



# Syresham St James CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 121993  
**Local Authority** Northamptonshire  
**Inspection number** 292285  
**Inspection date** 10 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Mike Capper

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	High Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Syresham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Brackley NN13 5HL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01280 850269
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	89	<b>Fax number</b>	01280 851146
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Will Adams
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Katherine Clough
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2002		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This small rural primary school takes pupils from the local village as well as surrounding areas. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is above average. There have been a number of staff absences over the last two terms because of illness. This meant that two out of four classes were being taught by temporary teachers until the start of this term. The headteacher took up post in September 2006 after a period as acting headteacher. A new senior teacher joined the school just prior to the inspection.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is a satisfactory school that is moving forward with renewed momentum under the purposeful leadership of the new headteacher. Pupils are well cared for and their personal development is good. There is a calm, happy and welcoming atmosphere in school. Consequently, pupils develop good social skills and they quickly grow in confidence. They happily take responsibility and they behave well. Strong links with the local church and chapel ensure that spiritual development is especially strong. The satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good number of out-of-school activities and visits that are greatly enjoyed by pupils. As one said, 'School is fun!' Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Good quality provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that most children are meeting or exceeding the expected levels for their age by the end of the Reception year. In this year group, children make good progress, benefiting from working in a small class, where good teaching and an exciting curriculum meet differing needs well. In Years 1 to 6, where teaching and academic support are satisfactory, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points at the end of the Reception year. By the end of Year 6, standards are above national averages, though test results are slightly lower in writing than in other subjects. Pupils make good progress in reading because they read regularly. Progress is slower in writing. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills in different subjects. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and this helps to make learning fun. Teachers are enthusiastic and well organised but they do not always expect enough of more-able pupils. This sometimes slows progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has made a good start to improving the school. There have been many useful initiatives, including developing thorough systems for showing pupils' progress from year to year, but the pace of change has been slowed unavoidably by long-term staff absences. There is now a full complement of permanent staff and the headteacher has rightly identified that the role of subject leaders now needs to be developed so that responsibilities for finding out how well the school is doing are more widely shared. There are good links with parents. They contribute well to pupils' achievement by supporting learning at home. Most are very pleased with recent improvements. One parent summed up their views: 'The headteacher's energy, commitment and enthusiasm have had a positive effect on staff, parents and pupils. There is a caring and loving atmosphere at school and a real sense of community.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching in Years 1 to 6 by ensuring that more-able pupils are consistently being challenged well enough.
- Give pupils more opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum so that writing skills improve more quickly.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to improve their involvement in monitoring provision.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children's attainment when they start school in the Reception class varies from year to year but is slightly above average overall. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress. By the end of the Reception year most children are working at or exceeding the levels expected for their age. They make especially good progress in information and communication technology (ICT), developing good skills for their age and using them well to support their learning. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards are above average overall by the end of Year 6. Most pupils are working at the expected levels for their age by the end of Year 6, though too few attain beyond this. This is because more-able pupils are not always stretched enough in lessons. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in reading, benefiting from the many opportunities they get to improve their skills at home or at school. In writing, where progress is satisfactory, standards are slightly lower than in reading with some pupils making careless spelling and punctuation errors.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy lessons and taking part in activities outside the classroom. As one pupil said, 'When I go home, I actually miss school because I like it so much.' Relationships through the school are good, in part due to the 'buddy' system', where children in the Reception class are paired up with an older pupil, who helps them settle into school. Pupils say there is very little bullying in the school, and they feel comfortable about reporting any incidents which might occur, safe in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and acted upon. Behaviour is good; in the words of one pupil, 'All of us are friendly to each other.' Rates of attendance are in line with national averages. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about the house system, which promotes a healthy sense of competition. Older pupils willingly undertake responsibilities such as being house and sports captains. Pupils take pride in their involvement in growing and collecting produce from the school garden, in particular when they made and sold chutney from the plums they picked. In Years 5 and 6, pupils learn how to use cheque books on their residential visit. Activities such as these, together with their good social skills, successfully prepare pupils for later life and help them to make a good contribution to the community. Pupils know how to stay safe and are developing a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyles.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage. Adults provide calm and patient support to all children, helping them to settle quickly. Children's learning is carefully assessed and work effectively meets differing needs. In Years 1 to 6, where teaching is satisfactory, there are good features in all lessons. Teachers get on well with pupils and manage behaviour effectively. They plan interesting and purposeful work. This helps to ensure that pupils are motivated and keen to try hard. For example, in a good lesson in Years 5 and 6, the teacher made a problem-solving activity exciting by telling the pupils that they were 'mathematics detectives' who had to work together to find the solutions. Teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to ensure that work builds on what pupils already know. This particularly affects more-able pupils and sometimes slows the pace of learning. The headteacher has also rightly identified that marking lacks consistency across the school and does not always help pupils understand how they can improve. Throughout the school, skilled teaching assistants have a good effect on learning, especially when working with small groups of pupils with learning difficulties outside the classroom. At these times, these pupils make good progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage curriculum supports learning well. The indoors and outside areas are used well to promote children's social skills and independence, and to prepare them for the start of school life. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum helps pupils to build steadily on what they have already learnt, though planning does not always take enough account of the needs of moreable pupils. The headteacher acknowledges that in the last two terms, staff absence has occasionally adversely affected continuity and progress, especially for older pupils. Throughout the school, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in different subjects. After-school clubs in sports and creative activities are popular and successfully meet pupils' differing needs and interests. The school carefully plans a good range of visits to stimulate pupils' interest in their learning. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 are able to go on a residential visit. These activities have a good effect on pupils' personal and academic development by helping them to learn to live and work together and to try out new things. For example, older pupils are particularly looking forward to a trip to France, when they will be able to practise the French they have learnt in school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The school successfully cares for pupils and supports their personal development well. This ensures that pupils feel happy and safe at school. There are good links with parents

