

# The Lincoln St Christopher's School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120754
<b>Local Authority</b>	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	313731
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Karin Heap

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Barry Fippard MBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Derek Metcalfe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Lincoln St Christopher's Hykeham Road Lincoln LN6 8AR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01522 528378
<b>Fax number</b>	01522 521110

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Lincoln St Christopher's is a special day school, designated for 170 pupils with moderate learning difficulties, aged 3-16. The school has a 10 place pre-school assessment unit and delivers an outreach service to support pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) in mainstream schools. Two thirds of pupils are of secondary age and there are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. The needs of pupils in the Foundation Stage are increasingly more complex. Over a third of the pupils have ASD. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, career Mark, Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Christopher's is a good school with some outstanding features, where everyone is committed to teamwork and high expectations. Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong. One parent sums up the school by saying: 'My son has grown into a happy, confident child who enjoys coming to school.'

The strong inclusive ethos, which underpins the exemplary personal development of students, is the foundation for everything that goes on in school. Behaviour in and around school is outstanding because pupils receive exceptional care and support. Procedures to monitor and record any health, safety and safeguarding issues are robust. Pupils are involved in their own target-setting and contribute to their own assessment and review meetings. As a consequence, parents feel they are well informed and supported by the school. Although pupils meet annually with a governor there is no formal structure through which pupils can influence the development of the school.

On entry to school, the knowledge and skills of pupils are exceptionally low in comparison to the national average. Given their particular and specific needs, however, they achieve well. Pupils make good progress because they are well taught and, in the best lessons, they learn independently. Activities are appropriately matched to meet the diverse needs of most learners. Academic and personal guidance is very well developed but there are some missed opportunities for further independent learning such as older pupils' additional responsibilities within the school.

The school has strong links with the community and local partners. For example, at Key Stage 4, pupils have planned and prepared a Christmas party for local senior citizens. They have access to entry level courses in English, mathematics, science and art in school and to GCSE courses in mathematics, science and design and technology, which are jointly organised with three local comprehensive schools. The school provides an extensive outreach programme for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), covering 63 mainstream schools.

The curriculum is good, meets statutory requirements, and matches the needs of learners. An exceptionally versatile range of courses is offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the school has a good variety of enrichment activities, especially at lunchtime. The newly established 'Eco School' has improved pupils' environmental awareness and the school has built its first 'sustainable classroom'.

The school is well led and provides good value for money. The headteacher and leadership team have a firm commitment to raising standards through effective self-evaluation. Subject leaders are yet to become fully involved in the school's monitoring and evaluation processes. Assessment procedures are now well established, with easy access through an electronic system developed by the school. Staff use assessment information to inform their teaching but the school is yet to evaluate its data, for instance for pupils with ASD, to further sharpen school self-evaluation. Governors make a positive contribution and increasingly hold the school to account. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and is in a strong position to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Although knowledge and skills on entry to the Foundation Stage are exceptionally low compared with national expectations, children make good progress because staff have strong relationships and teach them well. The work of the assessment class is highly regarded and it makes a valuable contribution to other partners, especially local schools and parents, ensuring that children receive an appropriate education. A small number of children join the newly developed reception class once assessment is complete. Teaching assistants are deployed well to ensure that activities are effectively adapted to meet the needs of the children. The new Foundation Stage classroom, which has only been in use for a very short time, is still being developed to provide sufficient opportunities for independent learning and choice making.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that subject leaders monitor and evaluate pupils' progress to improve the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation.
- Ensure pupils receive regular opportunities to influence the school's development within a formal structure.
- Monitor provision in the Foundation Stage regularly to ensure it remains suitably adapted in terms of teaching strategies and learning resources to meet the changing needs of individual pupils as they join the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Knowledge, understanding and skills for pupils when they join the school are exceptionally low in comparison to those achieved nationally; this is due to the nature and complexity of their needs. Relative to their starting points pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress, in particular in Key Stage 4. All pupils leave school with successful placements in education, employment or training, having matured into well-rounded and confident young people. This is because staff and pupils have high and realistic expectations. Pupils with additional needs are fully included and make good progress because staff successfully take into account their individual needs. Effective assessment procedures and the setting of challenging targets successfully track the individual progress of pupils. However, the school does not yet use this information to analyse the progress made by groups of pupils to inform future planning and school development.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy learning and parents confirm that their children like coming to school. Attendance is good and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils display trust and respect for adults as well as utmost care and consideration for one another. They learn how to stay healthy and safe; they take part in physical activities with real enthusiasm. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The policy for structured play activities and playground zoning has reduced incidents of inappropriate behaviour and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and The 'pupils' voice' policy provides feedback of views to the school. However, the lack of a regular and formal consultative system restricts opportunities for pupils to influence

