



Isham Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122023
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292295
Inspection date 1 November 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Isham
Age range of pupils	4-11		Kettering NN14 1HD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01536 723956
Number on roll (school)	103	Fax number	01536 723956
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ian Walford
		Headteacher	Kirstin White
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001		

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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 from surrounding areas. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is below average. These pupils are not distributed equally across the school. Children's attainment when they start school in the Reception class varies from year to year but is slightly above average overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that meets the needs of pupils well. Pupils are confident, articulate and sociable and love coming to school. Parents support the school well and they are rightly pleased with the progress that their children make. Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers get on well with the pupils and plan interesting activities that make learning purposeful. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and by the start of Year 1, most children are comfortably meeting or exceeding the expected levels for their age. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average, with pupils making consistently good progress in English and science. In mathematics, progress is less even, though satisfactory overall. There are occasions when more-able pupils are not stretched enough in mathematics, slowing their progress.

Pupils are well cared for and supported and their personal development is good. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. Relationships are very good and contribute to the atmosphere in the school, which is friendly and welcoming. As one parent said, "the school is such a happy place that the children can't wait to get here". Pupils take responsibility well and make a good contribution to the community by raising funds for local charities. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of staying safe and healthy. There is a satisfactory curriculum but it does not include enough opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures other than their own, hindering cultural development. The school provides many interesting activities outside lessons that help to make learning fun and extend pupils' skills in sport and music.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and governors are passionate about their school and want to do the best for the children. They know the school well and their purposeful leadership has been instrumental in the success of the many recent initiatives. For example, a recent focus on literacy has helped to raise standards in writing by the end of Year 6. There are good procedures for finding out how well the school is doing and pupils' progress from term to term is carefully checked so that weaknesses can be quickly identified. The school has a good track record of recent improvement and is in a good position to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently provide enough challenge for more-able pupils in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' cultural awareness by giving them more opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. 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 personal, social and emotional development, quickly developing good levels of independence.

Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. Although the school's data shows that until fairly recently, pupils' progress slowed significantly in Years 3 and 4, this is no longer the case. Good teaching is having a good effect on learning in these year groups and progress is now good overall throughout Years 1 to 6. However, in mathematics, whilst the school is successful at getting most pupils to the levels expected for their age, too few achieve the higher levels. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of the most able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils work hard, support each other well and behave very sensibly in lessons and around school. They have very good attitudes to their work and this is an important reason why they do so well. They are confident with adults and are very happy at school, with one boy commenting that he "enjoyed every minute of the day". However, despite the school's efforts, attendance is only satisfactory, mainly owing to parents taking children on holidays during term time.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good overall, although they have a limited awareness of cultures other than their own. Pupils feel valued and listened to. They know that their views are taken into account through the effective school council which has contributed to the development of after-school sports clubs and the purchase of play equipment. Pupils take responsibility for recycling waste and managing small budgets, for example, when running cake stalls for fundraising. These activities, as well as pupils' good basic skills, make a good contribution towards their preparation for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in most lessons because of the effective way that teachers make work purposeful. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils have been learning about stocks and shares. They have chosen their own company and have been monitoring how well it has been doing on the stock exchange. This work has helped pupils to gain a good understanding of basic economics and given them good opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in a practical way. In the Foundation Stage, practical activities

and the teacher's calm and patient support help children to settle quickly and have a good impact on learning. Throughout the school, teachers have good expectations of how pupils should behave. Positive, supportive relationships are a key feature in motivating and engaging pupils. Lessons are well organised and interactive whiteboards are used successfully to illustrate and enliven lessons. Teachers make good use of knowledgeable teaching assistants, who contribute well to support pupils' learning, for example, by working with those who have learning difficulties. In most lessons, work is well matched to the individual needs of pupils. However, in some lessons, especially in mathematics, there are missed opportunities to challenge more-able pupils, slowing the rate at which skills are improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school places a strong emphasis on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills and this has a good effect on standards. The curriculum is well planned but does not include enough opportunities to celebrate the cultural diversity of society. This restricts pupils' cultural development. Over the last year, there have been some good improvements to the curriculum. Teachers have begun to link different subjects more closely than in the past. Although this is still in the early stages of development, it has helped to make learning more meaningful for pupils. The school has rightly identified that more time still needs to be allowed for pupils to work creatively in subjects such as art, design and technology, history and geography. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. Visits and visitors make a good contribution to learning and help to bring subjects alive. Pupils are encouraged to maintain their health and fitness through a good range of sporting activities and clubs. Music is enjoyed by all pupils either through music and singing lessons or through individual tuition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All pupils are treated as part of the 'school family'. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to safeguard children. Pupils feel safe and secure and have confidence in their teachers. Children are well supported when they first start school in the Reception class and their progress is monitored carefully in all areas of learning.

Academic support is good. The school has recently been focusing on developing assessment procedures and pupils' progress is monitored regularly. Teachers generally use this information well to ensure that differing needs are being met, though this is less successful in mathematics than in other subjects. The school has suitable plans to extend detailed assessment systems to include other subjects. Pupils are given regular feedback on their work and they are set clear targets to help them understand how to improve. Pupils with special educational needs receive a good level of specific targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants, helping them to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers are hardworking and enthusiastic and they work well as a team. Parents are delighted with the school and with recent improvements such as their greater involvement in target setting. One parent noted that both "parents and children are made to feel welcome as soon as they walk through the door". In the last two years, the headteacher has established good systems for finding out how well the school is doing, though judgments tend to be over-cautious. This reflects the high expectations of staff and governors rather than any weaknesses in the procedures for evaluating school effectiveness. The monitoring of teaching by the headteacher is rigorous and information about how well pupils progress is analysed in detail to identify those who need additional support. This has already identified, prior to the inspection, that not all pupils do well enough in mathematics. Subject leaders monitor test results carefully and write useful reports showing strengths and weaknesses. They are starting to take greater responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and learning, though this is an area that requires further development to help identify where any improvement is needed. Governance is good. Governors have a very active role in planning for school development and they successfully hold 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	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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	3
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.

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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school in such a polite and friendly way and for showing us your work. We are pleased that you come to such a good school.

What your school does best:

- Good teaching helps you to learn well and make good progress.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you enjoy school and all the activities that teachers provide for you.
- All adults in school are very kind and caring and they give you good support when you are struggling with your work.
- You have a well-organised school council and we were especially interested in the 'stocks and shares' project in Years 5 and 6 which has helped you learn lots of new things.
- Your headteacher and governors are working hard to make the school even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to do even better in mathematics by making sure that your work is always hard enough.
- Give you more opportunities to learn about cultures other than your own.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.