

Irchester Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133601
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	367437
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Sims

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Clements
Headteacher	Julia Alison
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
School address	School Lane Irchester, Wellingborough NN29 7AZ
Telephone number	01933 353848
Fax number	01933 350479
Email address	head@irchester.northants-ecl.gov.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Inspection number	367437

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited every class to gain an overview of the quality of teaching and learning, and then observed 16 lessons taught by 14 different teachers. The inspection team had meetings with the school's leaders and staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body, and held informal discussions with parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked in detail at pupils' books, a range of documentation, policies and monitoring records. They scrutinised data on pupils' attainment. The inspectors received and analysed the responses to questionnaires from 145 parents and carers, 185 pupils and 27 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent are pupils improving their writing skills and how effectively do they apply these skills to their work across the curriculum?
- How well do the more-able pupils achieve, and to what extent do they display independence, initiative and enterprise?
- How consistent is the teaching and how effective is it in differentiating pupils' needs and enabling all pupils to achieve well?
- How effective is the day-to-day assessment of pupils' work and how well does it help them understand what they need to improve?
- To what extent have the changes in leadership and management become embedded and what impact are they having on raising pupils' achievement?

Information about the school

Irchester Community Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. There has been a significant change in staffing since the previous inspection, with almost half of the teachers being appointed in the last two years. The headteacher took up post in September 2009. The school has National Healthy Schools status, the sports Activemark and the Intermediate International Schools Award. The school runs a breakfast club each morning.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education but has shown strong signs of improvement over the last 12 months and has demonstrated that there is good capacity for further improvement. The strategic appointment of phase leaders and greater delegation of responsibilities have strengthened leadership and management and given greater weight to the headteacher's drive to improve many aspects of the school. An emphasis on the school's 12 core values is contributing strongly to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The appointment of a family link worker and a revised policy on attendance, drawn up in consultation with a group of parents, have led to a big improvement in attendance, which is now above the national average. Major revisions to the school's curriculum have produced some really interesting displays throughout the school and have engaged pupils' interest. A strong focus on assessment has enabled all teachers to become far more accurate in assessing the level at which each pupil is working and has resulted in all staff assuming a much greater sense of accountability for the progress of pupils in their class. As a result, pupils' progress is improving throughout the school. The starting point for all of these and other changes has been a very accurate self-evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. There is a good awareness of what still needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement even further.

Pupils' attainment has risen significantly following the well below average National Curriculum test results in 2010. Attainment for the current cohort of pupils in Year 6 is now broadly average, representing satisfactory achievement during their time at the school. Some pupils have made particularly good progress this year, and this has enabled them to make up for slow progress in previous years. Much has been done to improve the quality of the teaching, although the overall quality is satisfactory as there is still considerable variation from one class to the next. In one class, for example, pupils make rapid progress because the teaching is outstanding. In another, progress is much slower because the teaching lacks pace and challenge and work is not always matched sufficiently well to the differing needs of the pupils. A major emphasis on 'Big Writing' is having a noticeable impact across the school on motivating pupils and improving the quality of their writing. However, their skills in writing are still weaker than in reading and mathematics. Part of the reason for this is that there is not yet enough opportunity for them to apply their skills in subjects other than English.

The school provides good care, guidance and support. The appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has improved provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly in Key Stage 1. Procedures for safeguarding and ensuring pupils' health and safety are rigorous. Good partnerships with other schools and various agencies contribute well to pupils' learning and well-being. Good induction

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

procedures for children joining the Reception classes enable them to settle quickly into school life.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby pupils' attainment and achievement, by ensuring that all teaching is consistently good or better and, in particular, by:
 - developing teachers' skills in matching work more closely to the needs of all learners
 - using assessment more effectively to enable pupils to understand what they have to do to improve their own
 - ensuring that work is always sufficiently challenging for all pupils
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress.
- Improve pupils' writing skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum and in a wider range of contexts.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In 2010, attainment at the end of Year 6 fell from the above average levels of previous years to well below the national average. Analysis of available data shows that progress below Year 6 had been slowing for a number of years and teachers were insecure in assessing the levels at which their pupils were working. Improving teachers' confidence and their accuracy in assessing pupils' work has been key to raising pupils' attainment throughout the school. Assessments in reading, writing and mathematics identify pupils who are in danger of underachieving, and well-focused intervention work is enabling pupils to catch up quickly. Some intervention work takes place before school starts which enables the pupils to take a full part in normal lessons as well as receiving additional support. One-to-one or small group tuition under the 'Every Child a Reader' scheme is proving effective for younger pupils. Attainment is now broadly at the levels expected in most year groups, although some weaknesses still remain in writing. In a few year groups, standards in mathematics are above those expected.