their learning environment and enrich their personal development opportunities. Pupils' awareness of life beyond school is enriched through a wide range of educational visits. Well planned work-related learning helps them to develop life skills and to grow in maturity, preparing them well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and their skilled support staff work in effective partnership to support pupils' learning well. High quality relationships and social harmony are evident throughout the school and underpin the pupils' very positive approach to their learning. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of pupils and make good use of marking and assessment to monitor their progress. Planning is well informed by assessment of pupils' earlier learning and most activities are suitably challenging. However, the use of appropriate challenge to stretch the abilities of pupils, particularly the more able, is not yet consistent across the school. A wide range of teaching strategies are used well to ensure that most pupils have an equal chance to participate in lessons. Teachers use praise very effectively to stimulate and motivate pupils to give their best. Interactive whiteboards are used well, as seen in an outstanding history lesson, where the teacher's supportive commentary added excitement and drama to a 'walk through' tour of Tutankhamen's tomb.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum provision is good with some outstanding features, especially its facilities, resources and highly skilled and committed staff. The school makes every effort to create learning activities that are based on real life experiences, with many opportunities for pupils to transfer their skills into new situations. The school's positive and encouraging ethos helps pupils overcome many of their barriers for learning. At Key Stage 4, there are many opportunities for vocational and life based learning such as the team enterprise scheme. The school has adjusted its Foundation Stage structure to meet the changing needs of its learners, particularly those on the autistic spectrum. The very effective, flexible curriculum provided at Key Stage 4 is yet to be included into Key Stages 2 and 3 to provide challenge and extension for pupils. As a result, some of the more able pupils are not always stretched sufficiently. The school provides a good range of enrichment activities to further enhance pupils' learning experiences.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. All staff ensure that pupils learn and grow in a safe and supportive environment. Appropriate statutory arrangements are in place for protecting and safeguarding pupils. Risk assessment is well established in school practice. The school works in close collaboration with education and health professionals and other outside agencies in meeting pupils' specific needs. The partnership between parents and the school is very strong. Parents are kept fully involved in decisions about their children's education, target-setting and personal development. Very effective use is made of home-school books in the lower school to keep parents informed and involved. However, such good formal parental links are not continued in the upper school. Exemplary transition procedures ensure that pupils and parents

are quickly settled into the routines of school life. The assessments of pupils' work and tracking of their progress is very good and this makes a major contribution to the quality of academic guidance and support the pupils receive. The school has particularly effective transition links through its Connexions adviser.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his leadership team set a clear direction and are focused on improvement through effective self-evaluation. Leaders have correctly identified that effective self-evaluation is yet, however, to be fully embedded into all areas of school leadership, especially the work of subject leaders. The school has developed its own 'small steps' assessment and planning tool, which informs teachers' planning. Subject leaders are beginning to use this to track curriculum coverage and pupils' progress in their subjects. The setting of realistic and challenging targets and the involvement of pupils in this process are a strength, but the school is yet to analyse this information to inform school self-evaluation. Governors offer a range of additional skills and make a positive contribution by increasingly challenging the school. The school has very strong links with other partners and local schools and is highly regarded by the local community.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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**

12 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Lincoln St Christopher's School, Lincoln, LN6 8AR

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed our time with you and talking to you about your work. It has been great to see how much you enjoy coming to school and to see how well you behave. You are all very friendly, cheerful and polite and helped us feel at home in your school. Thank you for sharing your work with us.

When we visited your lessons, we were impressed by all the good work that you are doing. We could see that you enjoy your learning and that you are keen to help each other. One example of this is the work you do in design and technology and of course your exciting Christmas Concert. We were impressed with the many interesting activities adults were planning for you and the fun you have.

We are very pleased to tell you that you are lucky to go to such a good school. The headteacher, your teachers and all the other adults who work with you take great care of you and want you to do your best. You are doing very well to learn new things and to become well prepared for when you leave school. You are also doing very well in learning how to work together, helping each other and keeping safe.

I have asked your headteacher and the teachers to make sure that they know exactly how well you do in each subject so that they can help you to learn even better. I have also asked that you will be given the opportunity to get involved in discussions about things that go on in your school so that you can be part of the decisions that are made about the work your school is doing.

We will take away many good memories about your school and have really enjoyed the time we have spent with you. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Karin Heap

Lead inspector