

The Garth School

Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The executive headteacher is an exceptional leader. Together with senior staff and the governing body, he has successfully built on the many strengths identified at the last inspection so that the school is now outstanding in all areas.
- Teachers and other adults keep exemplary records of each small step in pupils' progress. As a result, they plan very specific learning experiences for each child to promote their rapid progress. Pupils enjoy their learning because it is so well adapted to their individual needs.
- Pupils love coming to school because it is a very happy place where they feel safe. They demonstrate their sense of happiness and security through smiles, gestures and involvement in activities. Their behaviour is always exemplary.
- Staff manage behaviour exceptionally well so that no learning time is lost.
- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and attendance rates have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Progress in the early years is outstanding. This is due to excellent teaching and the way in which activities are extremely well adapted to provide for each child's individual need.
- The governing body is highly organised, well informed and totally committed to achieving the best outcomes for the school.
- Pupils make remarkable progress in the sixth form. They are taught exceptionally well through highly relevant, carefully thought-out programmes and activities. These prepare pupils extremely well for their next placement and for life within their local community.
- Teaching is outstanding throughout the school. Very well-planned and often exciting activities engage the pupils in their learning.
- Pupils make excellent progress in acquiring literacy and communication skills and mathematical knowledge.

Information about this inspection

- Together with members of the leadership team, the inspector observed learning and achievement in 12 lessons. Pupils were also observed playing outside and during lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a parent or carer and an associate governor, a representative from the local authority and the school council.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work and heard a small number of pupils read. She also looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary and school development plan, information about pupils' performance and progress, procedures for safeguarding and monitoring attendance, records of behaviour, governor minutes and the monitoring of teachers' performance records.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but the inspector considered the school's own parental surveys. She also took into account 28 completed staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Garth School is a small special school that caters for pupils aged from two to 19 years with a range of severe and profound learning difficulties, including some pupils with a diagnosis of autism. In addition, a number of pupils have complex medical conditions. All have education, health and care plans or are in the process of being assessed for an education, health and care plan.
- Garth School forms part of The Spalding Special Schools Federation with The Priory School, a secondary phased school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. An executive headteacher leads both schools and they share a governing body.
- Most typically pupils will enter the school between the ages of three and five, however it is not uncommon for pupils to enter at other key stages.
- The school's catchment area includes South Holland and surrounding districts, including the market towns of Spalding, Boston, Holbeach and Long Sutton. There is a high proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government pupil premium funding, which provides support for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- At the time of inspection, there were two pupils in the early years provision, both of whom attend full time.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, with a small number from a diverse range of minority ethnic heritages.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form benefit from attending a multi-skills link course at New College Stamford.
- The executive headteacher is Chair of the Lincolnshire Special Schools' group which comprises of 21 special schools across Lincolnshire. They work in close partnership to provide training and network opportunities for its staff.
- The school has gained several Kitemarks, including Healthy Schools, the International Schools Award and AIM for Links Autism Inclusion Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Expand upon the formal accreditation opportunities available to pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Further develop community links to strengthen vocational opportunities for the pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school motto, 'Achieving Together', has real meaning for every member of the school community. All staff are seen as professionals and are given the confidence and opportunities to be creative, share good practice and learn from each other. As one parent stated, 'Each child is treated differently but as equals so that individual needs are effectively met.'
