

Alford Primary School

Hanby Lane, Alford, Lincolnshire LN13 9BJ

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2016

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and the deputy are passionate leaders. Their ambition and energy have been crucial in driving improvement since the previous inspection. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Governors enjoy and value their responsibilities. All governors are now very actively involved in the life of the school. They have the necessary expertise to support and challenge the school's leaders effectively.
- Children in Reception enjoy an exciting range of learning activities. They love the opportunities they have to discover things for themselves and make good progress.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress from their starting points. In 2015, both their attainment and progress were above the national averages by the end of Year 6.
- The school uses the additional funding provided to help disadvantaged pupils more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection. Disadvantaged pupils now make good progress and more are working at or above the standards expected.
- Effective leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability means that these pupils now achieve well.
- Pupils have plenty of good opportunities to pursue their interests in midday and after-school clubs.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They are friendly and polite with adults. They work and play together happily.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The comment, 'My child receives a high quality, well-rounded education', is representative of those made to inspectors.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics are not always as good as they are in those subjects.
- Feedback in books other than English and mathematics does not always help pupils know how successfully they have met the aims of the lesson.
- Not all subject leaders are as effective as those in English and mathematics in reviewing teaching to improve pupil outcomes across the range of curriculum subjects.
- In science, older pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to select and plan their own enquires.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes in subjects other than English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - questions and activities provided by teachers take into account the ages and abilities of the pupils and offer plenty of challenge for all pupils
 - when feedback is given to pupils it refers to the subject-specific aims of the lesson, in order that pupils know how to improve their performance
 - all subject leaders provide effective support and challenge so that the subject-specific skills are developed progressively throughout the school
 - in science, older pupils in particular have opportunities to select and plan their own investigations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- All of the staff who completed the online questionnaire strongly agreed that the school is well led and managed. Two comments were representative of many: 'This school is a wonderful place to work and I feel very privileged and lucky to work here' and 'Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are very supportive to all staff, whether teaching or support.'
- The senior leadership team and the governors responded with great determination to the previous inspection outcome and reviewed all areas identified as requiring improvement. Their passionate commitment to the school and its community has been inspirational. They have successfully secured teaching that is at least good in all classes and ensured that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- The previous inspection judged that the school did not use its additional government funding, the pupil premium, to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. The school's planning, allocation and evaluation of its use of this funding is now exemplary. Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils are making accelerated progress and closing the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally.
- Senior leaders keep close check on the work of staff and the achievement of pupils. They use the information they gather from visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and analyses of assessment data to identify where additional support or training is required. This is leading to better teaching and pupils are making good progress.
- The team of subject leaders includes both experienced and recently appointed postholders. Through lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil interviews they ensure that every class is enjoying a broad curriculum. However, in some subjects, despite these activities, the quality of provision and learning is variable. As a result, specific subject skills are not developed progressively as pupils move through the school.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is now a strength of the school. The special educational needs coordinator has improved procedures for identifying need. Teachers are both supported well and held to account for the progress of pupils who require additional support. The school's website gives a full account of the effective work in this area.
- Procedures for managing the performance of staff are effective. Senior leaders make sure that individual members of staff receive the support and guidance they need to improve their work. Individuals feel well supported. One commented, 'I couldn't imagine working anywhere else. The school has supported me at every stage of my career.'
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum ensures that they have a good understanding of British values. For example, to help pupils appreciate the importance of tolerance and respect there have been visits from ministers and parents to talk about Christianity, Islam and the Hindu faith.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is used well. A specialist coach has helped improve the confidence and skills of staff taking physical education lessons. Carefully targeted clubs have also been established to encourage less-active pupils to be healthy and active. Pupils are increasingly participating in sporting competition.
- The local authority has given the school good support since the previous inspection. In addition to quality assuring the work of the school, officers have provided valuable help to improve the quality of governance and the effectiveness of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Ten governors rearranged their diaries at short notice so that they could meet with the inspection team and attend the final feedback. This is indicative of their great commitment to Alford Primary. They are resolute that the school will sustain the impetus for improvement so that it is soon achieving outstanding outcomes.
 - The governance team has a broad range of skills and experience. It has expertise in education, safeguarding, finance, computing, safeguarding, early years and special educational needs. When governors visit the school to meet staff or pupils, or to check the school's procedures, these skills enable them to ask perceptive questions about the quality of provision and the outcomes of pupils.
 - Staff performance, including that of the headteacher and other teachers, is rigorously managed. The governors are fully prepared to ask for additional information to ensure that decisions about pay increases are based closely on a good range of evidence linked to ambitious targets.

- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. The school holds weekly meetings, attended by the designated safeguarding governor, to review cases and to respond to emerging concerns. Governors and all school staff are fully aware of their duty to keep pupils safe. All staff have been trained on safeguarding and child protection. They report promptly any concerns they may have about pupils and work well with parents to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Procedures for the appointment of staff are rigorous and relevant checks are made on all who visit the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching in all classes successfully meets the school's ambition that pupils will 'Learn well, have fun, stay safe'. Teachers ensure that their classrooms are welcoming places where pupils happily help one another. They use displays successfully to celebrate pupils' work and to provide information. Pupils use this information to help them if they are stuck in their learning.
- Teachers plan writing activities that are interesting and enjoyable. For example, Year 5 pupils worked with enthusiasm producing accounts of their recent visit to London. They took care to choose vocabulary that captured their memorable experiences. Pupils of all abilities produced good work because they received effective guidance on how to structure their writing.
- Good subject knowledge enables teachers to give clear explanations of concepts and processes. In two mathematics lessons, pupils followed with keen concentration as teachers and teaching assistants demonstrated the commutative properties of addition and subtraction. Pupils received prompt support to clarify any misunderstanding. This enabled them to tackle tasks matched to their abilities successfully.
- Work in subjects other than in English and mathematics occasionally focuses too heavily on the facts linked to a topic. This ensures that pupils gain a good knowledge of a topic but is less successful at challenging them to be inquisitive learners who develop subject-specific skills as they move through the school.
- Work in science books in upper key stage 2 shows that pupils rarely get the chance to ask their own questions and select ways to answer them. For example, in an interesting investigation into how a sneeze spreads germs, pupils were given step-by-step instructions of what to do. They did not have the chance to think of their own ways of investigating how to hygienically manage a sneeze.
- In all classes, teachers give a high priority to improving pupils' abilities to use grammar correctly. In key stage 1, teachers skilfully used opportunities in lessons to embed understanding of contractions and present and past tenses. In key stage 2, pupils confidently met the challenge of referring to modal verbs and adverbials when talking about their writing.
- Both in their lesson planning and during lessons, teachers take care to set plenty of challenge for the most able pupils.
- The previous inspection was critical of the quality of marking and noted that insufficient attention was given to improving spelling, grammar and punctuation. Plenty of guidance is given to improving pupils' writing skills. In topic books, however, the quality of feedback on how successfully pupils have met the goals of the lesson varies between classes.
- Teachers plan and monitor carefully the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. They act quickly if additional support is not having a positive impact. For example, one pupil was struggling to improve her spelling using a published learning scheme. The pupil is now successfully improving her skills working on activities based around spelling errors in her own writing books.
- The school provides effective additional support specifically for disadvantaged pupils. This includes high-quality small-group teaching and access to online resources that develop reading and spelling skills. There is same-day support for disadvantaged pupils to go over concepts that individuals found difficult in lessons. Throughout the school there is compelling evidence that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress
- Homework supports learning successfully. In addition to reading, spelling and mathematics, pupils are set longer-term projects linked to their topic work. Displays and photographs show that pupils enjoy these projects and complete them to a good standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum successfully helps pupils become thoughtful, caring and active citizens. Pupils say how much they enjoy and value the daily assemblies. In these and in lessons, pupils listen carefully and respectfully when others share their thoughts and experiences.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school as school councillors, energy monitors, peer mediators and sports ambassadors. Their extensive fundraising for a range of charities is good evidence of their strong moral development.
- Pupils' understanding of personal safety is good because many lessons and assemblies include reminders about personal wellbeing. They have also benefited from sessions run by the local authority e-safety officer dealing with cyber bullying and the risks of sharing personal information online.
- Pupils say that staff listen and respond to any worries they may encounter both in and outside of school. They say there is little bullying and that any that does occur is dealt with quickly.
- Leaders and staff, particularly the learning mentor, work effectively with external partners to support pupils who are most in need.
- Attendance in the school is slightly below the national average as a result of a small number of long-term absences from school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Just occasionally, pupils lose concentration in lessons and have to be reminded to focus on their work.
- During lessons and at breaktimes the school is orderly and calm. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and these contribute well to their good progress. They show good levels of concentration and incidents of low-level disruption are rare.
- Senior staff have had training to help them manage successfully the handful of pupils who sometimes present challenging behaviour. This ensures that incidents are dealt with calmly and sensitively. School records show a reduction in the number of poor behaviour incidents during the year.
- Staff who completed the staff questionnaire agreed unanimously that pupils consistently behave well and all strongly agreed that behaviour is managed well in the school. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were equally positive about behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Outcomes for pupils have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Year 6 pupils reach standards above the national averages. Effective teaching throughout key stage 2 ensures that they make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 has also risen since the previous inspection. In 2015, improved teaching and higher expectations led to pupils achieving standards that were significantly higher than the national average.
- Pupils' work in books and school assessments show that those currently in key stages 1 and 2 are achieving well. Good-quality teaching ensures that they are successfully meeting the demands of the revised, more challenging national curriculum in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Across the school, the most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Many of them make more than expected progress. This is because of the high degree of challenge provided for them in these subjects. However, in other subjects such challenge is not as consistent. At times, the questions and activities set do not stretch the pupils' thinking sufficiently. Consequently, outcomes in these subjects are not always as good as in the other subjects.
- The proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average in 2014 and 2015. Evidence from the school indicates that the pupils currently in Year 1 are likely to maintain to this positive record of achievement as result of sustained good teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- The performance of disadvantaged pupils in key stages 1 and 2 has improved since the previous inspection. Throughout the school, greater proportions of disadvantaged pupils are working at or above

