

# Isleham Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110791
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	367387
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Butt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	201
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Malkin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Bramley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Malting Lane Isleham Ely CB7 5RZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team visited 21 lessons or part lessons taught by seven teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and spoke informally to parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observations, analyses of pupils' work and other assessment information. The inspection team scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 85 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

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

- How well do teachers use assessment information to plan work that challenges more-able pupils?
- What is the school doing to raise attainment in reading?
- How effective are subject leaders in monitoring the quality of the provision?

## Information about the school

Isleham is similar in size to most primary schools. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. The school has Healthy Schools status. The school runs a breakfast club. There is also a pre-school on site that is privately run and subject to a separate inspection.

**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**

**3**

## Main findings

Isleham Primary is a satisfactory school. The headteacher has brought stability after a period of uncertainty that involved temporary leadership and changes of staff. She has introduced clear systems to track pupils' progress and the school is improving. Pupils' personal development is good and their above-average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school. The school cares for pupils well and there is a good range of partnerships with outside organisations that enhance their experiences.

Pupils make satisfactory progress from starting points that are generally in line with those expected. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Last year pupils did better in mathematics and this year the school has introduced measures to improve reading and writing with some success. Records show that boys are borrowing many more books from the library and special events such as 'book week' engage pupils well. Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good and better teaching but these are not consistent enough across the school and there are insufficient opportunities for staff to learn from one another by sharing good practice. Teachers plan work for pupils' different abilities, but sometimes the more-able pupils are not challenged enough. Pupils mainly have group targets, and they have a general idea of how to improve. However, teachers do not always use assessment data precisely enough to give them individual targets tailored to their specific needs.

The curriculum is enriched well with a good range of visits, visitors and clubs for pupils to enjoy. They particularly relished a visit by the last eel-catcher on the Fens. Staff teach subjects separately which sometimes limits opportunities for cross-curricular links and extended thematic work. When they explore topics, such as a recent study of the area around Ely, learning becomes much more relevant and alive for pupils, but this tends to be the exception rather than routinely planned and pupils' views and interests are not always given sufficient emphasis. The school's positive ethos promotes good pastoral care. Staff know pupils well as individuals and provide much support to families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Parents and carers particularly value the school's friendly and caring approach. One said, 'I would like to thank the staff for the support they have given myself and my children. I appreciate them involving me in my children's education.' Inspectors received many similarly positive responses from parents and carers; they also received a few very negative responses. The school has identified the importance of ensuring all groups of parents and carers are satisfied, including those who are

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harder to reach, and leaders and managers are working hard to bring this about.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate because monitoring by the headteacher is thorough. Subject leaders, some of whom are new to their posts, are developing their roles. Nonetheless, there is some variation in the extent to which leaders monitor closely the quality of provision in their subject areas or analyse data to identify possible gaps in pupils' learning. The governing body, which has also undergone much change, supports the school well, and provides a satisfactory level of challenge. Members of the governing body have recently become more closely involved with staff teams that monitor pupils' progress in order to be fully conversant with the data so that they can ask appropriately probing questions of leaders and managers. The school has made steady progress over recent years and has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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?**

- Raise achievement, including making teaching and learning consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring there is sufficient challenge for all pupils, especially the more able
  - showing pupils how to improve through using assessment data to set individual targets with them
  - sharing good practice
  - making the curriculum more coherent and relevant for pupils to inspire and engage them and taking on board their interests.
- Strengthen the drive for improvement by:
  - developing the monitoring role of subject leaders in improving teaching and learning and analysing data
  - ensuring the governing body develops further how it holds leaders and managers to account for the progress and performance of pupils.
- Continue to develop closer partnerships with the few parents and carers who are harder to reach to ensure all groups are entirely satisfied with the school's work.

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

**3**

Pupils enjoy learning, especially when they are actively involved in lessons. For example, in a science lesson, Year 4 pupils took pride in making circuits using batteries, bulbs and motors. Year 6 pupils recalled with enthusiasm how they had

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recently investigated the crime scene of the murder of King Duncan as part of their work on *Macbeth*. Pupils have positive attitudes and are keen to participate in class discussion. They have a thirst for knowledge and enjoy finding things out, such as how much of the rainforest is disappearing and its effect on the environment. They sometimes become distracted if the pace of learning slows, either because the work is not challenging them enough or because they are not completely clear about what they have to do.

The learning and progress of all groups of pupils is satisfactory. There are some examples of accelerated progress for individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have particularly benefited from interventions, but such good progress is not consistent across all subjects or year groups. Skilled and experienced teaching assistants help these pupils integrate into classes and provide appropriate support for them. These pupils make good progress in their personal development, so that they can work together in groups and contribute to lessons.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including resisting bullying and keeping safe on the internet. They say they are happy to go to an adult if they have a worry. Pupils behave well and show consideration for one another. Most pupils walk or cycle to school and make good healthy choices. They take part in plenty of exercise, including swimming in the school’s own pool during the summer months. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously as school councillors and house captains. They involve themselves well in village life, such as delivering gifts to the elderly at Christmas and the brass band playing at the local gala. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils embrace the school’s clear moral values and approach new experiences with enthusiasm, such as silk-screen printing with a local artist. They have a good understanding of other cultures from links with families who attend the school and with children in schools abroad.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will</b>	<b>3</b>

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

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<b>contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

In the most effective lessons teacher use open-ended questioning well to challenge pupils and break learning up into clear steps for them, so that they know exactly what they are doing. However, this does not happen consistently. In some classes, teachers do not always pick up pupils' misconceptions quickly enough because they are focusing too much on one particular group. All lessons have a clear objective and, in some, pupils are involved in setting goals that will enable them to succeed. Year 6 pupils wrote striking opening paragraphs to an autobiography by carefully checking they were catching the reader's attention. Marking is uneven between classes. In some cases pupils receive evaluative comments to help them improve, but in others this is less helpful. Similarly, while some pupils know the targets that enable them to make next steps in learning, this is not the case everywhere. Some targets are not specific enough for individual pupils. The curriculum engages pupils well when they go on trips to places of interest, or listen to a visitor to the school. Inspired by a local story-teller, pupils wrote haunting stories of the Fens. However, they do not always have sufficient input into topics to ensure that the curriculum is fully relevant to them.

