

Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121832
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340020
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Cockburn
Headteacher	Elizabeth Lovett
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 26 lessons and 13 teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with the governors, staff, and the school council and looked at pupils' work. They talked informally with other pupils and met with their parents and carers at the start of the school day. School documents were scrutinised including policies, development planning and self-evaluation, monitoring files, curriculum and safeguarding documents. Minutes of governing body meetings were examined, as well as the headteacher's reports to the governing body, local authority reports on the school and information provided for parents and carers. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 121 parents/carers and 37 members of staff. Inspectors visited the Children's Centre to observe its work. They held discussions with its staff, healthcare professionals using the centre and the parents/carers attending its various activities.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the work the school is doing to improve further the pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 2
- the school's focus to ensure different groups of pupils make equally good progress as they move through school from year-to-year
- the ways through which the school is developing its curriculum in order to promote the pupils' enjoyment and achievement
- the progress the school has made in developing its methods for assessing pupils' work
- the pupils' personal development and whether this is a strength of the school.

Information about the school

This is one of the largest schools of its type in the country. The number on roll is increasing. Most children and pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of children and pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of those for whom English is an additional language. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of children and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The governing body has established a Sure Start Children's Centre at the school. This does not provide childcare, but forms part of the school's extended services to its families and the local community. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools status and received the Effective Early Learning, Activemark and Investors in People awards. The school council has received a bronze award for its work.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils make good progress overall to attain above-average standards overall by the end of Year 2. The school does exceptionally well with attainment in writing and is now working hard to achieve a similar success in reading and mathematics and especially to increase the performance of the more-able in these subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and most of the very few pupils from minority ethnic groups make excellent progress. This is because of the very well-targeted support such pupils receive from both teachers and teaching assistants, particularly when learning together in small groups. Pupils are able to achieve well because outstanding care and guidance underpin very securely their personal development. Pupils' excellent behaviour, attitudes to learning and social and moral development are of particular note. Discussions with parents/carers confirm that the school provides a safe and secure environment within which their children thrive.

The school's past and present success and its good capacity for further improvement result directly from outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher not only provides an excellent example for the staff, but also ensures delegation of responsibility and appropriate training. Staff and governors take their responsibility to the pupils extremely seriously and are open and accountable towards each other. These factors also help underpin the school as a cohesive community. Learning is fun within the school's vibrant environment. Smiles and laughter are the order of the day and furrowed brows are only a sign of real concentration on a task.

Rigorous self-evaluation ensures the school concentrates well on driving up standards in all aspects of its life and work. The school is focused securely on improving further its curriculum through the ongoing development of more creative approaches. Pupils are being enabled to apply their knowledge and skills across subject boundaries. An evaluation of the impact so far on learning is underway to ensure full implementation at the start of the next academic year. Work is also in progress to improve further the quality of teaching by developing a more consistent approach to the use of assessment in the classroom, particularly through the use of questioning to challenge pupils to think more deeply about their learning. While more-able pupils are challenged very well in small, specialist withdrawal groups, particularly for reading and numeracy, such challenge is not always high enough in other lessons.

An exemplary feature of the school's outstanding contribution to community cohesion is seen in its development of a Children's Centre, attached to the school's Nursery. This Centre brings together not only important services for parents and carers and their children from birth to the age of five, but also the provision of professional care and support for all families with children at the school. There is significant outreach work

