

The Lincoln St Christopher's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120754
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358834
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Fippard MBE
Headteacher	Derek Metcalfe
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons were observed and 17 teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, school leaders and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation pertaining to safeguarding, pupils' achievement, school improvement planning and external reviews of the school's work. Forty-seven parental questionnaires were scrutinised as well as questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively does the school use its data on pupils' progress to raise achievement?
- Is there evidence to show that higher-attaining pupils make good progress?
- Does provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage meet requirements and the needs of the children?

Information about the school

The school is for pupils with statements of special educational needs who have moderate learning difficulties. Half of the pupils on roll also have an autistic spectrum disorder. A very few have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision is made to assess children who are aged three to five years old for statements of special educational needs: four children are currently being assessed. In addition, the school has seven other children in the Reception year. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and one third is known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. An outreach service run by the staff supports pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder in mainstream schools.

The school has many awards for its work, several of which have been revalidated since the last inspection such as National Healthy Schools status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Recently, the school gained the United Nations Children's Fund Award for promoting children's rights and responsibilities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Lincoln St Christopher's is a good school whose outstanding care for all its pupils supports them in achieving well. Good leadership and management and the experienced and expert staff equip the school well to meet pupils' wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are strongly committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. This is reflected in their continuous concern to ensure all pupils' needs are met so that they are able to achieve as well as possible.

The work of the school is highly regarded by parents, carers and by the great many mainstream schools it helps in providing for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils enjoy school, their attendance and behaviour are good and, as a result, they feel safe, self-confident and well disposed to being helpful around the school and in actively supporting many good causes in the wider community. The school excels in promoting healthy lifestyles amongst pupils and they learn much about eating well, caring for their health and, by enjoying the many physical pursuits offered, staying well exercised and fit.

Learning and progress are good because they are promoted effectively in the majority of lessons by well-qualified teachers and classroom assistants. Teachers and their assistants deal expertly with the barriers to learning caused by autism, moderate learning difficulties and other causes. The quality of teaching is good and it gains its strength from staff knowing pupils well and understanding the ways they learn best. A good curriculum, in its breadth and variety, contributes to pupils' engagement and enjoyment of learning. This leads to good achievement by the end of Key Stage 4. Assessment is satisfactory although it has not yet extended to helping pupils to know about their progress and how to improve it. The activities offered to children in the Reception year and those undergoing assessment meet requirements satisfactorily. However, assessment and the planning for each area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage lacks the detail needed to ensure children are offered good opportunities to learn and make progress.

Good leadership is more evident across the school than at the time of the previous inspection. The good improvement in subject leadership has extended the school's capacity to improve, which is now good. The monitoring of subject leaders, particularly in relation to lesson observation, is strengthening teaching. Their use of the school's data to check pupils' performance in their subjects ensures that they are also involved in evaluating the impact of provision and eliciting areas for improvement. Senior leaders have improved how they measure pupils' attainment and use the resulting information well to set challenging targets that drive improvement. The governing body makes effective use of data to agree school targets and to hold senior leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the use of assessment by encouraging pupils to evaluate their progress and advising them on how they can improve their work.
- Strengthen provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring activities in each area of learning are planned in detail
 - assessing children's progress more thoroughly in each area of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Across the school, pupils are settled, well behaved and attentive in lessons. This helps them to achieve well. Where autism is a feature of their learning difficulties, they have overcome significant barriers as a result of the expert interventions of teachers and their assistants. The most profoundly autistic pupils sustain a work rate and keep up with the rest of the class because they are the focus of the good support of dedicated classroom assistants. In science, one pupil was strongly supported by a teaching assistant who guided and gave constant encouragement so that he completed the demanding task of writing notes and drawing a diagram to explain an experiment. The well-stepped approach to teaching pupils with moderate learning difficulties means they understand what is required in lessons; they are confident in tackling work, and they try hard in meeting teachers' expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils have gained Entry Level Certificates, awards and experienced good work-related learning, ensuring they are well prepared for the future. The few higher-attaining pupils make good progress and gain GCSE passes, made possible by attending mainstream secondary schools to study for examinations.

Pupils grow vegetables in season, which are used in their school meals. This contributes considerably to their awareness and understanding of eating healthily and they make good choices of what to eat. The school council played an active part in setting up a healthy tuck shop. A good sum of money was raised by pupils to support improvements to a school they sponsor in Uganda. Pupils' enjoyment of school, the confidence they gain and their enthusiastic engagement in school and with the wider community, through cultural events in particular, leads to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about cultural diversity in Britain, especially from visitors representing different cultural heritages.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good because pupils find lessons lively and paced such that they are able to keep up with the work and learn. Specialist subject teachers provide challenge and high expectations in Key Stages 3 and 4. Often, good care is taken in explaining tasks very clearly, especially by illustrating them well with pictures or practical examples. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards for this purpose as well as for getting pupils actively involved in the lesson. Most teachers use questions effectively to determine if pupils understand the work to be done. However, pupils are not encouraged to evaluate their learning enough or to reach an understanding of how to improve it.

