

Inspection of Digby Church of England School

Church Street, Digby, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN4 3LZ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

'We are well taken care of,' said one pupil, describing life at Digby. Other pupils commented on how they enjoy their lessons, especially when they take place outside. Parents and carers complimented leaders on creating a 'close knit community' where 'staff know all the children well'.

The school is a happy, welcoming and inclusive place. Pupils behave very well. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They say that bullying does not happen because everyone gets along. They know that if they have any worries or concerns, adults will help them to sort it out. Older pupils appreciate being able to ask questions about secondary schools and growing up.

Pupils enjoy the wide variety of clubs that the school offers. They enjoy sharing their talents during the weekly assembly. The school's motto of 'opening doors, opening minds' resonates with pupils. They appreciate that despite being a small school, leaders make every effort to prepare them for life in wider society.

However, the school's curriculum is not sufficiently developed. The youngest children and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive precise support to help them to progress quickly.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Recently, they have revised the school's curriculum to ensure that it is precise in the knowledge they want pupils to learn and remember. This work is more developed in subjects such as history and geography. However, leaders have not yet made checks to ensure that the curriculum is being delivered precisely. Sometimes, tasks pupils complete do not help them to know more about a subject. Pupils with SEND are supported with adaptations to equipment and resources. However, leaders have not considered how the curriculum for pupils with SEND is well matched to their needs and development.

Pupils enjoy reading. The youngest pupils in early years seek out books as part of their play-based learning. Leaders have recently developed 'The Burrow'. This is the school's new library. Pupils who do not read regularly receive additional adult support to share books in school.

Leaders have recently adopted new early reading programme. They make checks to ensure that teachers are delivering the programme accurately and precisely. Where adaptations need to be made, leaders provide further, regular training for staff. Pupils use the strategies they are taught in their reading independently. The school's reading books are well matched to pupils' reading ability.

The school's mathematics curriculum is well sequenced. Leaders make regular checks to ensure pupils are remembering the key knowledge. When gaps appear, teachers ensure pupils get extra support to help them to catch up. Pupils with SEND receive resources to help them develop strategies to understand the mathematics they are taught. However, not all adults have the expertise or knowledge of the school's whole curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Individual plans and targets for pupils with SEND are not precise. They do not break down the knowledge into smaller, achievable steps to enable these pupils to know more over time.

The school is part of The Spires Federation. Leaders use the expertise from within the federation to develop all aspects of leadership and curriculum, including in the early years. The early years has seen some significant developments in a short space of time. However, adults do not make sufficient checks when children learn independently. There is not a clear focus on developing pupils' language. This slows down the progress children make in the early years.

The school's wider personal development offer is strength. Leaders are proud of the sports awards the school has received. They ensure that all pupils have fair and equal access to the after-school provision the school has to offer. The school's 'SHINE' values are understood by all. Pupils confidently talk about differences and diversity. They readily use language such as 'protected groups' and 'respect' in their everyday lives. They learn to listen to different viewpoints. They take pride in the responsibilities they uphold in school.

The school's governing body has seen significant changes. Many of the governors are new to role and as yet do not have an accurate understanding of the needs of the school.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support they have received to develop their knowledge and expertise to understand and teach the school's curriculum. Leaders have pooled staff from within the federation to support teacher workload. This is having a positive impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have recently revised and streamlined the school's safeguarding systems. They know their families and community well. This helps them to identify any pupils who may be at risk. Leaders ensure staff have regular, up-to-date training to help them understand safeguarding needs and how to report concerns. The school's records for safeguarding are well managed. Where pupils need further external support, leaders ensure this is in place.

Leaders support families by using some of the school's funds to promote school attendance. Where pupils need additional support for mental health, leaders provide an in-school counselling service.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Many governors are new to their role. They have not challenged leaders as well as they should. This prevents them from being able to check well enough the impact of leaders' actions. Governors should ensure that they have the right knowledge and expertise to fulfil their duties and hold leaders to account.
- Subject leaders are still developing some aspects of their leadership skills, particularly how well the curriculum is being implemented. As a result, they are not yet identifying precisely what is going well and what actions are needed to improve the delivery of the curriculum further. Senior leaders should provide subject leaders with support and training to improve their skills in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum so they can identify how it could be developed further.
- Pupils with SEND do not always receive a curriculum that is well matched to their ability. Targets set are often too broad and not measurable. This does not help pupils with SEND know enough of the curriculum that is at the right level or stage of development. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise to adapt the curriculum so that it meets the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Independent activities for children in the early years do not sufficiently focus on the development of communication and language. Adults do not make checks or use opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge in all areas of learning. Misconceptions are not identified quickly enough. As a result, learning slows. Leaders must ensure that all adults in the early years have the knowledge and expertise to support children to know and remember the early years' curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	120519
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10227378
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Hancy
Executive Headteacher	Courtenay Walls
Website	www.spiresfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of three schools that make up The Spires Federation.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in governance. The current executive headteacher took up post in September 2021.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- A Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools inspection was undertaken in February 2015.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID 19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held various meetings with the school's leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader.

- Meetings were held to gather information around attendance, behaviour and the school's personal development offer.
- Inspectors checked the school's arrangements for safeguarding through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding documents, including the school's single central record.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also sampled the school's curriculum for history. Pupils were also observed reading to a member of staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. They spoke to pupils and staff about their views on behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed the staff's and parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Westmoreland

Ofsted Inspector

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