

Irchester Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133601
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	316163
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Graeme Bassett

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	332
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ellen Godfrey
Headteacher	Julie Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	School Lane Irchester Wellingborough NN29 7AZ
Telephone number	01933 353848
Fax number	01933 350479

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school draws most of its pupils from an area which is less advantaged than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of traveller children attend the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. When starting school in the Foundation Stage, children's attainment is slightly below that expected for their age and many have particular weaknesses in their personal, social and emotional skills and in their communication, language and literacy. The school has been awarded a Sports Mark award and is working towards Healthy School and Eco School awards.

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. The headteacher provides a good and very purposeful direction to the work of the school, and leadership and management are good. She encourages and supports all staff and pupils very well and because of this, there is an evident enthusiasm to do better throughout the school.

Leadership and management at all levels are very productive and consequently many developments undertaken since the last inspection have had a marked influence upon raising standards and achievements. The role of the senior management team has improved significantly. The headteacher and senior teachers carry out frequent monitoring and evaluations of the school's work and all staff take part in regular discussions to identify strengths and weaknesses. The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although currently no-one has sole responsibility for its management and leadership. The school's self-evaluation, involving all levels of management, including governors, is accurate, providing a clear analysis of developments and improvements.

Most noticeable of all the developments brought about through good leadership and management is the innovative use of mixed age classes and the further grouping of pupils into ability sets in Key Stage 2. This has maximised resources well and has secured rising standards and achievements in English and mathematics. Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils enjoy their lessons and have positive attitudes towards their learning. However, pupils are not always sufficiently involved in assessing their own work and, because they do not have personal targets, most are not aware of what they need to do to improve. Subject leaders are very knowledgeable about their subjects and they have successfully established a good curriculum with growing cross-subject links.

The focus upon raising standards and achievement since the last inspection has been very successful. Achievement is now good and standards are above average, with pupils' progress accelerating markedly throughout Years 5 and 6. The traveller children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily. Additional focus in Years 1 and 2 has also resulted in improved achievement and average standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. However, checks to ensure that all of the more able pupils in Years 2 to 4, and in the Foundation Stage, do as well as they should are not rigorous enough.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. However, there are some gaps in their cultural understanding. They are aware of the need to remain safe and have a clear understanding of the agenda for 'Every Child Matters' because of the good levels of care, guidance and support. Behaviour is good. Parents are supportive of the efforts made by the school to include all children in all that the school does. This positive attitude is reflected in the pupils' good attendance. Comments made by many parents to the inspection team are echoed in the note of one parent who stated that she is 'proud that her son attends this school'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Good care, guidance and support ensure that children settle into school routines quickly and that their personal, social and emotional development is particularly good. Children feel safe and are able to develop their confidence in a secure environment.

Teaching is satisfactory and staff plan stimulating activities but a lack of overall leadership is causing some weaknesses. For example, initial assessment information is not used robustly enough to plan challenging tasks, especially for the more able children. Consequently, by the time children enter Year 1, attainment is broadly as expected for their age, but very few exceed the expected levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils have personal targets, especially for English, mathematics and science, so that they understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.
- Monitor and evaluate the progress tracking information more rigorously to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 to 4, do as well as they can.
- Ensure that pupils have a better understanding of the customs and traditions of people living in a multicultural society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Children make satisfactory progress during the Foundation Stage and most work securely within the goals set in all areas of learning for children of their age, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, by the time they enter Year 1.

Achievement at the end of Year 2 is satisfactory and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average, having improved well recently. Even so, the proportion of pupils that reach the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics is below the national average and this restricts the school's overall performance.

Pupils' achievement remains satisfactory and standards are broadly average as they move up through Years 3 and 4 but some of the more able pupils do not do as well as they should. Nevertheless, pupils' progress accelerates rapidly throughout Years 5 and 6. This results in achievement being good and standards being above average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is above the national average in all three subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress but, like all other pupils, make more rapid progress throughout Years 5 and 6. Traveller children achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show high levels of self-confidence and respect for each other and their teachers. The school's 'Children Charter', developed and adopted by all pupils, encourages them to abide by a clear set of expectations. As a result, pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. Incidents of bullying are rare and teachers deal with this issue promptly.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles, commenting on some unhealthy choices still available in the tuckshop. They develop good teamwork and positive attitudes to learning through sporting events and the reward system. Pupils make positive contributions to the school community and although the school council membership is limited to Year 5 and 6 pupils, younger pupils say they would like the opportunity to be involved. Pupils' involvement in the wider local community is limited.

