

Syresham St James CofE Primary School

High Street, Syresham, Brackley, NN13 5HL

Inspection dates 13–14 June 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and governing body have been highly effective in sustaining the rapid pace of improvement reported at the previous inspection. Consequently, teaching and achievement are good.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in developing skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are excellent. Teachers explain new learning clearly, and make sure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise new skills.
- Standards of behaviour and safety are outstanding. All members of staff know pupils' individual needs exceptionally well and always respond appropriately to them.
- The 'Syresham Values', devised by the pupils, set out clearly their hopes and expectations. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, reflected in these 'Values', is very helpful to their personal development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always set clear targets for pupils to achieve in lessons or use questions to increase challenges for pupils.
- Teachers direct pupils' learning too much and miss opportunities to allow pupils to investigate and think for themselves. Teaching assistants are not always used to full effective in supporting learning.
- The school's overall plan for pupils' learning does not include enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) or develop better understanding of other cultural traditions.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes and observed teaching and learning in eight lessons. He was accompanied by the headteacher during four of these.
- He looked at work in pupils' books, listened to a sample of pupils reading in Years 1, 2 and 6, and held discussions with pupils about their learning and experience of school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, members of the teaching staff, two of the teaching assistants, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- He looked at a wide range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, the local authority evaluation report, safeguarding checks and data about pupils' attainment and progress.
- The inspector took account of 14 responses to the online Parent View survey and held informal discussions with some parents during a coffee morning. He also considered the views of the seven members of staff who completed a questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mike Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Although the number of pupils on roll is steadily increasing, Syresham St James is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, and there is a small minority from Traveller families.
- More pupils join or leave the school during the course of each school year than in most schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from HM forces families) is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school hosts a local playgroup. This provision is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching from good to outstanding in order to accelerate pupils' progress at an even faster rate, by making sure that teachers:
 - always set clear and specific targets for pupils to achieve in lessons
 - routinely use questioning to increase the level of challenge for pupils
 - provide opportunities for pupils to think more for themselves and develop skills in planning how they are to tackle and set out their work
 - always deploy teaching assistants effectively.
- Improve planning of learning so that pupils:
 - have opportunities to use ICT as an integral part of day-to-day learning
 - broaden their understanding of the richness and diversity of cultural traditions within our society.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From starting points that are broadly in line with what is typical of four year olds at the start of the Reception Year, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. This good progress results from good teaching and the large amount of individual attention enjoyed by pupils because class sizes are very small. In Years 6, 5 and 3, the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is particularly good.
- Attainment in all year groups can fluctuate significantly from year to year. This is because variations in the performance of individual pupils within very small year groups have a disproportionate impact on results overall. This was the case, for example, in Year 6 in 2011 and 2012 and affects the overall performance data for the current Year 2. Nonetheless, standards are rising.
- The attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 is securely on course to be well above nationally expected levels in English and mathematics by the time these pupils leave at the end of the school year. Similarly, attainment in Year 5 is also well above what is usually found for this year group.
- The school's results in the 2012 check of pupils' skills in using phonics (the sounds made by letters) were above the national average. This is because phonics is taught well in small groups according to ability from an early age. The impact of this is seen in the good standards of reading throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils read fluently and with excellent comprehension, and use these skills to great effect to unlock learning in other subjects.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education. For example, most pupils in Years 5 and 6 are highly articulate, skilled in writing for a wide range of purposes and are adept at using essential skills in mathematics, such as secure knowledge of multiplication tables, to produce accurate calculations.
- The school is highly effective in closing the gaps between the attainment of transient pupils and their classmates and also in improving the rates of progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. It does this through careful assessment to ensure that teaching is tailored precisely to each individual's learning needs.
- In 2011-2012, there were no pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Currently, there are pupils eligible for this funding but too few for any comment to be made on their attainment.

The quality of teaching is good

- All of the parents who responded to the Ofsted online inspection questionnaire felt that their children are taught well. The pupils agree. Those interviewed cited either teachers or their lessons as their favourite features of the school. For instance, one pupil commented: 'I really enjoy my lessons. I love the challenges and the variety of work we do.'
- Teachers are consistently good at capturing and holding pupils' imaginations through well-planned activities and lively introductions to lessons. As a result, pupils sustain good levels of concentration for lengthy periods as they tackle their work.
- Teachers are good at using questions to check pupils' understanding of what they have to do,

and to help adjust their teaching if necessary. However, they often miss opportunities to increase the level of challenge during lessons through extra questions.

