

Inspection of Poplar Farm School

Helmsley Road, Grantham NG31 8XF

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Poplar Farm School is welcoming and inclusive. Pupils model the 'Poplar Promise' well. They are curious, positive and resilient learners. Pupils enjoy their learning. They love taking part in extra activities like 'PopFest' and walking Lola, the school dog.

Pupils say that they feel valued and safe. They know that adults will help them if they have any worries. Leaders and staff are positive role models. They have high expectations of pupils. Pupils understand routines well and respect staff. They behave well around the school and in lessons. Pupils say that bullying sometimes happens. They are confident that staff deal with this straight away, so it does not happen again.

Pupils are proud of their positions of responsibility. They enjoy being librarians, eco-warriors and school councillors. Pupils feel that they make a real difference to the lives of others. They donate food to help the local foodbank and raise money for charities. Pupils celebrate each other's achievements in assemblies.

Parents and carers share their children's positive views about the school. Typical comments include 'Poplar Farm is a fantastic school', 'the staff are all lovely' and 'nothing is too much trouble'.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for what learning looks like at Poplar Farm. They have considered the needs of all pupils when designing the curriculum. Pupils learn a broad and ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have identified the precise knowledge that they want pupils to learn. They design and sequence the curriculum to build on what pupils know. Pupils can discuss their learning with confidence. In a small number of subjects, leaders have not set out in enough detail the knowledge that pupils will learn. Pupils' knowledge of what they have learned in these subjects is less secure.

Teachers use assessment well to check pupils' learning in reading and mathematics. They adapt learning when pupils need to go over concepts. This helps to secure their understanding. Assessment is in the early stages of development in some subjects in the wider curriculum. Leaders are working on this so that they will know how well the curriculum helps pupils to gain knowledge over time.

Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start school. Leaders prioritise reading. Staff teach a carefully sequenced phonics curriculum. They are skilled in helping pupils to learn new sounds and letters. The books that the pupils read match the sounds they learn in lessons. Leaders identify any pupils who struggle with reading. Pupils receive support to help them catch up. Pupils love reading. They strive to earn a book from the reading vending machine. Teachers read to pupils

every day. Pupils listen with awe and wonder, excited by what might happen next in the story.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive at Poplar Farm. These pupils develop strong relationships with the adults who help them, because of the nurture that they receive. Pupils with SEND access the same learning and opportunities as their peers. Leaders work well with external agencies to provide specialist support for pupils when needed. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start at Poplar Farm. They soon learn routines and expectations. Children learn well together. They discuss their learning with excitement. Children develop their independence through well-considered activities throughout the day. They are settled, happy and curious learners.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They have lots of equipment to play with at playtimes. Pupils happily play and learn alongside their friends. 'Friendship monitors' ensure that nobody is left out.

Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils' personal development. This is a strength of the school. Leaders place a high priority on pupils' mental health and well-being. Some pupils access play therapy and have time to talk to adults about any worries that they may have. Pupils value this support. They say that it makes a difference and helps them to learn better in class. Pupils learn about the importance of keeping fit and healthy. They learn about democracy and have opportunities to vote in lessons. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders, including governors and the trust, know the school well. They provide effective support and training for all staff. Staff appreciate the care and consideration leaders have for their workload and well-being. They are proud to work at the school. There is a culture among staff of mutual respect and trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and the trust keep pupils' well-being and safety at the forefront of their work. They ensure that it is everyone's responsibility to keep pupils safe. Staff take part in regular training to help them recognise pupils at risk of harm. Record-keeping is thorough. Staff use the school's procedures well to report concerns. Leaders work with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils get the help they need. They make robust checks when new staff join the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about and understand age-appropriate risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not broken down the subject content sufficiently into precise components of knowledge. Some pupils are unable to recall previously learned content. In these subjects, leaders should carry out further curriculum thinking to enable all pupils to build cumulative knowledge and develop their long-term memory.
- Assessment of the wider curriculum is not yet fully developed throughout the school. In some foundation subjects, leaders do not always check effectively how well pupils acquire and remember knowledge. Leaders should establish a clear structure for the assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider 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.

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	145902
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10254748
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	293
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Hopkins
Headteacher	Kate Hodson
Website	www.poplarfarmsch-cit.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Community Inclusion Trust. It opened in September 2018.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and a range of staff, including an early career teacher.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. She also met with representatives of the trust.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The inspectors met

with the designated safeguarding lead and spoke with staff, governors, trust representatives and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, spoke with teachers, and spoke with pupils about their learning. The inspectors visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector met with groups of staff and pupils and considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Kirsty Norbury, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

George Huthart

Ofsted Inspector

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