

Inspection of Gunthorpe Primary School

The Pentlands, Hallfields Lane, Gunthorpe, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE4 7YP

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Christopher Scales. This school is part of Soke Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Cathy Carlisle, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Laura Holland.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend a school that is improving. Recent curriculum changes are still taking effect. Though expectations for what pupils can achieve have risen, this is not yet consistent across the school. Sometimes, pupils do not consistently receive the guidance they need to succeed. When this occurs, pupils may struggle to complete tasks, leaving their difficulties unaddressed.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. The 'golden rules' and assemblies that explain them set the standard. The 'golden rules awards' celebrate pupils who always behave kindly. Staff do not excuse or normalise challenging behaviour when it occurs. Instead, they address it appropriately to maintain a safe and orderly environment. However, pupils with additional needs sometimes struggle in lessons and their behaviour reflects this when staff support is not fully effective.

The revitalised playtimes are working wonders. Pupils are happy because staff arrange activities based on their ideas. They can try slacklining, play with tyres and loose parts, or dig in the staff-built sandpit. Before new activities start, assemblies teach pupils how to use equipment safely. For pupils who find playtimes challenging, there is 'The Zone' where staff provide a calm, welcoming space. Care like this makes the school a safe place for all pupils.

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

Change in response to the previous inspection took longer than expected. However, new trust and school leaders are taking sensible steps to raise standards. For example, they rightly focused on reducing low-level disruption in lessons. Now, classrooms are much calmer, helping pupils to concentrate. Leaders are relentless in their efforts to keep pupils safe, for example, working closely with external partners to strengthen safeguarding. Still, leaders recognise there is more to do to ensure recent curriculum changes lead to better outcomes for all pupils.

The school recently revamped its curriculum, including in the early years. The school elected to adopt high-quality curriculum packages that reduce workload and allow staff to focus on teaching. Systems to check pupils' knowledge are being refined, such as setting precise, regular checkpoints in the early years to better inform teaching. However, due to pupils' previous lack of access to an ambitious enough curriculum, gaps in knowledge exist. While the school is working to address this, gaps are not always consistently identified and resolved. Subsequently, some pupils move through lessons without securing key knowledge.

A renewed focus on reading is beginning to show results. For example, more children in the early years are keeping up with the phonics programme. Pupils benefit from regular reading practice, meaning they can confidently read the books they take home. When pupils struggle, staff provide careful support, helping them recall letter sounds before stepping back when they can continue independently.

However, writing remains a barrier to achievement. In the early years, children have too few opportunities to use their phonic knowledge in writing. In the other year groups, the expectations and support for writing vary. As a result, pupils differ greatly in how well they form letters and structure their ideas using age-appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The school provides tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, there is speech and language therapy, and a dedicated space called 'The Nest' where pupils receive a bespoke curriculum. However, some of the targets set for pupils, such as learning to read fluently or managing their emotions, are too broad and lack clear, measurable aims. This makes it difficult for staff to know how effective strategies are in helping pupils overcome any barriers to achievement.

Attendance is a top priority. Dedicated and determined staff focus on early support. A focus on building relationships allows the school to challenge and support families to overcome barriers to attendance.

The school has a strong focus on pupils' personal development. Well-being support includes thoughtful gestures, such as providing bagels at breaktime, as well as specialist services like psychotherapy. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum helps pupils understand themselves and others, supporting the development of friendships and respect.

Trustees and local governors provide strong strategic oversight. For example, the trust has expanded the central team to prioritise this school's improvement journey. Local governors develop a clear understanding of the school through a range of activities, including purposeful visits that celebrate improvements and provide assurance on leaders' information.

Leaders know rapid changes have been challenging for some staff. However, their open-door approach and reflection meetings help shape staff training. So, staff support the changes, seeing how they benefit both pupils and their professional development.

Some parents and carers note improvements, especially in the care their children receive and leaders' approachability. The school wants to strengthen parent engagement further. For example, they have plans to invite parents to join the improved break- and lunchtime arrangements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils lack the prior knowledge needed to access the ambitious curriculum changes. Variation in how understanding is checked and new learning is explained means pupils struggle to catch up on missed content and secure their grasp of new concepts. The school should strengthen how checks on pupils' learning inform the teaching and help to support pupils in building knowledge and skills incrementally and securely.
- Too many pupils struggle to write legibly and accurately. This affects their ability to communicate their understanding and makes it harder to assess their learning. The school should consider how best to strengthen writing instruction across the curriculum, including in the early years, so that pupils receive clearer guidance and appropriate support.
- The system for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND does not always include precise, measurable short-term targets. This makes it difficult to assess the impact of support and adjust strategies effectively. As a result, some pupils disengage from learning, complete work incorrectly or display heightened behaviour due to uncertainty. The school should consider how the approach to target setting could be refined to support clearer evaluation and responsive adjustments.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	145268
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10345496
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	343
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Laura Holland
CEO of the trust	Cathy Carlisle
Headteacher	Christopher Scales
Website	www.gunthorpeprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been change to leadership at the trust and the school since the previous inspection, including the chair of trust, CEO, director of education and the headteacher.
- The trust board delegate certain functions to a local governing committee.
- The school offers before-school childcare for pupils who attend the school. It is run by school staff and overseen by the board of trustees.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the chief executive officer, director of education, headteacher, deputy headteacher, trustees and a local governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, and held discussions with some pupils about their learning and wider school experience. They also reviewed samples of pupils' work and listened to a selection of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in the early years and in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school strategic plan, minutes of meetings of the trust board and local governing committee, and reports on pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, along with responses to Ofsted Parent View, which included free-text responses.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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