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within the local area. During the inspection, the daily impact of this provision was seen from pre-natal work, through mother and toddler groups, to support for foster families. Such services not only have a significant impact on the well-being of the pupils, but also on their preparation for school and subsequent support for learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement even further by the end of Year 2 by:
 - raising standards in reading and mathematics to those being attained by the pupils in writing;
 - ensuring that lesson planning provides increasing challenges for higher-attaining and gifted and talented pupils.
 - Develop further the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum by:
 - ensuring a more consistent approach to using assessment in the classroom, particularly through the use of questioning to challenge all pupils to think more deeply about their learning;
 - making sure that, by the start of the Autumn Term 2010, planning for the new creative curriculum is completed fully, in order to challenge and inspire pupils further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils achieve well. In addition to the school's notable success in enabling pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups to achieve as well as they do, the school has also worked hard to close the gap between the performance of boys and girls. There is now no significant difference in pupils' attainment regardless of gender. This success results from the school's considerable focus on ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Consequently, pupils of all backgrounds and abilities cooperate and work together extremely well, both at work and at play. Outstanding working relationships pervade the school and contribute significantly to good learning overall. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported very well, acquiring a level of English which enables most to make very effective progress in their learning.

Standards in Year 2 currently mirror the above-average attainment of recent years. However, not as many pupils reach the higher levels in reading and mathematics as they do in writing. The school is already tackling this issue. As a result, when working in small groups, more-able pupils read with expression and also comment perceptively on the characters and their feelings. In the mathematics group, success in more advanced calculation work is reinforced well through the pupils' active involvement in checking their partner's work. However, such levels of challenge and progress are not yet fully replicated during other lessons.

Pupils want to come to school because they enjoy learning. The pace and interest of

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activities is such that they waste no time during the day. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the school's moral code and abide by the 'Golden Rules'. Pupils are highly considerate of each other and behave extremely sensibly, remain on task and work purposefully. They know the benefits of an active lifestyle and demonstrate this during physical education lessons. Pupils have been in leading campaigns to stop adults smoking at the school gate whilst waiting to collect their children. The pupils are proud of their involvement in the school council, which provides a very effective forum for them to air their views. They know that the school acts upon their suggestions, for example in the choice of playground apparatus. Pupils from different groups and backgrounds work and play together harmoniously and carry out their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Their personal development, coupled with their academic success, is standing them in good stead for the future. Attendance is above average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Much has been done to enhance the quality of teaching and the school is now promoting greater and consistent challenge for the more-able. All teachers and teaching

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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assistants make excellent use of the school's resources to support pupils' learning. Effective tracking systems enable the school to set suitably challenging targets for individuals. Targets are currently being met or exceeded and are reviewed regularly to ensure the level of challenge is maintained. However, the teaching is not entirely consistent in the use of questioning during lessons to check regularly on pupils' understanding of tasks, to probe their reasoning and extend the thinking of the more-able.

Pupils are benefitting well from a creative curriculum which increasingly links different subject areas and enables them to use skills in context. The impact of work undertaken so far is currently being evaluated to enable full implementation from September 2010. Provision for the use of literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) across subjects is good and improving with the new curriculum developments. Teachers make good use of ICT to introduce tasks and engage pupils in learning. The school is also successful in extending into Year 1 the good teaching practice and curricular approaches from the Early Years Foundation Stage, which benefits pupils, particularly those who require additional help with their learning. The school enhances and enriches learning by using a wide range of visits and visitors to bring learning to life. Very high numbers of pupils participate in additional lunchtime and after school sporting activities.

The promotion of the pupils' well-being is at the heart of school life. Staff have an extremely accurate understanding of the needs of both the pupils as individuals and the local community as a whole. Consequently, the school has a real impact in securing support for and the confidence of the pupils and their families. Partnerships with support agencies are embedded deeply in the work of the school, not least through its Children's Centre. These partnerships support children and their families well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is ambitious on behalf of the pupils. Its commitment is a significant strength and motivates the leadership of the school. From team leaders, through to senior management, the headteacher and governors, there is a strong sense of common purpose and morale within the school is high. There is no complacency and the school monitors its work rigorously, working assiduously to resolve any areas of relative weakness. It has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and supports improvement

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through well-considered programmes of professional development for its staff. The school monitors regularly the effectiveness of its teaching and, in line with its significant commitment to equality of opportunity for all, is now focusing strongly on learning in order to ensure that all achieve equally well.

Governance is excellent, with individual governors giving freely of both their time and personal expertise. Close links are well established and the governing body is an active partner in securing school improvement. The school has an excellent understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic make up of its local area and its similarities and differences with the United Kingdom as a whole. This not only results from effective self-evaluation, but has also led to excellent community cohesion and the school's approach to eradicating any potential discrimination. Systems and procedures for the safeguarding of children are excellent. Leaders and managers at all levels promote actively the school's stated aim of 'Sowing the seeds for life-long learning, working together to achieve our best.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led exceptionally well. Staff are very well qualified and experienced. The provision and resources are excellent. Children's development on entry to the Nursery is below the levels expected for their age and often well below in aspects of their well-being and language development. The school has established programmes which enable the children to make outstanding progress in these particular areas of learning, such that they have gained significantly in their communication and

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social skills by the time they transfer to the Reception year. These outcomes are supported by very effective systems for assessment. The school's Nursery provides some 60% of those children who eventually join the main school. Of the remainder who join in the Reception year, many do so with levels of development lower than the Nursery children and have no pre-school experience. Those children from the school's Nursery continue to make excellent progress and the school works hard to close the gap in attainment between this group and those joining in the Reception year. As a result, children new to the Reception year make good progress. Given all these factors, attainment is broadly average by the time children transfer to Year 1.

Good levels of enjoyment and attitudes to learning are established very firmly in the Nursery. Working relationships are excellent between children and their key workers. Creativity is actively encouraged, for example, great fun was being had by children in the sandpit when using their imagination to make a chocolate-chip biscuit mix. They learned how to follow instructions as the adult read out the recipe and 'mixed' ingredients according to bucket-loads of sand. In a Reception class, the play corner was turned into a police station. Children were acting out their roles with responsibility. Discussion with them showed they had a clear understanding of right and wrong and the importance of the emergency services in the life of the community. Throughout the day, there is a very good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Inside and outside, the classroom and other learning areas are used very effectively.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents/carers responding to the questionnaire are entirely supportive of the school and its work on behalf of their children. All agree that their children enjoy school. Such views were supported in conversations with parents at the school gate, and with those attending the Children's Centre during the day. A few wrote comments indicating that the school took insufficient account of their views. The inspection finds channels are always open to enable parents/carers to express any concerns, and that these are taken very seriously. As one parent/carer wrote, 'My child has been taught with experience, drive and encouragement. Staff always listen to us both, and I cannot praise the school enough.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Irthlingborough Infant School and Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 393 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	89	74	32	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	84	69	35	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	66	55	48	40	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	72	60	44	36	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	81	67	36	30	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	61	41	34	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	54	53	44	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	56	46	54	45	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	57	43	36	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	46	59	49	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	41	58	48	7	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	71	59	46	38	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	69	34	28	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 May 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School, Irthlingborough,
Wellingborough, NN9 5TT

Right from the start of the inspection, we were very impressed by your smiles and your enthusiasm. This was shown in assembly when you sang the words 'Come and join our circle of friends. There's always room for one more. Open up your circle. That's all you have to do.' Thank you for opening that circle to us and making us feel so at home. It helps to explain why yours is a good school.

You make good progress and achieve well during your time at the school.

Those of you who find learning difficult make excellent progress.

You behave very well indeed and have excellent attitudes to your learning.

The adults at your school take excellent care of you, making sure you are safe.

Staff at your school work very well with your families to help you learn.

All the staff and governors run your school very well.

Your teachers are keen to find ways to help you learn and achieve better. We have asked them to do two main things. First, to help you to do as well in your reading and mathematics as you do in your writing. They will be planning work and setting you even more exciting challenges. You will also find your teachers will be asking you more questions in class. This is not only to check that you understand your work, but also to help you think more clearly about your work. Secondly, we have asked them to finish the work they are doing to help you make links between subjects and your learning even more interesting.

Finally, please keep on smiling as you all did during your second assembly, and throughout our visit. With all best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Miller

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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