

Rothersthorpe Church of England Primary School

Church Street, Rothersthorpe, Northampton, NN7 3HS

Inspection dates 20–21 November 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils typically make good progress because teaching is effective.
- Pupils’ sporting achievements are remarkable for a school of this size and reflect excellent coaching skills.
- Children in the Reception class develop skills quickly because of good teaching and are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- All staff teach phonics (linking letters and sounds) well. Developing reading skills has a high profile and pupils read well as a result.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils feel safe and well looked after by staff.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff identify the right priorities for improvement by regularly checking on teaching and pupils’ progress.
- Parents and carers are supportive and are involved regularly in reading and other activities.
- Governors know how well the staff and pupils are performing through their regular visits.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils’ progress in writing is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics in most year groups.
- Teachers do not make full use of modern technology to encourage pupils to write and improve aspects such as spelling.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons taught by five teachers. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the pupil council, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, and teachers responsible for different aspects such as the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority about the support and advice it gives to the school.
- There were 26 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 inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, and records of governing body meetings, checks on teaching and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils come from a wide rural area and some travel from the outskirts of Northampton.
- Very few pupils are from a minority ethnic background, and none of these pupils speak English as an additional language.
- There are mixed age groups in three classes. The Reception-age children are in a class of their own.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is well below average. In this school, it mostly applies to pupils who are 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 average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher started in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing in order to raise standards to at least the levels in reading and mathematics by:
 - creating more interesting and engaging activities, using modern technology, to inspire pupils to write
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to practise their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills when they are writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the Reception class varies from child to child but is broadly typical overall. Despite attending different nursery settings, some have reading, writing and mathematics skills that are lower than usual. Relationships and routines develop quickly because of supportive staff and the small number of children. Good teaching results in children making good progress in all areas of learning. They are well prepared for the next phase of their learning when they enter Year 1.
- Children make good progress in learning phonics (the sounds that individual and groups of letters make). Most demonstrate a good knowledge of individual and groups of letters, writing them correctly in a tray of sugar with a paint brush or spelling simple words.
- The good start children make to school is due to effective planning for indoor and outdoor activities. They enjoy creating shapes using shaving foam and hunting for letters outdoors. Playing board games with adults is both enjoyable and educational as they count sheep or match shapes. All use modern technology confidently to listen to nursery rhymes and enjoy making up their own version such as 'Twinkle twinkle little cat, would you like a great big hat'.
- School data show that almost all pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is because teaching is consistently good. Typically, progress is good for each year group and until 2012, there was an upward trend in attainment, which was significantly above national figures. A smaller than usual year group with a higher than usual proportion of less-able pupils then led to a dip in overall results for Year 6. However, this year pupils are clearly again on track to reach higher standards and are making good progress throughout – even in writing, where standards are lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Guided reading and phonic sessions, plus parental support for home reading or weekly reading time with their children in school, mean that reading skills are particularly strong. Some pupils are making exceptional progress in reading.
- Most tasks in mathematics are challenging for different ability levels. Pupils in Year 5 and 6, for example, responded well to their teacher's high expectations and were able to calculate the perimeter of complex shapes. A third of the pupils are on track to achieve standards expected for pupils two years older.
- Teachers are beginning to provide more frequent exercises to improve grammar, spelling and punctuation and these are helping to accelerate progress in writing. However, few opportunities were seen in lessons for pupils to use modern technology to encourage or support writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs usually make rapid progress in mathematics and English. They benefit from the expertise of skilled teaching assistants who work closely with individuals or small groups in lessons.
- The school uses the additional pupil premium funding well to provide individual help for the very small number of pupils known to be eligible, and school records show that this helps to improve their attainment in English and mathematics. Virtually all make the same good progress as their classmates.
- Pupils' sporting achievements are exceptional. Coaching is provided during the school day or in

