

Syresham St James CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121993
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	366822
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Adams
Headteacher	Katherine Clough
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector observed four teachers in nine lessons. The inspector also considered lesson observations from his previous two visits to the school. The inspector met with school leaders, the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, pupils and teachers. Also, he talked informally with a small number of parents and carers at the end of the school day. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at work in pupils' books, the school's information about pupils' progress, planning documentation, documents relating to safeguarding and school improvement planning.

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

- To what extent have the previous inadequacies, reported at the last inspection, been eradicated?
- Has capacity to improve been developed in leaders at all levels sufficiently so that the pace and focus of school improvement is appropriately robust?
- To what extent are gaps between boys' and girls' attainment being narrowed?

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than average and the number of pupils on roll has been falling. The pupils are taught in four classes. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. A very small number of pupils are from Roma travelling families. The school hosts a local playgroup. This provision is not managed by the governing body and will be inspected under separate arrangements. When the school was last inspected in May 2010, it was judged to require special measures. Since then, inspectors have visited the school each term to check on its progress in tackling its weaknesses.

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

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. A determined focus on improvement since the previous inspection has led to the school providing a satisfactory and improving standard of education. Good teaching has driven up standards and eradicated underachievement in Years 1 to 4. The good provision found in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been maintained. Progress for pupils in Years 5 and 6, whilst satisfactory, is not as rapid as elsewhere. This year has been particularly challenging for these pupils because of several changes in teaching staff. The quality of teaching for these year groups is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils in Year 6 have been given extra support to ensure that their progress is satisfactory overall and they make up lost ground. They are on target to reach above-average standards of attainment. Girls have performed better than boys in Years 5 and 6, particularly in writing. The school has well-thought-out plans to support both boys and girls in the current Year 5 in reaching the above-average standards that they are capable of by the time they leave Year 6.

The good progress seen in Years 1 to 4 is due to good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Assessment information is used well to plan work carefully and ensure all pupils' needs are met, including those from Roma travelling backgrounds. Support in these classes is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that appropriate additional support is given to pupils. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

School leaders have proven themselves capable. The challenges of the last year have been significant. The headteacher has navigated through the challenges with a steadfast focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Almost all areas of the school have improved, with many outcomes for pupils now being good. Self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher and subject leaders work well together. As a team, they drive improvements relentlessly and lead by example. As a consequence of the school's falling roll, classes have been reorganised for the next academic year. In their decision-making, leaders and the governing body have been focused absolutely on continuing the improvements seen this year. Their plans for next year and beyond are robust and designed to ensure continuing weaknesses are tackled, whilst maintaining the improvements that have taken place. These factors show the school's good capacity to sustain improvement. Several teachers have recently returned to school following long absences. These teachers have not been directly involved with the rapid improvements seen in the last year. Even so, these teachers, along with school leaders, recognise the importance of catching up with the developments that have taken place in their absence.

Parents and carers spoken to during this and previous visits express positive views about the school and its recent improvement. However, leaders have no system for collecting

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and considering the full views of parents and carers and, as a result, they have no clear understanding of their views beyond those areas of concern that are expressed. However, the school is very open to parents and carers. The chair of the governing body has worked hard to listen to parents and carers and make sure that the meetings held to discuss school improvement and pupils' progress are useful and in a format that parents and carers appreciate.

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?

- Ensure that progress is consistently good and that the remaining legacy of underachievement is eradicated quickly by:
 - ensuring the current Year 5 pupils are given high-quality teaching and support so both boys and girls reach above-average standards of attainment by the time they leave the school in July 2012
 - using the expertise within school to induct and support new and returning staff so they catch up quickly with the changes that have taken place over the past year, particularly in relation to teaching styles, curriculum development and use of assessment to pinpoint learners needs.
- Develop systems to ensure parents' and carers' views are sought, understood by leaders and, where appropriate, influence school improvement planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. In many classes, progress is good. The current Years 5 and 6 are making satisfactory progress, although a legacy of underachievement remains, particularly in boys' writing. In classes where teaching is predominantly good, pupils are highly motivated in their learning. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In those lessons, pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and try hard to do this. Pupils enjoy topics that give meaning to their learning. In one class, pupils' writing was enhanced because of the work they had been doing on India. The topic gave pupils a deeper level of understanding that positively influenced the content of their written work. Practical and outdoor activities are proving popular with pupils, particularly boys. In a mathematics lesson, pupils used their topic about dinosaurs to learn about measures and distances, marking out on the playground the footfall and lengths of different dinosaurs. In satisfactory lessons seen, pupils remain enthusiastic, particularly when working with their peers or independently. Pupils engaged less well in whole-class sessions because the subject matter is not made as interesting to them. In those lessons, pupils make satisfactory progress generally because adults work hard to help pupils with their tasks, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, it is as a consequence of activities not being matched as well to the full range of needs, abilities and interests that such support is necessary.

This school prepares pupils well, socially and emotionally. Pupils say that they feel safe and learn how to stay safe. Pupils are exceptionally caring towards each other, recognising their responsibilities in making the school a pleasant place to be. Behaviour is good, both

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in classes and around the school. The annoying behaviour that was reported at the last inspection has been eradicated because pupils are engaged much more in their learning. Pupils are very proud of their school and speak warmly about the opportunities being in a small school affords them. They have many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility and undertake these seriously and with commitment. Pupils develop good attitudes towards healthy living. They take part in a good range of sporting opportunities, understand the importance of healthy diets and make informed decisions about staying healthy.

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	2
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	2
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?

