

# Irchester Community Primary School

School Lane, Irchester, Wellingborough, NN29 7AZ

**Inspection dates** 25–26 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In some lessons there is an imbalance of teacher talk and pupil activity which does not give pupils time to make enough progress in their activities.
- The quality of questioning for able pupils does not always sufficiently probe their thinking.
- Writing progress is not as good as in reading and mathematics.
- Recent initiatives in writing have not yet had time to have full impact on results in all age ranges, especially in the classes for the oldest pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff and governors is resulting in an increase in the amount of good teaching and progress.
- The school has rigorous procedures for tracking pupils' progress. The school works successfully to ensure pupils who find learning hard overcome their difficulties.
- The governing body is active, involved and holds the school to account.
- Pupils' progress in reading is a notable strength.
- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. Subject and phase leaders are effective in their roles and are helping to drive improvements.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they show a good awareness of safety.
- The school takes good care of the pupils and works well with families.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.
- Good progress has been made in the school's development since the last inspection in May 2011.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 29 lessons or parts of lessons. Four of these were jointly observed with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read.
- They looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined the 20 responses on Parent View and the school's most recent survey of parents' opinions.
- A telephone discussion was held with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- A formal discussion was held with pupils.
- Inspectors examined progress data and other school documentation.
- The lead inspector held a discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body.

## Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sharona Semlali	Additional Inspector
Mary Maybank	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an above-average-sized primary school with 13 classes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are in three mixed-age classes.
- The school has 4.2% of its pupils at school action and 5.7% at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. These percentages are below the national averages.
- Children begin the Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher sometimes acts as a mentor to newly appointed headteachers and is vice-chair of the local cluster of schools.
- The school receives additional pupil premium funding for approximately 13% of the pupils which is below the national average.
- The school has a 'Lab 13', a science base which pupils use to pose questions and pursue answers with the support of a resident scientist. This facility is also used as a base for staff training and visits by groups of pupils from other schools. It makes links with businesses and universities.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve aspects of teaching to raise the quality further by:
  - improving the quality of questioning to probe able pupils' thinking and ensuring that they respond fully
  - ensuring that pupils have enough time to carry out their activities and make sufficient progress
  - developing the full potential of paired talk so that these activities are challenging and varied and also demand intensive listening
  - ensuring that there is a greater consistency in the quality of marking so that the pupils benefit fully from their mistakes and are clear what improvements they need to make
  - giving the same attention to the development of pupils' mathematical language as that which takes place in English.
- Build on the best practice in the school to ensure that the improved progress noted in Key Stage 1 in writing is replicated in all areas of the school by:
  - discussing as a whole staff writing activities and approaches that have proved successful
  - providing sufficient time for pupils to engage thoughtfully with writing activities
  - identifying words which individual pupils spell incorrectly but use frequently and getting the pupils to learn these
  - gleaning key grammatical improvements from writing in English and other subjects which individual pupils need to make.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Attainment on entry is slightly below expectations for the children's age because overall their personal, social and emotional development, communication and calculation skills are not quite at the expected level.
- The children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved as a result of good teaching. They now make good progress and reach the national average at the end of the Reception Year. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's learning. Reception children rolled out 'dough' and then stamped a number or letter into it which reinforced their recognition of these symbols.
- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1, marked by increases in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in the past two years. Attainment is broadly average. The good teaching of letter sounds (phonics) and good attention to regular reading habits have contributed effectively to this increased progress in reading and writing.
- Improved progress in Key Stage 1 is now moving into Key Stage 2. Although here attainment in the core subjects is broadly average overall, reading is a particular strength. This is the result of regular reading opportunities, the study of particular authors, a well-organised library which encourages pupils' interests in books and a computer program which checks comprehension and moves them on to more demanding texts.
- Pupils have been making expected progress overall in mathematics and writing in Key Stage 2 but current data indicate improvements and increasing gains in learning, although mathematics is stronger than writing. These gains have yet to show consistency over time. It is, nevertheless, clear that new initiatives in writing development are beginning to bear fruit. Progress is accelerating, although errors are sometimes too apparent in pupils' grammar and spelling.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar rates of progress to other pupils as do pupils who benefit from the pupil premium. This results from the early identification of their needs, effective adult support and programmes to overcome their difficulties, including one-to-one sessions and reading recovery tuition which are being effective.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There are some significant strengths in teaching but there is nevertheless variability in quality. Staff have good relationships with the pupils and lessons proceed in a calm atmosphere.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and supports the children's good progress. The teaching of reading is good throughout the school, including phonics and reading recovery sessions.
- Teachers manage the teaching of the mixed-age classes well. Setting for mathematics in these classes helps ensure that the work meets pupils' needs. In one mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, the teachers grouped pupils based on their errors in a previous mathematics assessment in order to improve their understanding.
- Lessons are well prepared. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Modern technology is used well to present lessons. Combined with good preparation, this adds pace to learning.

