

Irchester Community Primary School

School Lane, Irchester, Wellingborough, NN29 7AZ

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are now making good progress across the school, reaching standards of attainment that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good, and an increasing amount is outstanding.
- Pupils are happy and proud of their school. They behave well and most have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel very safe in school.
- Pupils do well because the school takes good care of them as individuals, including those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
- Lab 13, the school's science area, and the questioning approach to learning, develop scientific and investigation skills well.
- Staff, parents and carers and pupils share a strong belief in the values and attitudes promoted by the school.
- The school provides pupils with an interesting range of subjects, topics and experiences which contribute very strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher's effective leadership since the previous inspection has meant that standards and teaching have continued to improve.
- The headteacher is strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, subject and phase leaders and a knowledgeable and challenging governing body.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always share the ideas of the most effective teaching with each other.
- Within the overall picture of good achievement, there are some variations between year groups, particularly in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons involving 13 teachers. Two of the lessons were observed jointly

with school leaders.

- The inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils' work. They heard groups of pupils reading and spoke with others about behaviour and safety arrangements at the school.
- Account was taken of the 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views expressed by those parents and carers who spoke with the inspectors at the start of the school day, or wrote letters. The inspectors also considered 13 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicola Koncarevic

Additional Inspector

Michael Onyon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is below average, although it has risen since the previous inspection.
- The percentage of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. A below-average proportion is supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- At around one pupil in six, the proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The governing body manages a daily before- and after-school club.
- The school has a specialist science area, Lab 13, which is run by a committee of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils and overseen by a scientist in residence. The school has been awarded the primary science quality mark.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils in all year groups make rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics by sharing the features of effective teaching and learning already in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start at the school with skills and knowledge slightly below those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication, and personal and social skills. They are well taught through stimulating activities that develop their academic and personal skills, and they make good progress that helps to prepare them for Year 1.
- In the Year 6 national tests in 2013, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in mathematics was above average, and an increasing number of pupils attained the higher Levels 5 and 6. Rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics this year has resulted in improved standards in all classes. More-able pupils make good progress because the school has arranged additional work in small groups to encourage and to challenge them.
- The work seen in pupils' books, in lessons and the school's own progress information show that an increasing number of pupils in most year groups, including those who are most able and those from minority ethnic groups, are making good progress to reach and exceed the levels expected for their age. Any gaps in attainment between groups are closing rapidly.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen since the previous inspection. They were average in the 2013 tests.
- Within the overall picture of good achievement, there are some variations between year groups, particularly in mathematics. Progress in writing and reading is more rapid than in mathematics because a few pupils lack confidence with their basic number and calculation skills. The school has introduced a range of support sessions which has started to improve pupils' skills so that they are able to complete more demanding mathematical tasks.
- The school teaches phonics (the sounds that letters make) well. Results in the Year 1 phonic screening check in 2012 and 2013 were above national levels.
- Pupils have many opportunities to read for a variety of purposes, and they enjoy reading a wide range of books. Attainment in reading was average in Year 6 and Year 2 in the 2013 national tests and has improved further this year in all classes. Volunteers from the local community regularly come into school to support individual readers and to assist in the library.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress due to well-planned one-to-one and group sessions.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional teaching assistants and nurturing activities. In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium was similar to that of their classmates in reading and mathematics; eligible pupils were the equivalent of around six months ahead of their classmates in writing. Most eligible pupils currently in the school are making similar progress to their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers plan imaginative activities that excite and motivate pupils to succeed.

- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium are supported effectively. Additional support for small groups of pupils, before and during the school day, has helped to accelerate progress for all these groups of pupils, because they receive good individual attention.
- Teachers plan tasks that rapidly build on previous work and what the pupils are already able to do. Teachers make sure that all pupils know what they should be learning so that they can check how successful they have been. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils effectively, securing good understanding. This was seen in a Year 5 class, where pupils wrote scientific stories. The activity meant that pupils had excellent opportunities to discuss and share their ideas prompted by the teacher's questions and to practise their vocabulary with each other before writing.
- Writing, reading and, increasingly, mathematics are taught effectively. Pupils make use of vibrant displays and examples of work on walls, which they refer to when working in class. Teachers encourage pupils to write in many different contexts, and this develops their interests and stamina for writing. For example, in a Year 3 history session, discussions between the teacher and the pupils enabled all pupils to successfully write poems linked to the history topic.
- The checking of pupils' work, both in lessons and in books, is thorough. There has been a substantial improvement in marking. Comments in marking clearly identify what pupils have done well and what they should do next to improve their work. Pupils know what they have to achieve to move their learning forward, and they are given time at the start of the school day to correct or improve their work.
- Lab 13 provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their scientific and questioning skills. A focus for Lab 13 work this term has been to hatch chicks and to record their growth. During the inspection, Reception children were discussing how the chicks had changed since hatching, prompted well by the scientist in residence.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, all staff provide a stimulating and caring setting, where children are confident learners and make good progress. Adults step in at appropriate points to extend children's learning and to regularly assess and record their progress. Good links with pre-school settings allow children to move seamlessly into full-time schooling.
- The role of teaching assistants has developed rapidly since the previous inspection. Well-managed training has ensured that they are actively involved and effective in supporting individuals or small groups of pupils who need more specific support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is typically good in lessons and often exemplary around the school. School records confirm that pupils' behaviour is good on a daily basis and over time.
- There is a strong emphasis on teamwork in the school. Pupils have a great pride in their school and they respond well to merit points and rewards in assemblies.
- Pupils show enjoyment and have a great desire to learn, which contributes greatly to their good and better achievement. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Parents and carers have great confidence in the care that the school provides, and pupils agree that they feel happy and safe in school. A parent said that all staff 'go the extra mile' to support