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about being part of this strong learning community. They welcome opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge so that they can make sure that each individual has an equal opportunity to succeed. The school works hard to foster good relations with everyone and to tackle discrimination in all its forms.
- The executive headteacher provides inspirational leadership and management. Leadership at all levels of the school is exceptional. Senior leaders and governors set high expectations and have ensured that an extremely warm, positive environment has been established. This encourages pupils to do as well as they possibly can, enjoy school life and behave exceptionally well given their needs.
- Leaders and governors know and understand the school's strengths and areas for further development extremely well. Future plans are tightly focused on school priorities and there is an exceptionally carefully planned programme of training for all staff. Leaders are aware of the need to provide a broader range of accreditation for the older pupils and have specific plans to address this.
- The continuous and relentless focus by the leadership team on improving the quality of teaching has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of lessons and pupils' achievement since the last inspection. Leaders from other special schools carry out joint observations of teaching with senior leaders of the school to ensure that their judgements on the quality of teaching are rigorous and robust.
- Procedures for setting targets for teachers are rigorous and leaders ensure that salary increases are not awarded unless staff have met their targets based on pupils' progress. Staff are fully aware of their accountability for pupils' achievement.
- Middle leaders are extremely effective. They have a very clear overview of their areas of responsibility and know how they plan to improve them further. They provide and promote excellence in teaching and learning across the school.
- There is a continuous focus on raising pupils' achievement. This, alongside a recognition of what achievement for individual pupils looks like, means that activities are challenging but achievable. Assessment procedures for checking pupils' progress are very robust, and appropriate support is put in place if needed.
- The creative and thematic curriculum engages pupils. It provides a rich and varied range of experiences that are linked to individual strengths and interests. There are many opportunities for all of the pupils to go into the community through visits to places of interest. Leaders are developing links with local shops and offices so that the older pupils can benefit from work-experience placements.
- Communication through sensory work, symbols or carefully structured adult speech is the core of the school's work and is a major element of all learning. In all lessons, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted and as a result pupils make outstanding progress in the early stages of English and mathematics.
- Parents are very well informed about the activities on offer through the school website and daily home-school books. Some parents, however, would like more detailed daily information relating to their own child's progress.
- The strong emphasis on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and promoting British values are an integral part of the school's work. This is evident from early years where the emphasis is on making relationships and developing communication and social skills. By the time pupils are in the sixth form, the focus is on recognising diversity, cooperation, respect and tolerance for each other.
- Transition arrangements and careers advice given to pupils in the sixth form are a strength of the school. They are very well managed and highly effective.
- Sources of additional funding are spent very effectively. Disadvantaged pupils receive high-quality additional help to promote their reading and communication skills. As a result, they close the gap on their peers and move slightly ahead. The primary physical education and sports funding has enabled pupils to take part in rebound therapy at the local gymnasium and increased their physical activity, notably in swimming. This has brought exceptionally positive benefits for pupils' health and physical needs.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Staff are diligent in promoting a safe environment that does not deny pupils their independence. Unexplained absences of pupils are followed up promptly to