- Some teachers use the technique known as 'talk partners'. In this, pupils work together in pairs to discuss a question from the teacher, which deepens their thinking and inquiry. Sometimes, however, teachers do not always sufficiently exploit and vary this technique to challenge pupils in their responses. In some lessons, there is an imbalance between the time the teacher spends talking and the time for the pupils to engage in the activity, which reduces the opportunity for independent work.
- In direct questioning, staff do not consistently demand enough of the higher-ability pupils' thinking by probing their responses and ensuring that these particular pupils model a good range of vocabulary for other pupils. Occasionally the technique of asking the pupils with their hands up does not sufficiently engage other pupils in the class.
- Marking ranges in its quality and effectiveness. Some is good with clear pointers for improvement, while other marking does not help the pupils to improve enough.
- The teaching of writing is developing, and good techniques are being used to help the pupils to plan their stories. Pupils in Year 3 were seen to sketch out the events of their own version of fairy tales in sequence to help them write their story in order.
- Teaching assistants are generally well deployed and effective. They are often effective in one-to-one and small-group sessions.
- Pupils do not have the same good opportunities to use and become familiar with technical language in mathematics lessons as they do in English. 'Lab 13' encourages creative thinking and higher-level thinking in science and provides a keen point of interest for the pupils.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils is good**

- Pupils understand the clear behaviour policy displayed on every classroom wall and this works well. It clearly contributes to the pupils' typically good behaviour both in class and around the school.
- Pupils are attentive in class and show good levels of respect towards one another and to their teachers. They are polite and courteous. In occasional lessons, a few pupils do not remain fully on task during activities.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and are punctual for school. Groups of pupils who need extra help are keen to attend extra sessions before school to increase their skills. Attendance is above the national average.
- Pupils feel safe and happy in school. One pupil said, 'I feel safe here because all my family have been here and I learn more things in each year.' Pupils support each other well. They are clear that any behaviour problems are dealt with well by adults in school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the roads and when out and about. Some pupils act as junior road safety officers to remind others of road safety. Pupils are aware of the dangers of electricity and possible water hazards.
- Pupils are confident that bullying is extremely rare but if any should occur it would be dealt with effectively. They know about cyber bullying but say that it does not take place at school or out of school among themselves.
- Pupils are helped to take responsibility, and this is reflected in their mature attitudes. A group of pupils form the management committee for the on-site 'Lab 13', which encourages

pupils to pose scientific questions and pursue them. Committee members make contacts with businesses encouraging them to enhance curricular experiences within the school and organise partnerships with other schools. They were involved in drawing up the job description for the scientist in residence and also in the interview process.

### **The leadership and management is good**

- The headteacher exerts strong and enthusiastic leadership, directly influencing improvements. Good teamwork, responsible subject and phase leadership, effective monitoring of teaching and learning and regular tracking of pupils' progress support the continuing improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- 'Achievement meetings' (staff meetings) have clear agendas and are planned thoughtfully in advance so that these meetings are purposeful and move learning on. They cover a range of teaching and learning matters, help to develop staff's confidence and ideas and assist the pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is well planned with good opportunities for pupils to engage in extra activities. These include various sports, musical and performing arts activities and also a newspaper club for more-able pupils resulting in publications. Before-school activities help boost the learning of those who find learning difficult.
- Local authority involvement with its schools has reduced because of staff cuts, but the authority maintains a termly meeting with the school to set and review priorities which the school finds beneficial. The school's priorities are the correct ones and clearly focused on improving attainment further.
- Links with parents are developing well. There is much useful information on the school's website. The recently inaugurated 'Parents' Forum' provides a useful mechanism to discuss parents' views, concerns and ideas. The school survey indicates that most parents are happy with their children's education. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities.
- Arrangements for the performance management of the headteacher and staff are organised well. Staff indicate that the system of teachers coaching one another is working well and they are learning from this process. They also indicate that the links with other schools, including visits, help their professional development. The school is aware of the need to share best practice in the teaching of writing and spelling.
- Finance is managed effectively by the business manager and the governing body's finance committee. The pupil premium has been wisely spent to benefit the pupils concerned.
- The school's core values, such as 'tolerance', are being deeply embedded through a monthly focus on each one and doing much to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - is well organised through its committee system. Regular meetings ensure that the school is kept under review and members are well informed through their links with subject leaders. These help to ensure that the school is accountable for its work and the pupils' progress
  - ensures that good safeguarding arrangements and regular child protection training effectively support the school's duty of care.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133601
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	406536

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	342
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Clemence
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julia Alison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01933 353848
<b>Fax number</b>	01933 350479
<b>Email address</b>	head@irchester.northants-ecl.gov.uk



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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](mailto: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 information 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'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012

