

Irby Primary School

Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral CH61 4UR

Inspection dates 10–11 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Supported by continually learning and highly skilled staff, the headteacher is successful in establishing a calm, friendly school with a family feel. The culture established by the headteacher is one of ambition for every pupil.
- Staff are constantly seeking to refine what they do to make the school even better. Parents, staff and pupils rate the school highly.
- The school has improved since the last inspection. Governors, and leaders at all levels, have taken action to improve the quality of teaching. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has increased and outcomes, particularly for the youngest children, are much higher than previously.
- Teaching is outstanding across most subjects. As a result, pupils are musical, artistically creative and develop linguistically in three languages. They have a good understanding of the world through their geography work and develop a thorough understanding of different cultures. Almost every pupil has secure computing skills and a good understanding of events and people in history.
- Pupils' science work does not always show a high level of experimentation or investigation skills. Pupils do not always use more complex scientific vocabulary. Their high-quality skills in writing and mathematics are not always reflected in their science work.
- Adults' questioning in lessons is a strength. Highly effective teaching assistants and highly trained teachers check pupils' skills and knowledge throughout lessons. They ask searching questions that develop pupils' thinking and understanding.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. All groups, including the disadvantaged, the most able and those with special educational needs make sustained progress and attain highly.
- Provision for the youngest children is outstanding. In Reception, children quickly gain in confidence and independence. They make rapid progress and are very well prepared to start school in Year 1.
- Pupils regulate their own and others' behaviour and attitudes. Bullying incidents are rare. Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning are key factors in their excellent progress.
- Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They feel very safe and they develop into mature, confident, articulate young people who make a strong contribution to their community. Attendance is high.
- Senior and middle leaders check frequently on the work of the school and lead from the front in improving teaching. Governors are highly knowledgeable and committed and make a very good contribution to school improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In science, improve pupils' investigative skills, by:
 - making sure that pupils use their mathematical knowledge and skills to interpret a wider range of scientific data and record their findings in more complex ways
 - ensuring that pupils apply their writing skills to explain scientific patterns and results using correct technical vocabulary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- As one parent said to an inspector, reflecting the views of many, the school is 'welcoming, loving and very supportive'. The headteacher and senior leaders have created an ethos in which all staff are ambitious for their pupils and have high expectations. Staff actively search out and find each child's talent whether it be in an academic subject or linked to personal development such as leadership, performance or an ability to solve problems. The headteacher provides excellent and highly effective leadership. She is highly visible in all classes around the school and has the confidence of parents, staff, local authority and pupils.
- Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to be members of the school and agreed that training is used to encourage and support them. Leaders do what they can to have a motivated and respected staff team and create a climate in which staff are trusted to take risks and innovate.
- The school is a centre of learning for staff and pupils. All staff are very well trained. All adults continually reflect, evaluate, analyse and try to improve each other's practice. Senior leaders have not rested and have made improvements since the previous inspection. Pupils' reading levels in Reception and Year 1 have increased. Across the school, pupils have a much higher level of skill in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Outcomes for the youngest children have increased significantly. The issues from the previous inspection, that is, assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics and assessment during lessons, have been turned from relative weaknesses into strengths.
- The headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders all frequently check on the effectiveness of the school's work. They visit lessons for short and longer periods, evaluate pupils' work, consult pupils and parents, analyse assessment information and consult external agencies and visitors including the local authority. Importantly, they then act on the findings to give individual and group feedback to teachers and to follow up with training or with a change in school procedures.
- The highly effective and efficient business manager operates a tight ship. Her ability to organise key aspects of the school frees up the headteacher and staff to work with pupils. Some parents that spoke with inspectors praised the communication from the school and the efficiency of the school office. The support team in the office, as well as building managers and catering staff, all pull together to maintain and improve the quality of the school.
- There are no egos at Irby. All teachers who lead subjects are highly trained, open, honest and are keen to learn from, and help, each other to improve their teaching. They have an in-depth knowledge of their subjects and of the pupils' skills and understanding. The support for newly qualified teachers is comprehensive and allows them to quickly improve their practice.
- There is a rich, varied curriculum which has been thoughtfully planned and designed to have a significantly positive impact on pupils' outcomes. The headteacher has an impressive drive to make sure that all pupils have the chance to succeed and excel in something. There are a wealth of clubs, trips and out-of-school activities including Minecraft, choir, guitar, golf, badminton, netball, art and football. Each one has been carefully chosen to meet the needs and interests of pupils but also to identify if children can shine and have a talent in that area.
- Pupils learn three languages and learn about the culture of those countries. Pupils, in one of the groups that spoke with inspectors, asked each other questions in French and other pupils in the same group replied with very good pronunciation in Spanish. As a result, pupils are competent linguists.
- British values permeate the curriculum and support pupils in developing a good understanding of modern Britain. Pupils learn to respect others and learn about democracy. For example, one group of pupils could outline the difference between a prime minister and the Queen and talked about the different interpretation of democracy in Syria. The curriculum is enhanced by using role models of different ethnicities, faiths, genders, and ages to encourage pupils to respect people from different backgrounds. Consequently pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- The range of sports on offer has been enhanced by the use of the sports premium. This is a fund of money from the government to increase the level and range of competitive sport. The school provides extra tuition in a number of sports including tennis, rugby, bicycle skills, aerobics, cricket, maypole dancing, orienteering and parachute games. The result is an increase in participation in sport. A governor spoke about a large increase in pupils taking up a place at the local cricket club because of being inspired by the school.
- There has been good impact from the local authority's support. The pack of assessment information, which is sent to the school annually before the national data are published, is effective in confirming to leaders and governors the next priorities for improvement. The frequent audits and visits by local authority staff

