themselves, for example through travel training and in 'Spud Club' where students paid attention to health and safety requirements for food preparation.
- The school keeps a watchful eye on attendance and this shows that pupils attend well. Because pupils enjoy school they are keen to attend. One parent said how since her child joined the school he was up and ready for the transport every morning.
- Parents spoken to in school and who responded to Parent View feel their children are kept safe and are well looked after.

The leadership and management are good

- The merger of the two schools has been a huge challenge for everyone involved but strong, purposeful leadership by the headteacher, well supported by the governing body, means firm foundations are being laid for a bright future.
- Not all senior leaders were in school at the time of the inspection, but those spoken to were completely behind the actions of the headteacher and fully support the changes he has made.
- There have been recent changes to leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage as part of the reorganisation so it is too early to say how effective this will be. Good leadership of the sixth form prepares students well for the future.
- Some staff are still struggling with the brisk pace of development, but as time has passed most are seeing the value of what has been done and the reasons behind it. Changes in staffing and appropriate training to support new systems have already begun to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- The way the school evaluates the success of its work is thorough and accurate. Senior and other leaders make sure they check the effectiveness of what they do so they can make any necessary adjustments. Staff at all levels are beginning to take more responsibility for making sure the school runs smoothly, so it is not just down to the headteacher and senior leaders.

- One of the biggest improvements has been to the curriculum, which is now far livelier and engaging as well as better organised. One governor said it is so much more interesting for pupils and that you can almost see their thirst for knowledge.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education through inspiring assemblies and a wide range of interesting activities both in school, at lunchtime and after-school clubs, as well opportunities for residential experiences. They go out into the community much more than they did and are beginning to have greater opportunities to learn about life in a modern multicultural society.
- The school works very well with other schools, colleges and organisations. Its work with parents is a particular strength, especially the training courses it provides for parents to help them manage their children's behaviour and relationships. The school also gives independent information, advice and guidance to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education or training.
- The local authority gives the school support to manage any continuing personnel issues arising from the merger and to help implement the headteacher's improvements to the school swiftly.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- the governing body pre-empted any potential difficulties that might arise from the merger of the two schools and has worked hard at minimising potential disruption. Because governors have put the pupils' best interests at the core of their planning, feedback from pupils, parents and staff has been largely positive. However governors know it is still early days.
- governors are very involved in securing the finances of the school and making sure the performance management of teachers is clearly linked to pay. They know about the quality of teaching in the school and how well pupils do. They are aware of pupil-premium funding and are beginning to look in more detail at how it is spent and the effect it has on the achievement of eligible pupils. Although this information is published online it does not give enough detail about its impact.
- governors make sure current national safeguarding requirements are 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	120754
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	430709

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	257
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Gray
Headteacher	Allan Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2011
Telephone number	01522 528378
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