- Lessons are generally well organised and teachers manage their time effectively so that pupils have enough opportunity to consolidate new learning and develop the skills taught. Pupils' high standards of behaviour and their eagerness to learn contribute strongly to the strong sense of purpose in all classes.
- Lessons do not always provide opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning or to fully use initiative. This occurs when teachers' planning of learning focuses more on the activities to be tackled than the learning that should be developed and when the targets set for pupils to achieve in lessons lack precision.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is effective in helping pupils to improve. In Years 5 and 6, for example, pupils say that teachers' comments help them to understand clearly what they need to achieve next.
- In many instances, teaching assistants provide clear guidance and sensitive help for pupils when they adopt a teaching role. For example, in a guided-reading session for the most-able readers, a teaching assistant worked well in partnership with the teacher as, together, they helped pupils explore the way in which text stirs up emotions. However, in some instances, teaching assistants play little part in the introduction to lessons or merely supervise activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are attentive, concentrate well, eagerly answer teachers' questions, and take a keen interest in their work. As a result, lessons are productive.
- Pupils clearly know right from wrong and have a very strong sense of fair play. They consistently show courtesy and good manners towards one another and adults. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are infrequent. The school deals exceptionally well with these. Particularly noteworthy features of the 'red book' behaviour record are the written contributions made by those pupils who have misbehaved and the way in which this process ensures that they understand the consequences of their actions.
- Pupils are fully aware of different forms of bullying, but say that instances of any kind are extremely rare. For instance, pupils in Year 6 said that the last instance of bullying that they could recall occurred when they were in Year 3.
- At the start of each year, pupils discuss and agree a range of personal qualities that they value highly and would like to experience as regular features of life in school. These 'Syresham Values' are fully reflected in pupils' exemplary attitudes and conduct.
- The views of parents fully support the inspection judgement. All of those who responded to the questionnaire felt that children are well behaved. In discussions, parents listed a wide range of the school's attributes that they value greatly. These include the school's 'family' feel in which their children are well cared for, valued as individuals, and grow greatly in confidence as learners.
- Rates of attendance are consistently above the national average except for those pupils whose family circumstances lead to extended absences. Almost all pupils arrive punctually for school. In

the isolated cases where new arrivals have poor attendance, the school's actions have been highly effective in bringing about significant improvements.

The leadership and management are good

- Parents and carers greatly value the quality of education that the school provides for their children. All of those who completed the online survey are right to think that the school is well led and managed and would recommend this school to another parent.
- The headteacher continues to provide the steadfast focus on improving outcomes reported at the previous inspection. The headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body share a very clear vision for the school to which parents, carers, staff and governors fully subscribe. This vision is shared effectively with parents through, for example, the school website and termly meetings of the Parent Forum. It contributes considerably to pupils' achievement and the quality of education through the support for learning that parents offer at home.
- Systems for monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress over time are rigorous and provide secure evidence for leaders to use as the basis for their accurate evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness.
- The school's effective track record in addressing issues for improvement from the previous inspection, eliminating pockets of underachievement and accelerating pupils' progress, clearly demonstrates its good capacity for further improvement.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and balanced and is enriched with regular first-hand learning opportunities through visits and visitors, such as a recent experience of 'the living rainforest'. Further enrichment is provided through a good range of out-of-class clubs, and residential visits.
- In the Reception class, good leadership ensures that children benefit from a well-balanced curriculum. The activities provided for the children give them lots of exciting opportunities to investigate and learn important skills effectively through play. For example, after hunting for coins buried in sand, the children learned how to identify the value of the coins, and then sorted them according to their value. They thoroughly enjoyed 'shopping' with their coins by reading price tickets displayed on a range of items.
- Provision for ICT requires improvement because it is not used fully by pupils as a day-to-day tool for learning. The school has a number of computers within the library, but pupils' use of these has to be supervised and supported.
- While pupils have a good appreciation of their own cultural traditions, including those of the Traveller families, their understanding of people's way of life in other societies is less developed.
- The local authority has confidence in the secure way in which the school has improved and is now adjusting the support it provides from termly monitoring to a 'light-touch' model.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is exceptionally well led. The Chair of the Governing Body is extremely well informed and plays a strong role in helping drive improvements. Under his leadership, the governing body effectively monitors the school's effectiveness and provides clear challenge in holding the headteacher and all teaching staff to account for school performance. Governors understand the process for managing the performance of staff and the way in which teachers'

pay is aligned through this process. They have a good understanding of data about pupils' progress. Safeguarding requirements are securely in place and are rigorously maintained. Governors have a clear understanding of the way in which pupil premium funding is used and its impact on pupils' achievement.

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	121993
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	400114

This inspection 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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Allison
Headteacher	Katherine Clough
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2011
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