the children.

- Pupils play an active role in ensuring a happy, well-organised school. They feel that their views are listened to. Digital leaders, Lab 13 committee members, house captains, anti-bullying ambassadors and monitors make a strong contribution to the running of the school. These opportunities have an extremely positive impact on pupils' personal development.
- Virtually all parents and carers who responded to Parent View or who spoke to inspectors described behaviour as good. They also commented on how many opportunities their children had both in and out of school for visits, how well their children are supported and the high-quality relationships between children and staff.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All safeguarding requirements are met.
- Pupils learn how to keep safe; for example, when using the internet. Discussions with pupils showed they understand about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They said that there is no bullying in school, 'Although we do fall out with each other sometimes'. These incidents are often solved with the support of well-trained anti-bullying ambassadors.
- Attendance has improved rapidly this year and is now at the national average, which reflects the effective work of school leaders, particularly the learning mentor, in tackling absence, and the support they provide for individual pupils and their families.
- Strong links with health and social care professionals, together with staff who know their pupils well, help to give sensitive support for pupils whose home circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable.
- Pupils and parents greatly appreciate the well-run breakfast club, which provides a calm and sociable start to the school day, and the large number of after-school clubs.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, has created a highly effective leadership team which has brought about rapid improvements in pupils' achievements and quality of teaching.
- Leaders' accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, combined with the good record of improvement, shows that they have a strong capacity to improve the school further. The headteacher has managed developments and staff changes well to create a common sense of purpose. Staff questionnaires show that morale is high.
- Subject and phase leaders make a strong contribution to improving teaching and learning. Within their areas of responsibility, they check the quality of teaching, pupils' work in books, analyse pupil progress data and support colleagues. Paired teaching and observations of lessons have been effective in raising expectations. As a result, teaching has improved rapidly and is now securely good. However, this practice of coaching and paired observations of lessons has not yet been used to develop more outstanding teaching.
- The performance of teachers is managed well. Decisions about the salary that each teacher receives are securely based on the progress made by their pupils. Teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils are making through regular meetings with the headteacher and

other leaders. The performance of every pupil is tracked, and any pupil with additional learning needs is supported effectively, so that the vast majority of pupils achieve well.

- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. There are no recorded incidents of harassment.
- A rich and creative range of topics and subjects is promoting a love of learning which is often focused by pupils' questions and makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The learning is enriched further by Lab 13, residential visits, visits closer to home, visitors and opportunities to develop artistic, musical and sporting skills, and to learn a foreign language. Increasing involvement with the children's university, which is a national project to extend pupils' learning opportunities out of school, adds further enhancement and accreditation to the pupils' education.
- The additional primary sports funding is used to extend participation in after-school clubs, to take part in inter-school competitions, for teacher training, and to increase swimming lessons. The deputy headteacher has plans to monitor the impact of the funding.
- The headteacher understands the needs of the local community and has established links which parents, pupils and staff welcome and value. Partnerships with parents are developed effectively and start with a well-managed introduction to the Reception classes and the many workshops that introduce them to the school's teaching methods and homework activities. The fact that leaders are at the gates every morning is much appreciated by parents.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the school, which has helped leaders to raise standards, to make links with other schools and to ensure that the school's self-evaluation is accurate. The school works effectively with other schools in the local area to share teacher training, to check the accuracy of assessments and to develop new curriculum opportunities in science and computing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school's strengths and what it needs to do to keep improving, including in the areas of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching. It provides effective support and challenge. The governing body knows the key priorities for improving the school and how these can be met. Governors have a good understanding of the school, including the management of teachers' performance and the implementation of the national *Teachers' Standards* and how they affect salary progression. Governors make sure that they are kept up to date with training to improve their effectiveness, including holding the headteacher to account. The range of expertise within the governing body enables close monitoring of, for example, the financial position of the school. They check spending carefully and are aware of how the school uses the pupil premium to improve 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	133601
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	431610

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Clements
Headteacher	Julia Alison
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2012
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