



Inspection Report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 120711
LEA LINCOLNSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280878
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Martin Cragg LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lincoln Road
School category	Foundation		LN2 3JB
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01673 866900
Number on roll	1422	Fax number	01673 862660
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Joan Huckle
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Paul Strong

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	Inspection number 280878
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The William Farr School is a mixed 11-18 Church of England comprehensive school serving an area to the northeast of Lincoln. It is popular and oversubscribed despite recently increasing its admission limit. The school has foundation status. It became a specialist Technology College in September 2000 and also has Leading Edge status. With 1422 pupils on roll it is larger than average. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, those of minority ethnic backgrounds and having English as an additional language (EAL) are low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is below average although the number with statements of SEN is increasing and is broadly in line with the national average. The school is part way through a substantial building programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding education across all the major aspects of its work. Inspectors' judgements closely match the school's own evaluation of its performance and effectiveness. Pupils attain consistently and exceptionally high standards overall. They make at least good and usually outstanding progress. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They respect each other, have very good relationships with adults and very positive attitudes to their learning. Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to think for themselves and to work collaboratively. However, in a few lessons, the range of learning styles is too narrow and pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their independence. The curriculum meets the broad range of pupils' needs. Technology specialist status has successfully encouraged curriculum development. There is a very wide programme of extra-curricular activities and events in which pupils participate enthusiastically. Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding and a major strength of the school. Pupils are treated as individuals and their progress is carefully monitored. Senior staff provide a very clear vision for the development of the school. They have a detailed understanding of areas for improvement and take action to address these issues. Other leaders and managers are generally very effective, although the quality of their monitoring and evaluation is not yet consistent across the school. The governing body provides very good support for the school and is well-informed. As yet, it has not developed its role to hold the school to account and provide challenge for it to improve further. The school provides excellent value for money. There are well-established and effective links with local schools, the community and other agencies. Almost all the parents who returned questionnaires endorsed the quality of the major areas of the school's work. However, a small minority felt that the school did not take sufficient account of their views. The school has taken very effective steps to improve since the last inspection, particularly in narrowing the gap between the performance of boys and girls. There is excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. Through their very good attitudes to learning, students make very good progress in achieving exceptionally and consistently high standards. Students' progress is secured through outstanding teaching and regular mentoring and target setting. Very good care and guidance supports students and ensure their safety and well-being. In turn, students make a strong contribution to the school in mentoring younger pupils, paired reading and sports coaching. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding, provided by the heads of year and form tutors who have known the students since Year 7.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the range of teaching styles used in some lessons, so that pupils have opportunities to work collaboratively and are encouraged to develop independence in their learning. - Improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation by some middle managers to ensure that areas for development are accurately identified and acted upon. - Develop the role of the governing body so that it holds the school to account and provides challenge for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The achievement of pupils is outstanding. Pupils enter the school with attainment which is above the average for the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 9 pupils achieve very high standards in national tests. By the end of Year 11, standards are exceptionally and consistently high. In 2005, four out of five pupils achieved at least five higher grades at GCSE and all pupils achieved at least five pass grades. Almost one third of entries were awarded A* or A grades. Pupils make at least good progress by the end of Year 9 and outstanding progress by the end of Year 11. In 2005, the school was in the top 10% of schools nationally as judged by the value added between Year 6 and Year 11. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the small number with EAL make very good progress. Achievement in the sixth form is also outstanding. The proportion of students achieving higher and pass grades at GCE A level is consistently above national averages. The school sets challenging targets for pupils which most achieve or exceed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They learn in an exceptionally supportive and inclusive environment where they feel safe and valued as individuals. They develop a keen sense of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are very proud of the school and show great enjoyment in all it has to offer. They are enthusiastic about their involvement in a wide range of additional activities. Many are keen to take responsibility and volunteer readily for special tasks and to support others. Pupils develop confidence and self-esteem through the excellent relationships in all areas of the school. Pupils of all ages express mature opinions and their views are valued. They make a strong contribution to the life of the school and wider community through their involvement in the Year Forum and the School Council. They are encouraged to develop important skills which prepare them well for adult life, including their economic well-being. Behaviour throughout the school is outstanding, producing an exceptionally orderly and respectful community. Pupils have total confidence that any bullying or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with promptly and effectively. During lessons pupils concentrate well and work hard. They are articulate and contribute enthusiastically during discussion and group work. Attendance is well above the national average. The level of exclusions is low. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development is excellent. In assemblies and many areas of the curriculum, they reflect on a wide range of issues affecting their own lives and the lives of others. The programme for personal and social education is broad and makes effective use of outside speakers. Pupils are very active in their regular support for a range of local and national charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall. This is reflected in the excellent progress made by pupils and the high standards they attain. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. Their subject knowledge is excellent, and their enthusiasm is catching. They use praise and encouragement to motivate pupils effectively. Relationships between teachers and pupils are purposeful yet supportive, and this creates a very favourable learning atmosphere. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and pupils generally know what they should do to improve. The teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively and without confrontation. An important feature of the highly successful teaching is lively discussion, often stimulated by probing, open questions. Pupils participate fully and actively. They are expected to think for themselves, and are given every opportunity to express their own opinions. For example, in one outstanding lesson, the teacher's highly professional presentation, subject expertise and intelligent questioning ensured that pupils made excellent progress in knowledge and skills. In the few lessons which are no more than satisfactory, the teacher talks for too long and does not ensure that pupils are active in their learning. Pupils have too few opportunities to work collaboratively and to develop their independent learning skills. The school has rightly identified this as a priority for improving teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum throughout the school is outstanding. At all levels, it successfully promotes high achievement, and is designed very well to meet the needs and aspirations of all groups of pupils and students. There is very good flexibility in the provision of specific courses for some pupils with particular needs. Statutory requirements are met fully. Specialist Technology status has stimulated excellent opportunities for curriculum development. Planned opportunities for work-related learning, together with a very well-organised programme of careers education and work experience, prepare pupils and students very well for their future working lives. Pupils appreciate these opportunities and the ways in which they promote their personal development. An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities complements the curriculum. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in the numerous activities which build their confidence and enhance their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for all pupils is outstanding. The staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils reach their full potential. Pupils are guided closely, both academically and vocationally, and this ensures that their individual needs are met. There are very effective procedures to identify pupils who may be at risk of under-achievement and their progress is closely monitored through a well organised mentor system. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. The school has a strong inclusion policy. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are excellent. The school follows excellent procedures for the protection of children and to monitor all health and safety issues. Pupils feel able to talk to teachers about any of their concerns. The recent employment of a teacher to support transfer from primary school, and a school nurse are valued by pupils. Parents speak very warmly of the individual care and support provided for pupils by teachers, tutors and heads of year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher and recently restructured senior team set a clear and ambitious direction for the school. They have a strong vision for the school's further development and for the maintenance of high standards in all aspects of its work. This ensures an excellent and inclusive learning atmosphere. The school's self-evaluation shows a shrewd understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Progress on development plans is reviewed regularly. Middle managers are given the key responsibility for ensuring high standards. Procedures for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are in place, but there is not yet consistency across all subject areas. Most heads of subject carry out their role highly effectively, although the school rightly sees this as an area for development for some. Teachers and support staff are well qualified and effectively deployed. Their morale is high. Resources are managed very well and value for money is excellent. Governance of the school is satisfactory. The governing body discharges its statutory duties well. Governors are very well informed about the school's work, but do not yet use this information to challenge its performance more rigorously. The views of pupils and parents are collected through a regular survey and issues arising are investigated. The school has taken very effective steps to improve since the last inspection and high standards have been sustained through a period of growth and building development. The school has excellent capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your openness and co-operation during our visit. We greatly appreciated your comments and opinions and were very impressed by your maturity and positive attitude to your education. The inspection found that your school was outstanding in all the major areas of its work. You are set challenging targets and exam results are consistently high. You generally make very good and often excellent progress. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school was very impressive. You have very positive attitudes to your learning and are most successful when teachers encourage you to think for yourselves and to work actively in lessons. The school provides a very good range of courses which help you to achieve high standards. There are also many opportunities for you to take responsibility and to be involved in activities and events. We were very impressed by the work of the school council. Your tutors and teachers provide excellent guidance for you and your progress is closely monitored. Relationships are very strong in the school. All this adds up to a very effective education for you. The school could improve some aspects of its work. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and need to use more varied styles to encourage you to learn independently. In some subjects, the managers should monitor the quality of teaching and your progress more thoroughly to ensure continuing improvement. The governors are well informed about the school but should hold it to account more rigorously. We are confident that your school can continue to provide a high quality education and improve further. We wish you well in the future.