

Irthlingborough Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121831
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	292231
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Ward
Headteacher	Susan Drake
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002
School address	College Street Irthlingborough Wellingborough NN9 5TX
Telephone number	01933 654921
Fax number	01933 654923

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves one of the more deprived areas of Northamptonshire. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is well above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than most schools. The school has a Healthy Schools Award and an Investor in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality education for its pupils. Good leadership and management have successfully improved the progress pupils make and achievement is now good. Standards are average, and rising, with a greater proportion of pupils working at the higher levels than previously, especially in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good because assessment information is used really well to accelerate learning. However, the repeated requirement for pupils to write the learning intentions in their books in every lesson wastes valuable time. It halts the flow of learning often at the point where pupils are raring to go with their work. A good curriculum, enriched by effective links with the local secondary school and external agencies, ensures that pupils have many rich learning experiences in and outside of the normal school day. Pupils really enjoy when the school links subjects together to make learning more meaningful for them, for example, in arts week and in some mathematics projects. There is still some way to go to ensure such links are fully exploited to help pupils make the most of their learning. Pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well, and their information and communication technology (ICT) skills satisfactorily in most subjects.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are the outcomes of the effective care, guidance and support they receive. Pupils behave well. Their understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle is excellent. They enjoy learning, contribute well to the community, and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Overall, they are well prepared for their future. However, their attendance is only satisfactory, mainly because too many parents still take holidays during term-time.

The school's evaluation of its effectiveness, of pupils' achievement and of the quality of teaching is somewhat cautious. This is because it was based on previous outcomes rather than on recent improvements and what is happening in the school now. Good teamwork is evident throughout the school. Staff and governors share the same strong determination to help each pupil do as well as they possibly can and never to let anything slide again. This gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Exploit the links between different subjects more fully to help pupils gain maximum benefit from all of their learning so that they can make even faster progress.
- Make sure that no time is wasted getting pupils started on their work after good introductions and clear instructions have got them fired up and ready to learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The robust checks carried out in Year 3 show that pupils who reach the higher level in Year 2 have not always achieved their full potential in their first year at the school. The school has worked hard to address this issue and pupils now achieve well in lessons and throughout their time in Irthlingborough Junior. More pupils are achieving the higher levels and standards are rising. The school has been successful in reversing the drop in mathematics in the 2006 national tests. Pupils' ability to calculate mentally is much improved, as is their ability to use and apply

their mathematical skills in real life situations. For example, they have designed and costed a bedroom and its furnishings, and improvements to the playground. They used ICT well to do this. By Year 6, pupils enjoy reading and they read well. They make good progress in their writing and write at length for a range of purposes with a good sense of audience.

Pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well, and their ICT skills satisfactorily, in other subjects. The school is about to upgrade its ICT resources and facilities. At present, it makes best use of what it has to support pupils' learning, further enhancing this with some specialist teaching. It works very hard to achieve the challenging targets it sets itself.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well, enjoy learning and act responsibly. They feel safe and try hard to ensure that everyone else is safe. They consider other people's feelings and show good levels of appreciation when others do well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Through their work as school councillors and team captains, they make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They readily describe how eating healthily, the fresh fruit tuck shop and taking regular exercise contribute to healthy living. School councillors manage their own budget and are particularly proud of having instigated the planning and building of the school 'trim trail', having gained governors' approval and financial support to do so. Pupils and the vast majority of their parents greatly appreciate and support what the school does for them. However, pupils' attendance is only satisfactory because too many parents still take holidays during school time. This disrupts learning for the pupils concerned.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers respond positively to all advice that helps to improve pupils' learning. As a result, teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Teachers are fully aware of how well each pupil is progressing and what they most need to do to take their learning further. The information is used extremely effectively on a day-to-day basis to plan work that is well matched to pupils' different learning needs. This contributes greatly to the good progress pupils are now making, as does the effective use teachers make of their well briefed teaching assistants.

During lessons, teachers constantly check how well pupils are doing and that they understand what is expected of them. However, the time used for pupils to write down the learning intentions prevents some of them from completing the tasks set and therefore slows their progress. Teachers mark pupils' work well. Pupils greatly appreciate the 'two stars and a wish' approach to marking. They report that the time they are given to respond to teachers' marking, and the opportunities they have to discuss their work with each other, help them to make faster progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well planned curriculum ensures that teachers build progressively on what pupils already know. The curriculum is becoming increasingly interesting for the pupils, for example, by occasionally linking subjects together in different projects and themed weeks. However,

opportunities are missed to join up learning. This is because the links between similar topics in different subjects, for example, science and geography, are not yet fully exploited. The school is working on this. Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well, and ICT skills satisfactorily throughout the curriculum.

Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and more able pupils have opportunities to extend their learning by, for example, working alongside older pupils. The curriculum promotes pupils' health, safety and well-being effectively. The good range of additional activities, visits and visitors in and outside the normal school day, and the good links with the local secondary school further enhance pupils' learning and personal development. These arrangements also prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know pupils well. They and governors are strongly committed to pupils' care, safety and well-being. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good. Pupils report that they can always turn to an adult for help and they will get it. The school does much to raise pupils' self-esteem and works hard to help parents help their children. The school's good links with external agencies and other schools provide further support and guidance for pupils' learning and personal development. The school works hard to improve attendance but parents do not always co-operate in this. For example, pupils are sometimes off school for a full day for a dental appointment that only takes a few minutes. Academic guidance and support are good. Pupils, especially those in Years 5 and 6, know their targets well and understand how to improve their work. This helps their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong teamwork engendered by the drive for improvement gives the school clear educational direction and successfully promotes pupils' personal development and well-being. Perceptive, rigorous and accurate monitoring and evaluation, especially by senior managers, have improved the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum, so that pupils now make good progress and are achieving well. School and subject leaders have begun to look at different ways of linking subjects together to gain maximum learning benefit for the pupils. Although more remains to be done in this area, a sound start has been made.

In order to raise achievement more quickly in Years 5 and 6, governors funded additional staffing this year so that pupils could be taught in smaller groups. Pleased with the success of this strategy, they aim to extend it to Years 3 and 4 in the very near future. Governors hold the school to account well, questioning its outcomes and supporting the headteacher and staff in school improvement. The school development plan helps in this because its priorities are clear, they are the right ones, and the headteacher's reports show clearly the progress the school is making towards them.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Irthlingborough Junior School, Irthlingborough NN9 5TX

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking to us about your work. You told us you enjoy school and that the way teachers mark your work really helps you to see how you can improve it. You and most of your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school. Here is a summary of what we found:

- You are making good progress because you are taught well and teachers keep a very close eye on how well each one of you is doing.
- The school cares for, guides and supports you well. As a result, your behaviour is good and you have an excellent understanding of how to keep fit and healthy.
- You know how to keep yourselves and others safe and are confident that staff will always help you if you have a problem.
- The headteacher and governors lead and manage the school well. They too keep a close check on your progress and have your best interests at heart.

As well as those good things, we have asked the school to do the following two things to help you do even better:

- Make better links between subjects to help you see that you can often use what you learn in one subject to help you make faster progress in another.
- Make sure that no time is wasted in getting you started on your work after the teachers' clear introductions and instructions have got you ready to learn.

We hope that as a result of these improvements, you will make even better progress and will enjoy learning now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector