

Syresham St James CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121993
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340064
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Miller
Headteacher	Mrs Katherine Clough Mr Niall Flanagan
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons, taught by five teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, the substantive headteacher and the acting headteacher, the subject leader for mathematics, teachers and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 29 parents were analysed.

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

- how well pupils are making progress in writing and mathematics
- how effectively subject leaders are driving improvement
- whether the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to ensure that the children make good progress.

Information about the school

This primary school is much smaller than average. The pupils are taught in four classes. Currently, 15% of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is a lower proportion than in recent years. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. A very few pupils are from Roma travelling families. None of the pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals.

There has been much disruption to staffing in recent years. Most recently, the headteacher has returned from maternity leave to resume her role on a part-time basis. The senior teacher who has been acting headteacher is continuing in the role to cover the part of the week when the headteacher is not in school. Another teacher is currently on maternity leave and her position is being filled by a temporary teacher.

The school has the Activemark award.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement

Through its recent involvement in the Improving Schools Programme, the school has begun to tackle areas of weakness. The school can point to improvements in the progress made by some pupils this year, but overall progress and learning are inadequate. Stronger management systems have been introduced which provide a clearer picture of pupils' progress, but monitoring of the quality of teaching is weak. As a result, the school's leaders do not have a sharp enough insight into the shortcomings in teaching in order to rapidly improve it.

Not enough has been done to address the weaknesses highlighted by the last inspection. The teaching from Years 1 to 6 still requires improvement. Too many lessons are satisfactory or inadequate. The pupils still do not have sufficient opportunity to extend and develop their writing skills across the curriculum. The curriculum does not meet the needs of pupils of all abilities well enough. Subject leaders still do not play an effective role in the leadership of the school. The school leaders and governors have not demonstrated the capacity to make sustained improvements in any of these areas of weakness.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with many having reached, and in some cases exceeded, the goals set for the end of the Reception Year. From Year 1 onwards they slowly fall behind. With a more focused input in Year 6, their progress increases but attainment falls some way short of the high standards that they should reach. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low.

While behaviour in lessons is often good, both parents and pupils report concerns about the poor behaviour of a few pupils and the way it is dealt with. In discussion with some of the pupils, they confirmed that they would like what they term as the 'annoying behaviour' of a few to be improved.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics so that they reach levels of attainment that are consistently well above average, by:
 - ensuring that pupils have clear, relevant targets and are kept well-informed

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about how they are doing and how they can improve

- improving and extending systems to accurately assess and track pupils' progress
- providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - using time more purposefully and productively in lessons
 - raising expectations of what the pupils can achieve
 - making effective use of information about what pupils already know and are able to do to inform lesson planning
 - planning lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities to build on and extend their knowledge and skills
 - putting more emphasis on what the pupils will learn rather than do in lessons
 - deploying teaching assistants more effectively to support learning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all aspects of monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and sharply focused on outcomes for pupils
 - establishing high expectations and aspirations in all areas of school life, including behaviour
 - empowering subject leaders to drive improvements
 - providing the governing body with an accurate picture of the school's performance, so that it can hold the school to account and shape the school's future direction.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

In too many lessons, the pupils do not make enough progress because teaching does not take sufficient account of what they already know and are able to do. In some lessons, the more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not given the right amount of challenge to ensure that they make at least satisfactory progress. The work in pupils' exercise books confirms that progress is inconsistent and that, too often, skills and knowledge are not being built upon systematically.

Over the last few years, the rate of progress made by pupils between the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been in the lowest 5% of primary schools in the country. Analysis of the progress made by those pupils currently in Years 3 to 6 shows that, although progress has improved this year, it is not yet satisfactory or fast enough to ensure that they recover the ground they have lost in previous years.

The pupils are receptive to their teacher's instructions and respond positively when questioned. In discussion, some pupils reported that they feel that they are not given

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the guidance they need to enable them to rapidly improve their work. While they appreciate the positive comments their teachers make, they feel that they need more detailed guidance to help them reach the targets they are set. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is not as high as it should be, and this hinders the development of the skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Attendance is above average. Most pupils say they feel safe at school. They enjoy school and the range of extra-curricular clubs they attend. They welcome the responsibilities they are given, and older pupils support the youngest children well. The pupils have adopted a positive approach to staying fit and healthy.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Expectations of what pupils should achieve are not high enough. Although pupils' attainment is now more accurately assessed, the tasks that teachers set are not matched sufficiently well to pupils' needs to ensure that they build upon and extend their learning. The time available for learning is not used to the full. There is a lack of urgency at the start of some lessons, and time is lost in others through inefficient

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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classroom management. Teaching assistants are not deployed or used effectively. Their support in lessons is not well planned and, consequently they too often become an 'extra pair of hands' rather than a valuable resource for teaching and learning. While teachers' questioning draws pupils into discussion and generates interest, it is not used often enough to gauge the extent of the pupils' understanding and subsequently modify the lesson to ensure that all groups make the progress they should.