regarding finance, governance, health and safety and outcomes have meant that the senior leaders and governors are up to date in the latest legislation and good practice. The authority has enabled staff to be trained in child protection and in how to prevent radicalisation. These have been effective. The local authority has helped the school to refine and improve its teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils' work and assessments show increasingly good use of punctuation and correct grammar.

■ **The governance of the school**

- The governing body is ambitious and has worked with the headteacher and senior leaders to set a culture in which every pupil is able to shine and achieve their best. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are encouraged to have ambitious dreams and goals.
- Regular attendance at meetings and events at the school represents a high level of commitment.
- The governing body's leadership helps to shape the ethos and culture of the school and informs the priorities for improvement.
- Governors have a high level of knowledge about the school which is based on a deep understanding of assessment information, the quality of teaching and the use of resources including finances. Governors meet frequently with subject leaders, speak with parents and pupils and look at data to have a first-hand oversight over the quality and impact of the curriculum on outcomes for pupils.
- Governors have a good understanding of their statutory duties. They know how the pupil premium is spent and its impact on pupils from different starting points. The fund is used wisely and as a result, disadvantaged pupils make much higher rates of progress than the national average for this group of pupils. The system to check on the impact of the sports premium is yet to be as thorough.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils, staff and parents all agree that Irby is safe and secure. The business manager has a highly efficient and robust system in place to verify that staff are able to work with children and for checking suitability to work in a school. Protecting children is high profile. Visitors and staff are reminded frequently through posters and signs around the school, through frequently updated training and through regular briefings. As the headteacher put it, 'We expect the big people to look after the little people and for everyone to look after each other.' These values permeate what the school does. Case studies show that the school works well with families and with external agencies. Parents, and therefore pupils, benefit from the school's vigilance and following up of initial concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- It is the accumulation of whole-class, individual and small-group teaching that is effective at this school. The different styles and techniques blend well to suit pupils' different styles of learning. In some lessons pupils work as a group, in others they solve open-ended investigations, in others they complete worksheets adding a key word or a phrase. Key to the success, however, are the high expectations that staff have of pupils. As one parent told an inspector, 'The school pushes and challenges, I see it in practice'. Activities every morning are targeted to develop pupils' investigation skills or to practice aspects in which they are weaker. One pupil told an inspector, 'I love these sessions because it helps me to practise things I find hard'.
- Most staff have very good subject knowledge which allows them to ask questions that challenge pupils to think more deeply. Teachers monitor the learning of all pupils and quickly give feedback, correct errors or ask further questions to help pupils to deepen their understanding. Teaching in modern foreign languages is very high quality, in part because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge and ability to explain, demonstrate and make lessons enjoyable.
- Teaching in science is good. However, the level of investigative skills is not as high as it could be. Older pupils, for example, are not using the terms 'variable', 'hypothesis' and 'conclusion'. Some work showed simplistic scientific vocabulary. Some of the science worksheets hinder pupils' ability to extend and apply their writing skills. Similarly, many science books had only simple mathematical charts and data while in their mathematics books the same pupils could interpret and use a more complex range of graphs and charts.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or are disabled are taught very well. They are challenged to achieve high outcomes for their age. In one group, Year 5 pupils used rhetorical questions with confidence and ease in a discussion about an Iron-Age round house. One pupil explained that rhetorical questions are 'a question when you don't even want the answer'. The pupil then told the inspector, 'I'm going to tweak my work to improve it. I'm hopeful the final draft will be an improvement on the work on my whiteboard.' This focus on continuous improvement and striving to get better pervades each of the classes.
- Teaching assistants are well-trained and effective. They support all groups of pupils in and outside lessons