Pupils' progress throughout the school is satisfactory, although variable. In some classes, pupils make really good progress because the teaching is fast paced and challenging. In an outstanding English lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher provided excellent modelling of how pupils could vary their language, organise their work and improve their writing. Information and communication technology was used extremely well to stimulate and engage the pupils, and the brisk pace kept everyone on their toes. In some classes, pupils all carry out the same task and the more-able pupils in particular are not challenged sufficiently. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities mirrors that of other pupils. Some make excellent progress because of the additional help they receive through well-targeted support from teaching assistants and the class teacher. Pupils who are lagging behind in developing their reading skills receive individual attention from an experienced teacher which helps them to make good progress in their reading.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour in lessons is good. They are cooperative, helpful, and work well together. Pupils feel safe and they have developed a good understanding of safe practices, and a number of pupils have trained as first aiders. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school, willingly accepting the many opportunities to carry out responsibilities as leaders, monitors and members of the school council. They enjoy fundraising for local and international charities. Their first-hand knowledge of multicultural lifestyles and societies in the United Kingdom is improving. For example, the school used the occasion of the Royal Wedding creatively to help pupils not only learn about tradition and custom within the United Kingdom, but to help them learn about wedding customs and traditions in many other faiths around the world. Pupils' many good personal attributes and their sound literacy and numeracy skills ensure that they are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is improving. In all lessons, good relationships between adults and pupils support learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support not only pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but other groups of pupils also. Most adults are skilled in asking questions of pupils which consolidate or extend their learning, but sometimes questions are not challenging enough. Teachers share each lesson's objectives with pupils and work with them to identify key success criteria for them to achieve. This

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

helps pupils to know what is expected of them and has been an important factor in improving their progress. In the best lessons, class teachers have high expectations and this means that all pupils, whatever their ability, are helped to achieve as well as they can. Pupils behave well and this is largely because teachers engage and motivate them, capturing their interest. However, there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching across the school and, as a result, not enough lessons are securing the best possible progress, particularly for the more-able pupils. Sometimes, this is because the pace of the lesson is not quick enough. Many teachers are using assessment information increasingly well to reshape lessons to ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. However, this does not happen in all classes. Pupils' work is marked regularly, however, teachers are not always critical enough in pointing out where and how pupils could improve their work.

The redesigned curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' standards of attainment and is progressively leading to greater levels of engagement and enthusiasm towards learning. This is because it is becoming more relevant and meaningful to them. Displays in many parts of the school, such as those on extreme environments, provide evidence of some really worthwhile, exciting and interesting learning experiences. Pupils enjoy the wide range of visits and visitors which enrich and extend the curriculum, and they appreciate learning from first-hand experiences and practical activities. Particularly effective in enlivening the curriculum are the partnerships with different community groups, such as working with 'Young Magistrates' and local environmental campaigners. These enable pupils to develop their understanding of social issues alongside skills in English and mathematics. While the opportunities for pupils to practise writing in other areas of the curriculum areas are increasing, they are still not sufficient to enable them to consolidate their skills and become fluent, accurate and versatile writers.

The school is a caring community and the care and support of its pupils is of good quality. Staff regularly monitor the progress of individuals and work well in partnership with parents, carers and other agencies to support those pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. The work of the newly appointed family link worker and the new special educational needs coordinator has also been instrumental in strengthening provision for these pupils. The breakfast club provides a particularly supportive social environment where pupils are looked after well and develop a range of skills. There are well-established arrangements to welcome new pupils into school and also to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership which is focused on improving educational provision for pupils and raising attainment. Despite the hard work involved in implementing the many changes which have been made over the last year, staff feel much more confident in assessing pupils' attainment than before. They comment enthusiastically that the changes to the curriculum have really engaged pupils' attention. The steps taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been managed well and all teachers have been involved in devising the new teaching and learning policy. Planning has been strengthened and teachers work closely together to support each other. Members of the governing body have also provided good support and challenge in holding leaders to account and overseeing the changes. Their involvement has also had an impact on improving the administration and the financial management of the school, both of which are now good.