The curriculum has weaknesses. Although the required range of subjects is taught, some are covered superficially and opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills are not exploited. The school has made effective arrangements to support the small group of pupils from Traveller families who now attend the school. As a result their attendance has improved. Arrangements for keeping the pupils safe are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteachers and subject leaders have a strong desire to make improvements. The introduction of the Improving Schools Programme has brought the recognition that substantial improvements are needed. Currently, the monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' progress is not rigorous or incisive enough to lead to an accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Too much of the school's self-evaluation is superficial and perpetuates an over-generous view of its performance. The governing body is now challenging the headteachers about the impact of the Raising Attainment Plan, but the information they are given in response to their questions - about the quality of teaching, for example - is drawn from scant monitoring of its impact on the quality of learning. Consequently, the governing body has not had sufficient influence on shaping the direction of the school.

The pupils' progress is now carefully tracked and the performance of each pupil is discussed at regular meetings. However, this has yet to ensure that all groups and individuals have equal opportunity to make the progress they should.

Partnerships with parents are satisfactory. The school seeks parents' views and keeps them informed of events. The school has forged positive relationships with the small number of Traveller families who now send their children to the school. Wider partnerships contribute well to the good range of extra-curricular opportunities that the school offers to the pupils.

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The school carries out all the required checks on adults who work in the school. The school has drawn up a community cohesion action plan. This has had a positive impact on the school community, but the school has not established links that will generate the opportunities to promote community cohesion beyond its immediate locality.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good provision for the youngest children has been maintained since the last inspection. The children's learning and progress are successfully developed through a range of interesting activities. Attainment on entry is generally at the level typical for their age. Children in the Reception class last year made good progress and reached a good level of development, providing them with an above-average platform on which to build in Year 1. The current Reception group of 12 children displays confidence and a good level of independence. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader ensures detailed notes and assessments are recorded by the adults. These show that the children are making good progress.

The children respond well in teacher-led activities. These activities are effective because they are well planned, thoughtfully prepared and carried out in a manner that engages the children. For example, when the teacher was working with a group of children using a number line on the interactive whiteboard, they improved both their formation of numbers and their ability to count back from, for example, 12 to 6. Similarly, the range of activities available for children to choose themselves is carefully prepared and well supported. The adults develop the children's learning well in the outdoor area, and activities flow freely from indoors to out. While the Early Years Foundation Stage leader

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ensures the classroom provides a safe and adequate space for the relatively small number of children in the cohort, some of the resources are less than inspiring and do little to create a stimulating environment.

The children play and work well together and are happy to pursue their own interests. They are well versed in daily routines such as snack time, and are keen to tidy away at the end of activities. The adults monitor the children's choices carefully, and develop conversations through thoughtful interventions that extend their use of language.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are happy with the school's work, and all who returned the questionnaire agree that their children enjoy school. Over a third of parents who responded expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. In their questionnaires, and in discussion, the pupils also expressed concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils, which they say is dealt with by the school but nevertheless recurs. The pupils are very clear that they have no worries about bullying, but that they would like to see the behaviour of a few improved. Behaviour in the lessons seen during the inspection was always satisfactory, and in some it was good.

A few parents added comments to their questionnaires expressing the opinion that expectations are too low. The inspection findings endorse this view, and inspectors concluded that pupils are capable of faster progress and higher attainment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Syresham St James CofE Primary School 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 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 92 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	59	12	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	59	12	41	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	28	17	59	4	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	24	17	59	2	7	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	8	28	18	62	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	17	21	72	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	28	17	59	2	7	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)	8	28	20	69	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	34	15	52	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	17	12	41	8	28	3	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	28	18	62	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	24	19	66	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	28	18	62	2	7	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 pupils' 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.



7 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Syresham St James CofE Primary School, Northamptonshire, NN13 5HL

Thank you for completing the questionnaires and taking the time to talk to me about your school.

I have placed the school in a special group of schools which is visited regularly by an inspector. This is because there are a number of areas where the school could do better. Many of you said that you don't know how well you are doing, and when I spoke to some of you, you said that you would welcome more guidance on how to improve your work. This kind of guidance would be very helpful. Some of you think that some tasks are too easy, and I saw some that were a bit too hard for others.

While you are happy and feel safe at school, some of you are concerned about what you see as the 'annoying behaviour' of a few pupils. Most of the children behaved well in the lessons visited by inspectors, but you told me that the behaviour of a few pupils was the main thing you would like to see improved. I have asked the headteachers to establish high expectations of how all pupils will behave in order deal with this.

I have asked that a number of improvements be made to the way you are taught and helped to learn, so that you can make faster progress and attain higher levels, particularly in mathematics and writing. I have also asked the headteachers and governors to carefully check to see how well the school is performing.

Your very thoughtful, sensible and clear answers to my questions helped me a lot. I hope the improvements the school has been asked to make will help you enjoy your time there even more. The changes should make your learning more challenging, so that you make as much progress as possible.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector

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