standards expected for their ages. They are making good progress from their starting points and the gap between their attainment and that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally is closing.

- The effective use of school sports funding has led to improved outcomes for pupils. A focus on improving the ability of teachers to teach gymnastics has transformed the quality of performance in this discipline.
- Teachers work together to make the best use of their expertise and in some instances act as subject specialists teaching their specialism in more than one class. This is improving outcomes in computing and music for pupils in upper key stage 2.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. They receive extra help through learning programmes chosen carefully to meet the gaps in their knowledge. Case studies of a sample of individual pupils show that the school evaluates any additional help closely. This enables teachers to adjust interventions promptly where pupils are not gaining the skills or knowledge intended quickly enough.

Early years provision

is good

- Since the previous inspection the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased. In 2015, it was slightly above the national average. This is good progress from the children's starting points and reflects the care staff take to tailor activities to match the children's range of needs and interests.
- At the start of the Reception Year, the proportion of disadvantaged children with skills typical for their age is considerably lower than for others. Over the last two years the school has been very successful in narrowing this gap by the time they leave Reception. However, disadvantaged pupils in the early years are still less likely to reach a good level of development than other children. The school is working with local pre-school providers to narrow the gaps that are present in areas such as communication and language before disadvantaged children join the school.
- The children love learning, whether working in the classroom or outside. Areas such as 'mud pie kitchen' and the den-making area promote good personal and social development. They encourage the children to explore their interests and curiosity together. Early writing skills are equally well developed in the Bug Hotel because the children enjoy making lists of the minibeasts they discover.
- Adults take care to promote reading and number skills throughout the day. Fun activities such as fishing games and rolling balls down chutes allow adults to check how well individuals are grasping skills that have been taught earlier. This in turn enables them to provide additional challenge for those who have mastered concepts and more support for children who need extra help.
- Parents are full of praise for the quality of education and care their children receive. In conversations with inspectors they praised how well the school builds the children's confidence and encourages them to become more independent. The 'nose wiping station', complete with tissues and mirror, is particularly admired.
- The children's progress through Reception is recorded online. A strength of the system is that it allows parents to follow and contribute to their children's learning journeys (records of each child's progress). As one parent commented, 'I log on at home so that I can back up what my child is doing at home.'
- Parents also value weekly family reading sessions where they share stories with their children. These are popular because they also allow parents to meet with staff and to learn of the different ways in which they can support their children's learning.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Children get along well with their classmates. They have a good understanding of how their actions can impact on their friends.
- Leadership of early years is very effective and has successfully raised the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. There is a clear understanding of how young children learn best and the Reception area is very well resourced, with bright and attractive activities. Children move safely between areas of learning. Adults are well trained in procedures to ensure that children are safe in the school.

School details

Unique reference number	120440
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10008112

This inspection 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	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Parsons
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Debbie Forster
Telephone number	01507 463 414
Website	www.alford.lincs.sch.uk
Email address	primaryschool@alford.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2014

Information about this school

- Alford Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British.
- Early years provision is provided in two Reception classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by additional government funding (the pupil premium), at 40%, is above average. This funding provides additional support for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Fifteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs or disability.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching. Some of these visits took place with school leaders.
- Inspectors asked pupils about their learning and what it is like to be a pupil at the school.
- Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised and inspectors heard some pupils read.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 35 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and held brief discussions with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Thirty-one responses to the staff questionnaire were received and analysed, as were four pupil responses to their questionnaire.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents were analysed, including the school's self-evaluation statement, school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and information about pupils' achievement.
- Records relating to attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.
- The records of children in local authority care were also analysed and discussed with the headteacher.

Inspection team

Tony O'Malley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Moira Dales	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca King	Ofsted Inspector

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