

Whittlebury Church of England Primary School

High Street, Towcester, NN12 8XH

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all ages achieve well, and make particularly fast progress in reading and writing.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons, around the school and outside in the playground. Pupils feel extremely safe and thoroughly enjoy school.
- Consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching is the key to pupils' academic and personal achievements. Pupils say how teachers make learning fun and help them when they find the work difficult.
- Parents appreciate the high quality of care provided for their children, and many say this is why they chose this school.
- Inspirational leadership by the executive headteacher ensures that the school makes the best of its partnerships with the other federation schools.
- Good systems to manage teachers' performance enable the executive headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body to rectify weaknesses and raise achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 is not as fast as in reading and writing. Some pupils struggle to calculate quickly in their heads and more-able pupils do not always attain the high standards of which they are capable.
- Subject leaders have too little responsibility for evaluating teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the executive headteacher. The inspector also made a number of brief visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, leaders of subjects and aspects from across the federation, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection.
- He observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including records of the progress of every pupil, planning and monitoring files, behaviour records and documents relating to attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Terry Elston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller-than-average primary school that became part of the Forest Federation of three schools in September 2012. The schools share an executive headteacher and governing body.
- The proportion of the pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those supported through school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is average.
- Pupils are taught in two classes, with Reception children and Key Stage 1 pupils in Class 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils in Class 2. There are too few pupils to comment on floor standards.
- A high proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school at other than the usual times.
- The school has recently achieved The Eco-Schools award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 matches that in reading and writing by:
 - giving pupils more practice at quick mental calculations
 - providing more opportunities for more-able pupils to work by themselves at challenging tasks
 - planning more occasions for pupils to use their number skills in all subjects.
- Develop the role of subject leaders, giving them more responsibility for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and benefit from working alongside older pupils in the class. They develop good reading skills and enjoy the daily phonics lessons that teach them how to build sounds into words.
- Their writing skills improve well because of interesting tasks such as retelling traditional tales that the teacher has read to them. In their number work, children count confidently and enjoy practical tasks such as working out how many plastic rods it takes to build a police station.
- They develop their independence well and choose activities sensibly. Children play imaginatively and enjoy acting as veterinary surgeons to cure the ailments of their dinosaurs and teddy bears.
- While there are some variations from year to year, overall, children join the school with skills broadly typical of their ages and achieve well by the time they leave. Pupils and their parents endorse this and say how well the school helps them learn.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average by the end of Year 2. These pupils are confident readers and have a good store of known words. They make good progress learning how to blend sounds together and this helps them read challenging books. In the 2012 phonics check, Year 1 pupils' scores were well above the national average. Pupils' stories are interesting for the reader because they think carefully about including exciting words in tasks such as creating a 'magical weekend'.
- In mathematics, they enjoy the way teachers give them practical ways to improve their skills, and one group made rapid progress when using mathematical apparatus to work out difficult addition sums.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress. With such small numbers and high proportions of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than usual times, attainment by the end of Year 6 varies from year to year. In 2012, only two out of the six pupils who took the national tests started at this school. Over time, progress is generally faster in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- Pupils read well and widely. They enjoy fiction and factual books and many are proficient at skimming texts in books and searching computers for information. They write exciting stories and improve their work by activities such as investigating the techniques used by authors to develop characters in their novels.
- In mathematics, pupils show good skills working with shapes and complex coordinates but even older ones sometimes struggle when asked to calculate quickly in their heads. They enjoy working at mathematical problems, but sometimes the more-able pupils find them too easy.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in both English and mathematics. They benefit from good teaching in the small classes based on accurate assessment of their difficulties. They improve their reading skills particularly well because of the regular teaching of word-building skills that gives them confidence to pick up a book and read for pleasure.

- The school provides good support for the small number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium. They achieve well and their attainment is in line with others in the school.
- Pupils who join from other schools make good progress, but, while the gap is closing, their attainment by the end of Year 6 tends to be lower than others in school. The teachers make accurate assessments of their skills and work closely with parents to help their children make a good start.