after-school clubs and there is a high participation rate amongst pupils. The expertise of coaches and pupils' enthusiasm have led to success in area competitions and their tag rugby team reaching the national final.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. As a result, most pupils make good progress in lessons.
- In the Reception class, good routines for learning are quickly established. Children benefit from the close support of adults as they work indoors or outside on an interesting range of well-planned activities. Phonics are taught effectively, ensuring children are prepared well to further develop reading and writing skills when they move into Year 1.
- Teachers accurately assess pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics on a termly basis, giving them a clear picture of each pupil's progress. Recent assessments have highlighted less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well. There is a quiet, calm atmosphere for learning in lessons. Any rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour are handled immediately and effectively by staff.
- There are few disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the small year groups. Teachers know them well and are fully aware of their particular needs, and so plan tasks that are relevant to their ability level. Well-trained teaching assistants support these pupils' learning effectively in lessons.
- More-able pupils invariably do well in all subjects. Teachers plan appropriately challenging tasks for them and they often work independently, spurred on by positive attitudes and a determination to complete their work to a high standard. In mathematics, teachers plan challenging, problem-solving tasks to engage and interest pupils. This was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection, and has been tackled well.
- Some teachers are tackling weaker grammar, punctuation and spelling skills creatively. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson, learning was outstanding when pupils used computers and guidance provided by the teacher to edit one another's work. However, there were few other examples of pupils making use of computers to improve their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons and this leads to a quiet industrious atmosphere. Even when lesson introductions are occasionally long and some lose concentration, they still sit quietly and do not disrupt others.
- Behaviour is good around school. Pupils are polite and show respect to adults and one another. School records show that there have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that 'everyone is welcoming'. Those who spoke to the inspector said that school is fun and that they are well looked after by staff.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They are clear about internet

safety and know about cyber bullying. School records show that incidents of bullying or racist behaviour are extremely rare.

- Attendance is consistently above average, showing how much pupils enjoy coming to school. There is hardly any persistent absence.
- All the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire had positive views about the school. Many strongly agreed with almost every question and all said that they would recommend the school to others. Those spoken with during the inspection were equally positive about the school. 'If I won the Lottery, I would still send them to this school' was a typical view.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher's energy and enthusiasm has inspired staff to focus fully on improving the school. All are working effectively as a team and, having identified where improvements can be made, are working together to eliminate them. Improving writing is a current priority.
- The weakness over tracking individual pupils' progress, highlighted in the previous report, has been corrected. There is a well-established system for collecting and analysing pupils' progress, making it easy for staff to identify and support any individuals or group who are not doing as well as expected.
- The experience and expertise demonstrated by the leader responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures children have a good start to school in the Reception class. The school makes good use of outside specialists to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs from entry and right through the school.
- National standards are used effectively to judge the quality of teaching, so accurate judgements are made on how well teachers are doing their jobs. These assessments are linked to teachers' pay. The headteacher and staff check teaching in termly lesson observations. These checks have succeeded in ensuring that teaching in all lessons is at least good and occasionally outstanding. Making more use of computers to promote writing skills has already been identified by the school as an area for improvement.
- The curriculum is well planned and learning opportunities beyond the normal timetable, such as the gardening and food technology clubs and residential visits, add to pupils' enjoyment of school. Learning French, topics about ancient civilizations and the study of different faiths give pupils a good understanding of cultures different to their own and contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All are keen to raise funds for the disaster in the Philippines at their Christmas fundraising event.
- The additional funding allocated to increase sporting opportunities is being used effectively to enhance the quality and breadth of physical education and sports provision. It has significantly increased participation by enabling coaches with considerable talent and expertise to teach pupils. Currently, school teams are area champions in netball, tag rugby and football.
- All parents and carers hold positive views about the school. They rightly endorse that staff treat every pupil equally, their children are safe and looked after well, and that discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils are well prepared for life in Britain and a global society.
- The local authority has supported the school effectively over time, helping to make teaching consistently good. Recently, it supported governors in the appointment of the new headteacher.

Governors have benefited from regular training events, developing their skills and expertise. Currently, the local authority is introducing a system of mutual support between schools and teachers in order to share good practice. The new headteacher is paired with a more experienced headteacher of another school, for example.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are achieving in comparison with others nationally. Governors have the knowledge and confidence to hold the school to account for the performance of different groups of pupils, increasing their effectiveness. The governing body is beginning to focus much more on helping the school to check how well it is tackling its identified priorities for improvement. The performance of the headteacher and other teachers is reviewed each year to determine pay increases. All current national requirements relating to employment and safeguarding are met. Governors carefully check the impact of the pupil premium and the funds allocated to provide additional sporting opportunities on the achievement and behaviour of pupils.

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	122014
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	429587

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	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Sturt
Headteacher	Nicola Fountain
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2009
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