ensure they are safe. School staff accompany pupils on their link course at the college and carefully monitor their attendance, behaviour and progress.

- The local authority holds the school in very high regard and provides a 'light touch' support to the leadership team.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very skilled and experienced and have a very clear understanding of their role in determining the strategic direction of the school. They have carried out an audit of their own skills and contribute positively to the school's development planning. They know the school very well through their regular visits and attendance at special events and parents are aware of how to contact them should they wish to do so.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of information on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. They monitor the performance management for all staff and make sure that the quality of their work is related to their pay and professional development.
- Governors monitor the budget carefully and have a detailed analysis of the spending of specific funds such as the pupil premium and the primary sports and physical education funding.
- Governors ensure all legal requirements for safeguarding and the welfare and interests of the pupils are in place by updating policies, making sure training is up to date and that procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors are rigorous.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- All adults working in the classroom create a very positive atmosphere for learning and manage pupils' behaviour extremely well. This was seen in lessons and in the school's monitoring records of behaviour over time. Staff are exemplary role models and implement the behaviour policy consistently across the school. As a result, those pupils with challenging behaviour make outstanding progress in gaining self-control and re-engaging in learning in a very short space of time. Any kind of disruption is extremely rare. In the few incidents where any physical intervention is required, the school documentation is exceptionally thorough. Incidents are recorded in detail and there is clear information on any actions taken.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning because their activities are fun and exciting. They respond extremely well to the 'cube' system which rewards good work, behaviour and effort. Pupils take great pride if their team gains the most cubes over the week.
- High expectations and routines are established very quickly in early years and help the pupils to feel safe and secure.
- The older pupils enjoy attending their courses at college and their behaviour off site is exemplary. They told inspectors that going to college helped them to be more independent.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There is a genuine feeling of mutual trust and respect among the staff. Pupils say that the staff are always there to help them when they need it and that there is no bullying in the school.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and unauthorised absence is rare. Authorised absences are as a result of medical conditions and pupils' need for constant treatment. The school works closely with parents and therapists to make sure pupils have as little time away from school as possible.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the high-quality care and support their children receive and the steps the school takes to ensure their child is safe.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and robust. The school conducts thorough risk assessments for activities that take place both on site, at the college and for school trips and visits into the local community.
- As pupils get older and develop greater independence, the school does all it can to make them aware of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils spoken to were able to tell the inspector about the dangers of using social networking sites, how they were taught to cross roads safely and how they had to follow safety rules when they were cooking.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching in all key stages, early years and in the sixth form is outstanding. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress in listening and communication as well as in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Excellent planning, knowing the interests of the pupils, flexibility and excellent relationships are key components to the school's success in meeting individual needs.
- In all classrooms, teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together. They know their pupils extremely well and are able to build on their strengths and interests to motivate and engage them in learning. As a result, every pupil is challenged to achieve even more and very well supported towards this.
- Teaching is exciting and inspiring for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties who also have complex medical needs. Teachers and teaching assistants have been very well trained in the use of sensory and visual prompts to support the development of literacy, communication and numeracy skills. These make sure that pupils' small steps in learning build effectively on what they already know. As a result, they make very rapid progress towards their targets.
- All adults in the classroom have a clear grasp of pupils' abilities and how the next small steps in learning will be achieved. Sensitive, well-differentiated questioning gives all pupils the opportunity to succeed. Staff make a point of telling individual pupils how well they have done. The most-able pupils are able to describe what they think they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Lessons are typified by a wide range of creative, stimulating activities. For example, 'hunting and fishing' for food, washing clothes using a tub of water and a stick, and making bread helped some pupils gain a better understanding of life in the middle ages.
- Independence is promoted well throughout the school. Routines are well established in the early years and are replicated throughout the school. For example, musical prompts are used to signify when an activity will be finishing and when it is time to tidy up. Pupils respond well to these and have developed good habits to take increasing responsibility.
- A very strong emphasis on communication, literacy and numeracy across all subjects is evident in planning and in practice. Teachers make excellent use of signing, visual timetables, symbols and extremely well-chosen resources to ensure that pupils with different learning needs are absorbed in their activities.
- Pupils' written work, annotated photographs, learning in lessons and the school information about progress over time demonstrate that teaching over time across all subjects is outstanding. As a result, all pupils, including those with autism, the disadvantaged and the most-able are making sustained progress leading to outstanding achievement.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Due to the complexity of pupils' learning difficulties, their attainment remains low. However, all pupils make outstanding progress because teachers are skilled at finding the best ways for them to learn. Achievement is strong in all year groups, including early years and the sixth form.
- All pupils are assessed in depth when they first join the school and progress is measured from their individual starting points. The school uses a variety of methods to assess pupils' current levels of attainment. This provides very detailed information for teachers. It is used creatively by teachers to target work at the correct level for very pupil, including those whose progress is measured in very small steps.
- Assessment focuses very much on the progress pupils make against their individual targets. The careful analysis of assessment information ensures that if any pupil is at risk of not progressing as expected, this is swiftly recognised and additional help quickly put in place.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and make a significant contribution to progress made. All staff are able to assess accurately what progress, achievement and engagement may look like for a particular child as they know the pupils extremely well.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make outstanding progress in their reading, literacy and numeracy skills because of the individual attention they are receiving. Many of these pupils speak English as an additional language as well as having complex needs. School information on their progress shows that they are making the same good and outstanding progress as their peers. This information has been checked as part of a moderation process with other special school staff. The school's systems, which ensure that teachers' judgements are accurate, are rigorous and robust.
- In the early years provision, children quickly learn to recognise and use symbols then letters and records

through well-organised provision for teaching reading and writing.