The quality of teaching is good

- The pupils, as well as the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, agree that teaching and learning are good. The evidence gained during the inspection confirms this. Teachers make lessons fun by imaginative use of technology and practical resources that capture pupils' interest. One class, for example, was highly stimulated by a short video clip that helped them write vivid descriptions of a 'twisting, dancing star' and a 'cave drowned in darkness'.
- In typical teaching, teachers make the point of the lesson clear and check throughout on pupils' progress towards this goal. They ask searching questions to deepen pupils' understanding and have high expectations of the quality of their answers. For example, in one mathematics lesson the teacher insisted that pupils gave full explanations of their working out to make sure they were confident in all the stages of calculation.
- Teachers show a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. The teaching of reading skills is particularly good throughout the school. Younger pupils learn quickly how to tackle new words and older ones benefit from very good opportunities to read widely to research their topics. In writing, teachers prepare pupils well for the task and have high expectations of the quality of their work.
- In mathematics, teachers give pupils many good opportunities to solve problems involving shape and number and this gives them a good feel for number. At Key Stage 2, however, they give too few opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in quick mental calculations and some older ones still use their fingers to count.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well in partnership to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils find the work challenging but achievable, and while these pupils are supported well in their learning, they have good opportunities to work by themselves. Importantly, teachers make sure pupils of all abilities have equal opportunities to answer questions in class discussions.
- There is some outstanding teaching in both classes. These lessons inspire pupils who talk excitedly about the problems they have solved, the fire stations they have built and how the visiting policeman showed them how he used his baton.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils fully deserve their reputation in the area for their courtesy and exemplary behaviour. Teachers make the rules very clear and are consistent in their application. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying or racism and that all feel safe in this small community. Outside, they play happily and are quick to help anyone who appears upset.

- Pupils who find it hard to manage their own behaviour benefit from outstanding support and speak highly of how this has helped them keep out of trouble and make good friends.
- In lessons, pupils concentrate extremely well and always remember to put their hands up to answer a question. When given the opportunity to work on their own pupils do so sensibly and show very good levels of independence.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and say how they look forward to the exciting lessons. They are extremely punctual and attendance rates are above the national average. Pupils learn much about how to stay safe and speak knowledgeably about the potential dangers of using the internet and the impact of cyber bullying. They were thrilled when the community policeman visited and asked mature questions about how he kept people safe.
- Pupils of all ages take responsibility readily. The school council does a very good job representing other's views and worked very hard to improve the play equipment outside. They helped raise the funds and met with the contractors to ensure the equipment met pupils' needs.
- Pupils are very reflective, and think carefully about people in the world who are poor or suffering from oppression. They develop an excellent awareness of moral issues and show a deep understanding of how their actions affect others. They know that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher leads with very high expectations of all members of the school community and ambitious goals for the future. She makes very effective use of the federation of schools to organise joint, cost-effective training and provide opportunities for teachers to plan activities together. This makes the best use of the expertise of all staff in the federation.
- The executive headteacher works effectively with the heads of teaching and learning to evaluate the quality of teaching that forms a strong basis for the annual reviews of their performance. Teachers find this process helpful and a fair way to decide on their levels of pay.
- Subject leaders who work across the three schools provide good support to all staff and have ambitious targets to raise attainment. As yet, however, they have had limited opportunities to evaluate the quality of teaching to gain a first-hand view of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The leaders and governing body evaluate the provision accurately and their astute use of data to raise achievement shows the school's capacity to improve further.
- The local authority has supported the school well in recent years and did much to help plan the transition into the federation.
- The leaders show a good commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. Their careful analysis of the achievements of different groups, such as boys and girls and those known to be eligible for free school meals, enables them to provide support to any pupils who are underachieving. The leaders and governing body make good use of the pupil premium to support eligible pupils and evaluate its impact on their achievements.
- Safeguarding systems are robust and meet all requirements. These are reviewed regularly by the leaders and the governing body.

- The school has a very good partnership with parents. Their comments to the inspector and responses to the on-line questionnaires were very positive, particularly in terms of behaviour, their children's progress, the quality of teaching and the way the school is led. All say how much the federation has helped improve the school and the experiences for their children.
- The activities planned across the federation for pupils are interesting, and they enjoy opportunities to work with the other schools and join them for visits. These topics provide very good opportunities to enhance their literacy skills, but fewer to develop their mathematical understanding.
- The school gives pupils many opportunities to reflect on issues such as the world of nature and the richness of different cultures. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced further by the school's strong links with the church and good teaching about different faiths and cultures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement gained through regular visits, meetings with senior leaders and observations of lessons. Governors have the skills and confidence to hold the leaders to account. They know how the school compares with others and take a full part in its improvement. They ensure safeguarding requirements are met and are closely involved in the evaluation of teachers' performance and its impact on their pay. They know what is being done to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. Training for the governing body is comprehensive and matched well to the needs of this school and others in the federation. Governors have a good awareness of the school's budget. For example, they know how the pupil premium is spent, why it is allocated in this way and the impact it has on pupils' academic and personal development.

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	122003
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	412061

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

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	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Luntz
Headteacher	Eliza Hollis (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2010
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