and professionals such as the school nurse to safeguard the well-being of pupils. Academic support is satisfactory, and improving. Many procedures for tracking pupils' progress are new and they are not yet used consistently enough to ensure that the different needs of pupils are being met. Teachers have started to set targets in English. Pupils find these helpful because it 'helps us to do better' and they would like to have them in other subjects. Teachers identify pupils with learning difficulties quickly and set clear targets for their improvement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

In a short time, the new headteacher has established a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and an accurate picture of overall effectiveness. She has brought fresh ideas to the school and there is a good awareness that, despite recent improvements, progress in Years 1 to 6 needs to be faster. Although instability in staffing has slowed the pace of change, the school has demonstrated in the steps already taken that there is a satisfactory capacity for the school's further improvement. There are satisfactory systems for finding out how well the school is doing. Whilst the headteacher makes good use of performance data to find out what is going well, the role of subject leaders in checking how well the school is doing is not fully developed. This means that over the last term too much responsibility has fallen on the headteacher. Governance is satisfactory. There are many new governors and they are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibilities. They are supportive and are beginning to take a more active part in holding the school to account.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

- Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. We found that at the moment the school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that there are good things in the school but also some things that need improving. What we liked most about your school
- Children get a good start in the Reception class and quickly learn new things. They are especially good at working on the computers!
- In Years 1 to 6 you make steady progress so that by the time you leave the school in Year 6 you are working at higher standards than children in most other schools.
- You behave well and are keen to take responsibility. We particularly like the way that you make things to sell at school fetes.
- Teachers make learning fun and provide lots of interesting things for you to do in and out of lessons.
- All adults in school are very kind and caring and they look after you well.
- Your new headteacher has made a good start to improving the school and understands what needs to be done next. What we have asked your school to do now
- Make sure that teachers always give you work that is hard enough for you.
- Help you to improve your writing by giving you more chances to write in different subjects.
- Involve all teachers more in checking how well you are doing so that they can decide what needs improving. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and we wish you all well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.