The school can point to striking examples where it has helped individuals to overcome barriers to learning, and provides well for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. For example, a nurture group had a positive impact on developing pupils' social skills. The school's persistence in following up absences has been rewarded with an improving trend of attendance. The well-run breakfast club, which is housed in spacious and attractive accommodation, gives pupils a sociable and nutritious start to their school day.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement and is building capacity after a period of staffing difficulty and change. Several new members of staff have

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strengthened the team and there is a shared understanding about the school’s priorities based on secure self-evaluation. There are detailed strategic plans for improvement. Measures focusing on improving reading for younger pupils and encouraging all pupils to write with a purpose are having a positive impact on standards in English. Subject leaders are developing a sound understanding of how to improve their areas, but do not have sufficient opportunity to celebrate good practice. There is some variation in how effectively they use data to analyse progress or how rigorously they undertake monitoring. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governing body members have helped to steer the school through challenging times. The new chair attends senior leadership meetings and he is gaining a good understanding of the school’s priorities for improvement. The governing body is becoming more effective in how it challenges leaders and managers as it becomes more informed about pupils’ progress and performance.

Links with the nearby secondary school raise pupils’ aspirations and cultural awareness. There are good partnerships with local churches and charities. The sports partnership gives pupils a wide range of sporting opportunities, and links with the village gala committee develop pupils’ creativity. Most parents and carers are happy with the work of the school but a few have issues with aspects of its work, which resulted in a few very negative responses. The school works hard to engage all groups of parents and carers and communicates generally well with them. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The school tracks the performance of all groups carefully and it is closing any gaps it identifies. Safeguarding arrangements are good. All requirements are fully met and the school undertakes thorough evaluations of provision, for instance relating to off-site visits. A further example of good practice is the school’s regular analysis of playground accident records. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily, knowing its local community well and working hard to make it as cohesive as possible. Pupils exchange letters with a French school twinned to the village and support pupils at a school in Kenya. They have a growing awareness of the other cultures in the United Kingdom.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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



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**The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money**

**3**

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the Reception class and are happy and secure, as routines are well established and there is a variety of interesting activities for them to experience. There is a good mixture of tasks led by adults and those chosen by the children themselves, although some of the self-selected ones do not always link sufficiently to the topic to consolidate previous learning. Children are able to select their own resources, and make good use of the outside area as well as the classroom. They particularly enjoy the role play cafe, where they can practise early reading and writing skills as they serve one another. One child said, 'We don't like customers because they always make us run backwards and forwards!'

Careful observations build up a clear picture of each individual child's achievements, although these are not always recorded in an accessible way. Staff give a high priority to children's welfare and well-being and work well with parents and carers. Teaching has good elements but is satisfactory overall, with an appropriate emphasis on developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills. The new leader is building a strong team of staff committed to improving the provision further.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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

The proportion of questionnaires received from parents and carers was above average. Most said their children enjoyed school, thought the teaching was good and that the school helped their child to have a healthy lifestyle. The most negative responses related to aspects of the school's leadership and management and the extent to which parents' and carers' views are taken into account. Inspectors investigated these concerns. The school has faced many difficult situations with staffing and other matters, much of which is confidential, but has acted appropriately on each occasion. Leaders and managers go out of their way to be available to parents and carers and the governing body runs a parents' forum. The school is open to new ways of engaging with parents and carers and it is working hard to ensure all groups of parents and carers are fully satisfied with its work.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Isleham Church of England 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	62	28	33	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	58	29	34	4	5	2	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	34	40	41	48	7	8	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	42	38	45	5	6	4	5
The teaching is good at this school	44	52	37	44	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	41	38	45	6	7	5	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	47	40	47	3	4	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)	33	39	40	47	5	6	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	36	42	37	44	7	8	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	36	40	47	9	11	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	38	36	42	6	7	8	9
The school is led and managed effectively	35	41	34	40	2	2	12	14
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	42	49	33	39	4	5	4	5

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Isleham Church of England Primary School, Ely, CB7 5RZ**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school and sharing your views with us. Isleham provides you with a satisfactory education, which means it does some things well and can improve in others. Here are some of its strengths.

- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy.
- You behave well and look after one another.
- You do a good job of helping around the school and getting involved in village life.
- Your attendance at school is good.
- There are plenty of visits, visitors and clubs for you to enjoy.
- The school looks after you well, especially if you are facing difficulties.
- Good links with other organisations give you extra opportunities to try new sports and other experiences.

We have asked your teachers to help your learning improve even more by making sure the work makes you really think and giving you individual targets to show you what to do next. We have also asked them to take more account of what interests you when planning topics. We have asked people in charge of subject areas and the governing body to check carefully on how you are doing so that you can do even better. We have asked the school's leaders to find ways of making sure all the parents and carers are happy with what the school is doing.

You all can help by working hard and telling your teachers what you enjoy studying.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt  
Lead inspector

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