The well-enriched curriculum offers all pupils opportunities to discover and develop their interests and talents. The provision for English and mathematics is good and pupils' learning is supported well through the use of information and communication technology, including its use across the curriculum. A broad range of work and activities is offered and there are particular strengths in physical education, design and technology and the arts. Opportunities for accreditation, work experience, careers education and guidance, and access to courses in mainstream schools are good.

The excellent care and attention shown by staff for pupils ensures they feel confident, secure and valued. Parents and carers are completely assured that their children are kept

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safe. They also see that their children thrive in the stimulating and welcoming environment of the school and that their needs are met. Areas inside the school and outdoors are designated as places of calm and tranquillity, which some pupils are in much need of during the day. Information for pupils, such as timetables, lunch menus, news and notices of events, is displayed at strategic points throughout the school which helps reduce some of the stress autistic pupils experience. The school's commitment to the professional development of all staff has an excellent impact on the support for pupils. Behaviour management training equips staff to manage pupils who are challenging with sensitivity and to good effect. Strong links with agencies ensure that specialist support, such as speech therapy and occupational therapy, are made readily available to pupils. Collaboration between therapists and teachers is a strong feature in planning to meet pupils' needs. The arrangements for transition are outstanding, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4, and the close partnerships with the careers service, schools and colleges account for much of what is strong in this respect. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of college options tailored to their needs and capabilities. The school has a good record of placing pupils on college courses leading to their gaining vocational qualifications.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership, setting clear aims, high expectations and deploying staff well to promote pupils' achievement. Senior leaders provide the necessary drive to ensure the staff is a united and cohesive team. The priority given to developing staff expertise has ensured they have up-to-date knowledge and skills to meet the varied and complex needs of pupils. This is central to the school's good promotion of equal opportunities and the effective way it tackles discrimination. The governing body takes a close interest in pupils' outcomes and is actively involved in agreeing challenging school targets with senior leaders. Parents are kept well informed: their views are regularly sought and they are consulted on the work of the school. There are strong partnerships with other schools, in particular as a result of outreach work. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good because procedures are comprehensive, well defined and firmly in place. They reflect the school-wide commitment to keeping pupils safe and a high level of staff awareness of the need to promote their well-being. The school community is very cohesive and particular emphasis is placed on actively engaging with the wider community through the contributions pupils make to music and dance festivals. The school also responds well to the needs of others in different parts of the world through fundraising events.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed satisfactorily. Staff understand children's developmental needs and their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff provide children with enjoyable and engaging learning activities. As a result, they make satisfactory progress and improve their knowledge and skills including their communication, mathematical and social skills. Positive relationships help to build children's confidence and encourage them to persevere with tasks. Work and activities are varied although not planned with sufficient regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance. As a result, opportunities for learning and progress are missed, such as providing a greater chance for children to initiate their choice of activities. Too much of the learning is led by adults and there is not enough freedom for children to move between indoor and outdoor areas as part of their work and play. The progress children make within the activities provided is recorded satisfactorily but the lack of detailed planning has an adverse effect on assessment, which is not thorough enough.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who completed the questionnaire hold positive views of the school. They feel they have a very close relationship with the school and praise the staff. Parents and carers are reassured that their children are happy at school, are safe and enabled to make substantial progress. Inspection findings endorse the views of parents and carers and confirm the school's many good qualities and the positive outcomes for pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Lincoln St Christopher's School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 181 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	72	13	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	70	14	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	60	17	36	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	55	20	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	68	15	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	51	23	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	57	19	40	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	57	17	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	74	12	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	60	19	40	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	49	24	51	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	81	9	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	85	7	15	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 February 2011

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school, and many thanks to the members of the school council who met with an inspector to discuss their work and explain how much they enjoy school.

We found that you go to a good school. Here are some of the best things about your school:

- you are making good progress because you behave well, try hard with your work and your teachers are good at helping you to learn
- you know a fantastic amount about how to be healthy
- you are really generous and helpful around the school and raise money for many good causes
- there are many activities on offer to you in school and after school that are interesting, exciting and help you enjoy coming to school
- the way in which the school cares for and supports you is outstanding.

To make your school even better, we have asked the headteacher to:

- help you judge your progress in lessons and make sure your teachers give you advice about how you can improve your work
- improve the planning and assessment of work and activities for the children in Reception year and the assessment unit.

You can help to improve your school by continuing to behave well and working as hard as you can. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector

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