- After they leave the early years, the most-able pupils in other key stages become competent readers and can produce short pieces of written work.
- Strong progress in numeracy is shown by growing confidence in matching objects and recognising numbers and later by counting, adding and subtracting. Numeracy is taught in very practical ways which means pupils learn to apply skills in everyday situations that are meaningful. The most-able pupils work out simple word problems and do simple multiplication and division calculations.
- Students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form follow the Equals 'Moving On' curriculum and achieve accreditation in a range of academic and vocational areas. There are plans in place to broaden the accredited courses on offer.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children start school with skills at levels significantly below those typical for their age and make excellent progress across all areas of learning because they are well taught and cared for. Leadership of the provision is outstanding and the early years leader has built a strong team who have expertise in caring for children with complex needs.
- Progress is particularly evident in children's personal, social and emotional development and in their communication skills. This is because staff have a highly individualised approach to meeting the needs of children. They use an impressive range of indoor and outdoor resources and a variety of methods to ensure activities are interesting and at the right level for all children. As a result, they enjoy their lessons and their positive attitudes lead to outstanding learning.
- Children's spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is promoted exceptionally well. They very quickly learn to take turns, make choices and work alongside each other. In a lesson where the children were mixing different colour paints to see what would happen, their amazement and joy at watching blue and yellow paint turn into green was particularly evident.
- Teachers and teaching assistants keep accurate information on the progress of children through labelled video recording and photographs that they are able to share with parents through a web-based programme. A close look at children's 'learning journeys' confirmed the outstanding progress they are making towards set targets.
- Parents say their children are safe and secure in school. Children are well supervised all the time and adults keep notes on how well they are doing to share with parents. Signing, visual and musical prompts are used so that children start learning routines early. Consequently, behaviour and safety are outstanding.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding, Teachers plan exceptionally well to meet the differing needs of students and build good relationships based on mutual respect.
- Leadership in the sixth form is outstanding. This ensures that teachers are passionate about providing the very best for all students, enabling them to make rapid progress in all areas of learning, experience challenging work and do the best they can.
- All students make good and some outstanding progress in developing work-related skills and further developing literacy and mathematical skills to use in their everyday lives.
- Students currently follow a range of accredited courses which enable them to further develop their literacy, communication, numeracy and problem-solving skills in a range of school and community based activities. As a result the students are able, with varying levels of adult support, to transfer and use these skills in a range of environments: the classroom, the local community, college, inclusion links with the Priory School and on residential trips. Leaders are currently developing work-experience placements within the local community for the students.
- The school has highly effective plans for other courses of study which will lead to a broader range of nationally accredited academic and vocational courses. This will demonstrate more effectively the outstanding progress students have made across a range of subject areas.
- The most-able students in the sixth form have attended some lessons at the Priory School and as a result have achieved Entry Level 1 and 2 passes in English and mathematics.
- Students in the sixth form are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education or training

because of the excellent help and support they receive from the school and from the Learning Disabilities and Difficulties careers advisor.

- Work-experience opportunities are planned for individual students within the local community. Examples include hairdresser's assistant, stacking shelves in Sainsbury's and domestic work in a local church. The school ensures that risk assessments are carried out and that students are safe at all times.
- Students enjoy attending their college link course where they participate in a range of courses including design and technology, sport, drama, animal care and hair and beauty.
- The behaviour of the students within the sixth form is in line with the excellent behaviour of pupils across the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120752
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	464182
Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Corcoran
Executive Headteacher	Daran Bland
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 May 2012
Telephone number	01775 725566
Fax number	01775 728829
Email address	Daran.bland@priory.lincs.sch.uk

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