

Irthlingborough Junior School

College Street, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough, NN9 5TX

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most pupils achieve well because teaching is usually good and, on occasions, outstanding.
- Pupils' progress in reading is excellent. Most read expressively and with confidence. This is helping to improve the quality of their writing.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. All learn to swim before they leave the school.
- Attendance is above average.
- The headteacher has a well-established senior leadership team. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Teaching and achievement have been improved significantly as a result.
- Governors are keen to help the school to improve. They use their individual expertise well to support staff. Regular visits ensure that they know how effectively the school is performing compared to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment and progress in mathematics is not as good as it is in English in most year groups. Fewer pupils reach above-average standards in mathematics compared with English.
- In mathematics, teachers do not always set pupils sufficiently challenging work or provide enough opportunities for them to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils are not always sure of what they have to do to improve in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed sixteen teachers in nineteen lessons. Two were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the pupil council, a group of six Year 6 pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and the coordinator for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- A discussion took place with a representative of the local authority to assess the support and advice provided for the school.
- There were 41 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspector took account of these and also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school with their children.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, minutes of governing body meetings and records of checks on teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.
- The breakfast club and 'Fun 4 all' after-school club were also visited.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Scobie	Additional Inspector
David Heald	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There are four classes in Years 3 and 4 and three larger classes in Years 5 and 6. Additional part-time teachers enable pupils in Years 5 and 6 to be taught in smaller groups for English and mathematics with others of similar ability.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is well below average and few speak English as an additional language; most of these speak English confidently.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for additional government funding through the pupil premium; in this school, it applies to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of any alternative off-site provision for its pupils.
- There is a swimming pool in a separate building on the school site. Time is allocated for children from the infant school to use it.
- A breakfast club and after-school club, organised and managed by the governing body, is available during term time. These are included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by Year 6 by;
 - ensuring that pupils of all abilities know what they have to do to improve
 - extending opportunities for pupils to develop mathematics skills in other subjects
 - making sure that teachers set sufficiently challenging tasks that are closely matched to the different ability level of pupils
 - ensuring that senior staff regularly and rigorously check the quality of teachers' planning to make sure lessons meet the needs of all pupils and the progress of individual pupils to identify any who are falling behind and need additional support.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. There is some slippage in standards as pupils move from the infant school into the junior school. This has been identified as a trend for the past three years. It is most marked for pupils who were assessed as achieving above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Junior school assessments at the end of pupils' first half term show that, for about one third of these pupils', their attainment is average rather than above average.
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. Attainment is above average in English and average in mathematics by the time they leave. Both subjects show a rising trend in standards over the past two years. In 2012, over nine out of ten pupils made the expected progress in English but the proportion was lower, at eight out of ten, in mathematics.
- Improving attainment in English, with a specific focus on writing, has been achieved over the past two years by extending the ability grouping of pupils from Year 6 into Year 5. This has enabled learning to be tailored more closely to the ability of pupils in each group. Teachers have also planned more opportunities to write at length in literacy sessions and in other subjects. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed writing the pros and cons for questions such as, 'Is television good for children?' Good opportunities for writing are provided in topic work about India and when planning a mission to an imaginary planet.
- Throughout the school, pupils make excellent progress in reading. Independent research for topics, using computers and reading their own writing to others, gives reading a high profile. Recently, in collaboration with students from a local college, pupils wrote and published their own adventure novel for children.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics is improving at a slower rate than in English. Ability grouping has been extended from Year 6 into Year 5 for mathematics from the start of this academic year, but it is too early to judge the impact of this arrangement. School data show that fewer disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are achieving above average standards in mathematics than they do in English. The same is true for those entitled to the pupil premium funding.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good, overall. All thrive as there is a calm, industrious atmosphere for learning in most lessons. Some statemented pupils make outstanding progress. This is because of the special talents of the well-trained learning support assistants, who work closely with them in lessons.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding to provide additional staff who support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in lessons. This ensures that they make good progress. There is now no significant gap between the attainment in English between them and others in the school.
- Achievement in swimming is outstanding with all pupils learning to swim before they leave school. All pupils achieve well in music. The subject expertise and enthusiasm of a part-time teacher provides excellent opportunities to play the ukulele and other instruments as well as performing in a successful choir.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. In effective lessons, all groups of pupils have tasks appropriate to their ability level and receive individual attention from teachers and learning support assistants to complete them successfully.
- At its best, teaching ensures that learning is challenging and fun. Pupils enjoyed thinking of questions for their teacher who took on the role of 'The Lady of Shallot' and all enjoyed learning three new chords when playing the ukulele.
- Teachers make frequent and accurate checks on pupils' rates of progress. Those who are falling behind in English are quickly identified and supported. The same attention is being applied to pupils' performance in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their individual learning needs are recognised and catered for in teachers' lesson planning and delivery.
- Marking is thorough and usually gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- In mathematics, progress is limited when teachers do not plan sufficiently challenging tasks that build on pupils' prior learning. Too often, the same work is set for all pupils and so some find it too easy and others too difficult. Pupils are not as sure about their targets and where they are in mathematics as they are in English.
- Expertise in teaching music and having their own swimming pool ensures pupils do particularly well in these areas of the curriculum.
- In lessons, pupils work together well, often sharing ideas. They help one another to improve written work by sensitively suggesting where improvements are needed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- 'Our school values us so we must value our school' is an apt motto. Pupils look after one another and are well behaved. All say that they feel safe and that teachers are kind and helpful. 'If you fall over, there is always someone to help you up,' was a typical view of pupils.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their above-average attendance which has been maintained for three years.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection agree that their children enjoy school. All had positive views. 'I'd like the school to keep them for even longer,' was a typical view of parents.
- Pupils are not concerned about bullying. All have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as name-calling and misuse of mobile phones or emails. They know what to do if they experience any form of bullying and are confident that staff will help them.
- Behaviour is consistently well managed and any cases of inappropriate behaviour are normally dealt with immediately and effectively by staff. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and resolve minor disagreements for themselves. There have been no exclusions in the past two years.