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good overall but their knowledge of the customs and traditions of people living in a multicultural society is only satisfactory. With above average standards and good attitudes to learning, pupils are prepared well for their next school and for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers work well within their year groups to plan tasks that build effectively upon pupils' previous learning. This is especially strong in English and mathematics lessons where pupils are grouped, according to their ability and previous successes. Teaching is improving because of the good use of intervention strategies when pupils need additional help and because of the in-depth planning across the school. All staff are developing good use of interactive whiteboards to maintain a brisk pace of work and to demonstrate interesting lessons.

Teachers make good use of their marking to ensure that their comments help pupils to build upon their previous learning. Regular assessments are thorough and teachers know how well each pupil is progressing. Even so, some of the tasks set for more able pupils in Years 2 to 4 and in the Foundation Stage are not always sufficiently challenging. Pupils are not involved sufficiently in assessing their own work and do not have targets to show them what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and organisation of the curriculum is contributing to the improvement in overall standards. English and mathematics are rightly prioritised. The school is steadily moving towards making links between subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used creatively across subjects to make pupils' learning more interesting. The school is effectively developing pupils' personal, social and health education through other subjects and staff fulfil the agenda for 'Every Child Matters' well. Establishment of French is steady and is used enthusiastically in each class to 'meet and greet'. This makes a small contribution to pupils' cultural development but the coverage of multicultural development is not comprehensive enough. The good range of clubs and activities outside lessons is well supported and a number of them feel privileged to belong to the school choir. Visits and residential visits enhance pupils' social, moral and spiritual development effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good and all staff show great care and concern for each pupil's personal development and well-being. All reasonable measures are taken to ensure pupils' safety and protection. Staff have successfully improved pupils' behaviour and it is now good. There are good links with parents and with support services that provide extra help for those who need it.

Academic support and guidance are good. Effective support, especially from the classroom assistants for different groups of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good within each class. However, more could be done to provide specific targets

and individual help for these pupils. Throughout the school, ongoing assessment of individual pupils' progress in English and mathematics is thorough. Teachers use this data very effectively to track each pupil's progress. Records are analysed accurately to plan what pupils are taught next, but sometimes this information is not used rigorously enough to ensure that all of the more able pupils are given guidance about how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and management. The school works in two separate buildings, but communication between all staff is very good because of the continual efforts made by the senior management team. The headteacher has delegated responsibilities very well. She deploys the senior members of staff and subject leaders effectively to help with the monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's performance. The senior management team has set challenging targets and this has raised standards and achievement significantly over the past three years. However, the monitoring role undertaken by leadership and management analysis is still not rigorous enough to ensure that all of the more able pupils do as well as they should. The governing body is very knowledgeable, well organised and fully committed to raising standards and achievement throughout the school. The governors carry out their responsibilities well and maintain a prudent watch over the budget. They are knowledgeable and have good procedures to find out what is happening in school. Areas for improvement at the last inspection have been fully completed and, with good leadership and management, the school is now well placed with good capacity for further improvement in the future.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

28 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Irchester Community Primary School, NN29 7AZ

- Thank you for helping the inspectors and me when we visited yesterday. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We found that your school provides you with a good education and that you do some very exciting things. These are the things that are particularly good:
- Your headteacher provides good leadership and management. All teachers and other staff support her very well.
- By the end of Year 6, you make good progress and your work is above average in English, mathematics and science. Some of you who find work easy to do need to be given work that is more challenging, especially those of you in Years 2 to 4 so that you can do even better.
- You are all developing good attitudes towards your work and towards each other. You know a lot about keeping safe and you understand how to remain healthy.
- You are very polite and your behaviour is good.
- Staff look after you and care for you well.
- The teaching is good and the teachers are making your learning interesting, especially with the whiteboards.
- The curriculum is good.

There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- Make sure that you all have your own targets, especially for English, mathematics and science, so that you understand what you need to do next to improve and how well you are doing.
- Check and use the information about your progress more thoroughly to ensure that each of you does as well as you can. This is particularly so if you are in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 to 4, and find work easy.
- Help you to gain a better understanding of the customs and traditions of people living in our multicultural society.

You can also help by asking your teachers how you can make your work better. Once again, thank you for your cooperation.

Graeme Bassett Lead Inspector



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Lead Inspector