and have a significant impact on the learning of all groups of pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' safety is a high priority at Irby. As one pupil said to an inspector, 'We all help each other, especially if we need First Aid.' Parents and staff agree that there are effective systems in place to keep pupils safe. Pupils themselves agreed that they feel safe at all times, yet not overly restricted. The children in the Reception, for example, in the forest area, are allowed to climb, balance on ropes, jump into and out of tyres and explore around the forest tracks. The youngest children through to the oldest learn to use resources and equipment safely.
- Pupils have a thorough understanding about how to stay safe online, for example taking care not to give away or post information which could be used by other people. The school has intervened very effectively on the rare occasion when online safety is compromised. School staff are highly vigilant.
- School records show that bullying is rare. This view is supported by pupils and there are very few incidents of racism and pupils confirmed that anyone from another country, faith or ethnicity would be welcomed at this school and would feel at home. There are very few incidents of homophobia, such as using the term 'gay' in a derogatory way. Pupils confirmed that homophobia was not an issue at the school because everyone should feel safe and welcomed. There are a few but rare instances of name calling based on someone's appearance. There is a good system for following up any instances to make sure they do not re-occur.
- Pupils make a very good contribution to their local community through, among other things, fundraising for charities and good causes. There is an excellent system of older pupils helping to run aspects of the school. Older pupils support the youngest children when they first enter Reception, at break and assembly times and sometimes with their work. They gauge carefully when to help and when not to help. As one older pupil said 'My buddy has gone off to play because he has his own friends now.' Year 5 pupils spend some 'work experience' time in the pre-school.
- There is an active and challenging school council. The council challenge governors to explain the impact of the governing body in the previous year. Pupils, over time, increasingly become self-confident and aware of themselves but also of others around the world from different backgrounds.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Parents, pupils and staff all agree that behaviour is well managed by the school.
- Attendance is well above average for all groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs. The school has used its support systems very well to tackle and improve any signs of increasing absence.
- Around school, pupils put things away sensibly in the corridor, walk sensibly and quietly and treat their school's resources with respect. They show very good manners and are extremely polite. They self-regulate their own and others' behaviour. One older pupil noticed, for example, a younger pupil slightly distracted in the Remembrance assembly. Unprompted and without fuss, he quietly crawled over to correct the pupil's behaviour.
- At break and lunchtimes, pupils play traditional games that have been taught to them, for example, 'Dusty Bluebells'. Boys, girls, older pupils, younger pupils and pupils from different ethnicities mix well and play harmoniously. Pupils are engaged and busy at breaktimes and are very clear about the rules.
- The headteacher tracks and analyses playground incidents and behaviour in depth to see if there are any patterns. She uses the analysis to continually tweak what the school does. This approach, according to the records, has led to a reduction in behavioural incidents over time.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is a strength. They are keen, concentrate and persevere in their activities, show an eagerness for learning and rarely get distracted from their activities. As a result, they become very successful learners. In part, this is because the curriculum and activities are lively and exciting.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils are musical and are artistically creative. They learn three languages including Chinese and develop linguistically in two. They all learn to play a musical instrument, read musical notation and those with an interest or prowess are encouraged to continue their musical development to a high level. The art and design and technology work around the school is of high quality. From the outset, pupils are taught techniques of using different media. In one display, pupils created a silhouette of Stonehenge, as part of history week, over a background of skilfully painted colour tones. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop an understanding of basic Mandarin Chinese. By the end of Year 6 pupils have made good, sustained progress to be able to speak, listen to, write and read in French and in Spanish.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of the world through their geography work. In the playground, a group of pupils were talking about the area around the village in greater Wirral while referring to a painted map on the wall. Pupils use maps frequently in their work and their work shows some thoughtful reflections about climate change and about different cultures.
- Almost every pupil has secure computing skills and a good understanding of events and people in history. In one lesson, pupils in Year 4 skilfully used tablet computers to research information about ancient Egypt to help find information about different Egyptian artefacts. Pupils use timelines well to place events and people in chronological order.
- Pupils develop an ability to read words by splitting them into sounds using their knowledge of phonics (phonics are the sounds that letters represent). Almost every pupil is able to use phonics at the expected level by the end of Year 1. There is no difference between boys and girls, between summer- and autumn-born pupils or between pupils who are and who are not disadvantaged. Pupils enjoy reading and they can refer to the books of an appropriate range of authors.
- From their starting points, pupils make rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Almost every pupil is ready by the end of Year 6 for secondary school. Almost every pupil, including boys, pupils with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged, reach the expected level by the end of Year 6 – which is much better than other schools nationally. In grammar, punctuation and spelling in 2015 nearly three quarters of pupils attained the higher Level 5. This figure is almost 20% higher than other schools nationally.
- The most-able pupils do well at Irby. They are challenged through ambitious targets and attain high standards by the end of Year 6, particularly in reading and mathematics. All pupils who are looked after by the local authority achieve well across the full range of subjects. Pupils who are disadvantaged make at least expected progress and a much higher proportion than the national average make more than expected progress, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- Other outcomes are also very strong. Pupils develop into articulate, creative and innovative young people fully prepared for the next stage in their education.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- When children transfer into Reception they make rapid progress. The youngest children start first and become used to the staff, systems, routines, resources and the school's expectations. As the older children join their classmates over the next few days and weeks, the youngest children gain greatly in confidence by showing them around the area and acting as monitors. They explain to newcomers how the systems work. By the end of Reception, the gaps in development between the summer- and autumn-born children have closed considerably.
- Parents are involved with their children's learning from the outset. High-quality home activities build on what the children are doing in class, are enjoyable, imaginative and practical. In one example in mathematics, with the help of parents, children had to find four objects, weigh them, order them from lightest to heaviest and then record their answers in their home books. In another, they practised counting forwards and backwards from zero with their parents, and in another they drew a map of their route to school identifying and labelling key buildings and geographical features on their route. Parents are surveyed each year about their experience of the Reception and transition. The comments are used by the leaders as a way of continually improving what they do.
- Children make rapid progress over the year particularly in their reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Reception, outcomes are higher than the national average. Over the last four years, children's

