Inspection of a school judged Good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Irthlingborough Junior School

College Street, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN9 5TX

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 February 2025

Outcome

Irthlingborough Junior School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Nicholas Garley. This school is part of the Learning For Life Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Joanne Sanchez-Thompson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter French.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a friendly and caring place where pupils feel supported by staff. Pupils make friends easily. They know who to turn to if they have worries. Pupils enjoy their learning. They listen in class, do as they are asked and walk sensibly around the school site. On the rare occasions that inappropriate behaviour occurs, teachers deal with it swiftly.

The school has high expectations of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Typically, pupils achieve in line with the national average by the end of Year 6.

The personal development programme enables pupils to experience many new opportunities within and beyond Irthlingborough. For example, in Year 3, pupils visit the seaside, and in Year 5, pupils learn to ride a bicycle safely. In Year 6, pupils develop team-building skills on the Isle of Wight and travel to London to watch a show in the West End.

Pupils are supported to develop their talents and interests successfully. Clubs include crocheting, ballroom and Latin dancing and football. Pupils also take on responsibilities, such as becoming elected school councillors, digital leaders and well-being ambassadors.

The school organises daily opportunities for pupils to learn from each other, reflect and to boost their mental health. For example, pupils take part in guided meditation during 'Mindfulness Monday' and debate moral questions during 'Philosophy Friday'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school provides a curriculum that matches the ambition of the national curriculum. Since the previous inspection, the school has identified and sequenced the key knowledge that pupils should know and remember across all subjects, with increasing depth. This has had a clear impact on pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 5 draw on their prior knowledge to explain the contributions that the ancient Greeks made to language and democracy.

The school has a well-established reading programme in place. This programme helps to quickly identify pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Pupils receive daily support from trained staff so that they catch up with their peers. These pupils are given books to read, which help them practise the sounds that they have learned. The school has identified that some pupils need additional support when writing. It has adapted the writing curriculum so that pupils have the opportunities they need to improve their spelling, punctuation and handwriting. However, sometimes pupils are given complex writing tasks before they have the knowledge and skills that they need to attempt them successfully.

The school understands the different needs of pupils. Those with SEND are typically well supported in class. The work they complete is ambitious and achievable. The school also helps pupils with SEND and their families when they join the school. It identifies any emerging needs that these pupils may have.

Teachers present new knowledge and information clearly, giving pupils the opportunity to make links to what they already know. For example, in mathematics, parts of a whole are introduced gradually and revisited regularly, helping pupils to strengthen their knowledge of fractions. Teachers check that pupils understand what is taught. However, across subjects, checking is not as systematic as it could be. As a result, pupils sometimes forget key knowledge or do not have their misconceptions identified quickly.

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. The school provides opportunities for staff to access professional development to deepen their knowledge when necessary.

Attendance rates are above the national average. The school has very high expectations of pupils' attendance that it communicates clearly to families. Pupils who are at risk of low attendance are identified early on so that any barriers are overcome quickly. The school's 'behaviour curriculum' successfully teaches pupils how to behave in class, speak to each other appropriately and respect the school's rules. The school has ensured that the proportion of pupils who are suspended has declined.

The local governing body and the trust board work together closely to monitor the school's progress. They ensure that the school is setting the correct priorities and working successfully towards addressing them. Staff are happy here. They feel that their workload and well-being are taken into account by the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not check that pupils understand and remember what has been taught as effectively as it could. As a result, occasionally, pupils have gaps in their learning or develop misconceptions. The school should make sure that teachers routinely check that all pupils understand and remember what has been taught before new learning is introduced.
- Sometimes, writing tasks are too challenging for pupils who struggle with their writing. This means that some of these pupils do not catch up with their peers and do not complete age-appropriate writing tasks successfully across subjects. The school should continue its work to adapt the teaching of writing so that these pupils secure the foundational knowledge and develop their transcriptional fluency before attempting challenging writing tasks.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141910
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10371750
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter French
CEO of the trust	Joanne Sanchez-Thompson
Headteacher	Nicholas Garley
Website	www.irthlingborough-jun.northants.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Learning for Life Education Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and pupils' wider development.

- The inspector met with representatives from the trust and the local governing body.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Guy Forbat, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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