In many respects, the school's engagement with parents and carers is good. For example, parents and carers were involved in writing the anti-bullying and e-safety policies and setting up the new nurture room. They have enjoyed getting to know what a normal school day looks like through the 'Seeing is believing' tours; and the highly effective website has improved communication significantly. However, almost a fifth of those who returned the inspection questionnaire feel that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns, indicating that the school is not positively engaging with all parents and carers. The school has good links with a wide range of support agencies, the local community and other schools which broaden the learning opportunities for pupils and promote their well-being. The latest initiative has been the procurement of funding to establish a 'Lab 13' science room and employ a science teacher.

Safeguarding procedures are good, as highly effective steps are taken to ensure that all adults who come into contact with pupils are carefully vetted. There are extensive training opportunities for staff. The environment is safe, and regular health and safety checks are carried out, sometimes with the involvement of the school council. The school has taken positive steps to identify the religious, ethnic and socio-economic make-up of the community and to broaden pupils' understanding of, and involvement in, the local and wider communities. The school is very conscious of its duty to tackle discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and provides good additional support for specific groups of pupils. For example, there is a special computer club for those who do not have access to a computer at home. However, because the quality of the teaching is variable, enabling some pupils to make faster progress than others, overall equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes are generally just below those which are expected for their age in all areas of learning, particularly in language and number. They make sound progress in their first year and good progress in problem solving, reasoning and number as a result of the guidance they receive which focuses on developing these skills. By the time they move from Reception to Year 1, children's attainment is broadly in line with expectations, although slightly lower in key skill areas such as personal and social development, and communication, language and literacy.

Children choose from a wide range of activities that encourage them to learn and practise new skills, and they move freely between indoor and outside areas. They can work and play equally well together as a group or independently. However, staff do not always ensure that children take full advantage of some of the opportunities that are provided to cover all areas of learning, particularly writing.

Adults provide good role models and show that they understand young children's learning needs through their interactions in directed activity and in spontaneous play. They actively teach good behaviour, and children generally respond positively to their guidance. Adults praise and encourage children's efforts and offer guidance about what they might try next. They regularly assess children's progress and increasingly use these assessments to plan future provision.

There is a strong emphasis on the safety and welfare of children. Adults have good links with outside agencies, which enable children with specific emotional and learning needs to receive the support they need. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who is relatively new in post, has accurately identified the key areas for development and actions are leading to improvements in outcomes for children. A particularly successful development are the recently established induction procedures, which help to form good partnerships

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

with parents and carers and enable children to settle in quickly and well into the Reception classes.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over two-fifths of the parents and carers, more than in most schools, completed a questionnaire, and many included written comments. Most parents and carers responded positively to each of the questions, but a number of concerns were raised. Some of the parent and carers expressed concerns with regard to their children's progress, meeting their particular needs and ensuring children are well prepared for the future. Some commented positively about the changes which the headteacher has introduced; others raised concerns about the way the school is being led, some of the changes which have been implemented and the way the school listens to their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team judged that the changes which have been implemented over the last year are leading to improvement. The level of attendance has risen, pupils find the new curriculum interesting and engaging, and their attainment is rising once again.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Irchester Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 145 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 344 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	44	71	49	10	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	52	65	45	4	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	27	87	60	18	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	32	76	52	19	13	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	53	37	76	52	11	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	30	77	53	18	12	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	36	79	54	14	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	45	31	71	49	19	13	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	30	79	54	19	13	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	32	79	54	13	9	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	19	87	60	20	14	8	6
The school is led and managed effectively	32	22	88	61	9	6	12	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	35	78	54	13	9	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Irchester Community Primary School, Wellingborough
NN29◆7AZ**

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing how you learn, how you get along with one another and how polite, friendly and helpful you are. We particularly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. This means that the school is doing many things well, but there are some things which could be improved to make sure that you all do as well as you possibly can. These are the main things we found out about your school.

You are making satisfactory progress, and some of you are making good progress, in literacy and numeracy and in your learning in other subjects.

You listen well in class, work well with each other and do a lot to help around the school - we were impressed with your involvement in setting up Lab 13.

There is variation in the quality of the teaching; sometimes it is outstanding, but at other times it does not challenge you to make fast enough progress.

You very much enjoy the new 'Wow' introductions to your topics, a range of interesting activities and the clubs, visitors and school trips that take place.

The staff take good care of you; this helps you to feel safe and know there is always someone to help you if needed.

The headteacher and other school leaders have been working very hard to improve the school and have made some good changes over the last year.

To help you to make better progress in your work, we have asked the school to make sure that all of the teaching is as good as it possibly can be. 'Big Writing' has helped you to develop new skills, but we have asked teachers to give you more opportunity to practise your writing when you are learning about other subjects.

You can help yourselves to do even better by continuing to work hard and trying to achieve your targets. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Graham Sims

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.