attainment has risen. Some of this is down to improved teaching. The mix of one-to-one tuition in mathematics and reading, with small-group, and whole-class teaching, plus the chance to work independently on well-designed activities, for this school, generates high outcomes. Children leave ready for Year 1 being able to read and write accurate sentences, but also with high levels of concentration, confidence, independence and an ability to solve problems and be creative. There is almost no difference between boys and girls or between the disadvantaged and others nationally. The most-able children are challenged and exceed expectations by the end of Reception.

- In lessons, adults pose high-quality questions that develop children's thinking and understanding. The outdoor area is bare. However, it is used very creatively by adults depending on what is being learnt in class. On one occasion, for example, it was turned into an outdoor stable with a rocking horse inside to stimulate children to think about animal care and welfare. The outdoor area is supplemented by trips to the tree area at the back of the school, in which children learn how to make dens and learn about animals and their habitats.
- The leader of the early years provides highly effective leadership. She is continually looking to improve provision. Plans for improvement are based on a deep analysis of assessment information, of children's work and outcomes, parents and children's views, and on the views of external visitors and moderators. She has a simple yet well-designed system to track children's progress but, importantly, to identify and challenge any child in danger of falling behind.
- The leader has high expectations of children, which is key to making sure that they attain the highest possible levels. These expectations extend to children's behaviour. The children behaved very well during the observation of the Remembrance minutes' silence. They sorted, put on and carried their own wellies to avoid making a mess on the carpet on the way to the forest area. They are keen and eager to learn. Children act safely in the classroom and in the forest area, while still having the confidence to explore and try out new things.

School details

Unique reference number	105025
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10001503

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Barley
Headteacher	Mrs A Palmer
Telephone number	0151 648 2944
Website	http://www.irbyprimary.com/
Email address	schooloffice@irby.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2012

Information about this school

- Irby has slightly fewer pupils than in the averaged-sized primary school. Most of its pupils are of White British heritage and there is a relatively high proportion of boys.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported by a fund of money provided by the government called the pupil premium. It is funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority or are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported by this fund is approximately half the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is approximately half the national average.
- The proportion of pupils starting or leaving Irby part-way through their education is similar to the national average.
- In the last three years the school has met the government's floor standards (the minimum that the government expects of pupils' attainment and progress.)
- The headteacher is a school improvement associate for another school in the Wirral.
- There is an on-site pre-school which is privately run and subject to a separate Ofsted report.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school in a number of subjects including history, Spanish, art, English and mathematics. They also observed a Remembrance assembly and looked through a range of pupils' work, including pupils' science work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils at break and lunchtimes and spoke with three groups of pupils. They also took pupils' views into account from the school's own surveys.
- Inspectors considered the views of 43 parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. In addition, they spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of staff including senior and middle leaders (these are teachers who lead subjects or aspects of the school such as special educational needs), lunchtime staff, teaching assistants and office staff. They also took into account the views of 14 staff who completed the online staff survey.
- Inspectors met with a representative of the local authority, with six members of the governing body, and with an independent family support worker.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead Inspector

Maggie Parker

Pamela Potter

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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