- The safety and welfare of pupils who attend the before- and after-school clubs is excellent. Pupils enjoy a good range of activities and are provided with healthy snacks.

The leadership and management are good

- The effective leadership and management of the headteacher have created strong, well-established tiers of management. The senior leadership team and year leaders' team have clear roles and areas of responsibility. Pupils' progress is checked on a regular basis. The deputy headteacher's expertise in analysing data is invaluable in identifying individuals or groups who are falling behind.
- Teaching is checked in detail through termly lesson observations by leaders and managers, helping to make sure that it is effective in promoting learning. Following these checks, the quality of teaching in mathematics has been made a focus for improvement. Teachers' expectations were not high enough to raise attainment to the same level as in English.
- The leadership and management of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are good. Parents and carers are fully informed about progress and involved in regular reviews. Most are pleased with the learning support provided for their children by staff and outside specialists brought in to help.
- Leaders and the governing body make sure that progression through the pay scale is closely linked to teachers' performance. The Teachers' Standards are used effectively to judge the quality of teaching.
- The local authority has provided effective support to help raise attainment. Their advice and support improved standards in English and similar methods are being employed by the school to raise standards in mathematics. The local authority now checks the school's performance each term to see that all groups continue to make good progress.
- The good range of after-school clubs contribute well to pupils' achievement and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Religious studies, topics about India and recent links with a school in Uganda give pupils a good understanding of other cultures and faiths.
- The school fosters good relations with parents and carers. Those who responded to Parent View were very positive about their children's experience of school. All agreed that staff treat every pupil equally, and that discrimination is not tolerated in any form.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body know how effectively staff are working because governors regularly visit school to see for themselves. They know how good teaching is and how the school's performance compares to that of other schools nationally. They are beginning to check much more closely on the school's progress with its identified priorities. The performance of the headteacher and teachers is reviewed annually to help the governing body to determine pay and promotion. Governors are well-trained, attending a wide range of training events each year. Their personal expertise is used to good effect to support the work of the various committees and to challenge the school with a view to improving aspects such as health and safety and child protection. All current national requirements relating to employment and safeguarding are met. Financial resources are well managed and the impact of pupil premium funding is checked carefully.

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

Unique reference number	121831
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	402054

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Ward
Headteacher	Susan Drake
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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