Improvements in the quality of teaching have been at the forefront of the school's rapid improvement. Much teaching is now good. Good teaching is characterised by a clear understanding of the needs and abilities of individual pupils. In good lessons, there is a strong use of assessment to guide pupils through the next steps in their learning. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and communicate these well. Interesting and carefully chosen topics are beginning to be used well to give learning in literacy and numeracy meaning. Satisfactory teaching is limited to lessons in which teachers are temporary or are returning after long absence. In those lessons, it is clear that teachers do not know pupils as well and assessment information is used less effectively to match work to the precise needs of individuals. Lessons often remain

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exciting, although, in some cases, activities rely too much on worksheets that do not stretch learners fully.

The curriculum is developing and is satisfactory overall. Recent developments in learning through topics and an increased use of the outdoors are proving successful. Opportunities for practising literacy and numeracy skills are found throughout the curriculum. Extra-curricular sporting activities are popular and well attended.

Pupils are very well cared for, with each being known well in this small and friendly school. Systems for maintaining pupils' safety are robust and reviewed regularly. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Potentially vulnerable pupils are supported very well. The school works closely with families and other agencies where appropriate. Attendance is monitored carefully so that above-average attendance is maintained. Where the attendance of an individual does become a concern, the school works with partners, such as the traveller welfare service and educational welfare officers, to ensure all is done to improve it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels have worked with determination to bring the school to a point where it no longer requires special measures. Their capacity in improving the school has been proven through the rapid improvements seen over the last year and in their action plans for the future. A significant strength is the way the headteacher works together with the literacy and numeracy leaders. The close working relationship means that good practice is shared quickly across the whole school and curriculum. Leaders track the performance of different groups and individuals carefully and take action to ensure that inequalities are tackled quickly. As a result, the gaps in attainment between boys and girls have been eradicated in Years 1 to 4. In Years 5 and 6, there remains a gap between boys' and girls' attainment in writing. The interventions to support pupils are beginning to close the gap. Pupils fall behind no longer and there is good additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities that means they make progress in line with their peers. Leaders have a clear understanding of the backgrounds and cultures of pupils in school. The curriculum is developing pupils' awareness of global diversity in a balanced way that avoids stereotypes. However, plans to provide opportunities for pupils to mix with others from backgrounds that are different to their own are at an early stage of development.

The governing body challenges and supports leaders successfully. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and works hard to ensure the

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school continues to improve. The chair of the governing body has worked closely with the local community, ensuring that, as far as possible, parents and carers are well informed about the changes that are taking place. Safeguarding systems meet legal requirements and are reviewed appropriately. The school has worked well with a range of partners. It seeks advice and support willingly from the local authority, other schools and the diocese in eradicating inadequacies and developing sustainable good practice. Particularly useful partnerships have been developed with other local schools. The links allow teachers throughout the school to talk and develop ideas successfully alongside other colleagues.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in all areas of learning in this happy and vibrant setting. There is a good balance between independent choice and carefully designed teacher-led activities that move pupils on from their particular levels. The outdoor environment is used well, with a range of activities that capture children's imagination and provide good opportunities to develop social skills and speaking and listening. Early reading and writing is developed well, with many opportunities to practise early writing through role play and scenarios set up by the teacher. Early number skills are developed well through direct teaching and a range of opportunities to use number through play. Role play is a strong feature that supports children's learning and development. During the inspection, children completed their own passports, chose holidays from brochures, booked holidays in the role play travel agent and paid money for their holiday. Children were monitored carefully in the activities by the teacher, who interjected where useful to encourage better interaction and engagement. Children learn about the sounds that letters make and begin to use these to attempt increasingly complex words. Early reading is developed well, with pupils blending sounds together successfully. From a starting point that is broadly in line

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with expectations for their ages, children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage well prepared for Year 1. A significant number of children exceed expectations for their age.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

HMI spoke to a small number of parents and carers. They were positive about the work of the school and the decisions that have been made by leaders and the governing body. They state that their children are happy at the school and appreciate the range of activities on offer. However, the period during which the school has been in special measures has placed a strain on the relationship between some groups of parents and carers and the school. This has been exacerbated when the school has been unable to share or discuss confidential and sensitive information. Nevertheless, leaders have acted appropriately in sharing information with parents and carers. Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Syresham St James CofE Primary School, Brackley, NN13 5HL

You will be aware that I have visited your school several times since it was placed in special measures about a year ago. I am very pleased to be able to tell you that your school no longer requires special measures. Everyone in your school community should be very proud of all that has been achieved over the last year. The teaching is now good and leaders have shown that they are able to continue to improve your school. I know from our conversations that you will continue to help your school go from strength to strength. I have been very impressed with your behaviour around school. I have been particularly impressed with how well you look after each other and care for younger children in your school. You told me about how you enjoy being part of your school. This was good to hear because this has not always been the message you have given to inspectors.

I have asked your school to do some things to make sure it continues to get better. I have asked that your headteacher makes sure that new teachers and teachers coming back to school after being away have an opportunity to learn about all the developments that have taken place. This is so they can see what you have got used to and what is working so well for your school. I have also asked that those of you in Year 5 are given all the help you need to catch up. I know that you have had a difficult year, with lots of different teachers. I know that your headteacher wants you to have the best chance possible in Year 6.

I have also asked your headteacher and the governing body to make sure they find out what all of your parents and carers think about the things that are happening in school. This is particularly important because some of your parents and carers have been worried about how well your school is doing. You could help by telling them about the kind of things you are doing in class.

I would like to finish by thanking you all for your time and maturity when talking with me over the past year. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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