

Isham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 122023 |
| Local Authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 340073 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 March 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Alan Jarvis |

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

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 101 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Ian Walford |
| Headteacher | Mrs Kirstin White |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 November 2006 |
| School address | Church Street Isham NN14 1HD |
| Telephone number | 01536 723956 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. The inspectors spent the majority of their time observing pupils' learning. They observed four teachers as they visited eight lessons or parts of lessons. The inspectors held meetings with governors and a number of staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of information, including numerical information showing the progress made by pupils, and samples of their work. Questionnaires returned by 51 parents and carers, four staff and 40 pupils were analysed.

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

- the impact of the steps being taken to close the gap in attainment between English and mathematics
- the impact of improvements being made in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well leaders and managers monitor the work of the school and help it to improve.

Information about the school

This small rural primary school takes pupils from the local village but the large majority live in the surrounding area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but they are not distributed evenly across the school. Pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes. The school has recently achieved the Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

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

Isham has sustained its good effectiveness and is steadily improving. It works extremely closely with parents, who play a full part in supporting their children at home and in helping the school to improve. Parents rightly speak very highly of the school. One wrote, 'Our children are very happy at school. They are taught well and are given the encouragement they need to enable them to thrive and flourish.'

In this small school, staff know the needs of every pupil very well and keep a watchful eye on their welfare and personal development. This successfully ensures that by the time they leave school, pupils are confident, well-rounded individuals who are ready to meet the challenges of the next stage of their lives. Pupils' behaviour is excellent at all times. This really helps their learning and ensures they look after each other extremely well. As one girl told an inspector, 'Everyone is kind and we feel very safe.'

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Recent improvements have ensured children make good progress in all areas of learning. This is because teaching is good and children benefit from a wide range of challenging activities. However, the outdoor area is not covered nor as well resourced as the classroom. As a result, learning is hindered in bad weather.

All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve well academically. This stems from the good and sometimes outstanding teaching and the good ethos for learning which encourages them to be creative, work hard and aim high. As a result, attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Attainment in English has typically been high. In contrast, that in mathematics has not been quite as high because not all pupils have been as proficient in calculations as their general ability predicts. A higher focus on mathematics and better targeted support have helped close the gap in the current Years 2 and 6. However, the mismatch remains for some pupils in other year groups including the Reception class.

A further key to the school's success is an improved and distinctive curriculum. At its heart, is a good emphasis on English, mathematics and the arts. In recent years, an enjoyable and effective 'connected curriculum' has been developed in which different subjects are linked together into skills based projects. This helps pupils develop a range of skills and provides them with many memorable experiences. Nevertheless, the school is aware there is scope to further strengthen mathematical links to help quicken pupils' progress.

The school continues on an upward trajectory, despite recent staff changes, because of the strong determination of the headteacher, well supported by the governors, to bring further improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school development plan is

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sharply focused on tackling the few remaining weaknesses. The improvements made in the curriculum, links with parents and pupils' understanding of how to live healthily and of other cultures illustrate that the school is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure attainment in mathematics is on a par with that in English in all year groups and consistently high by the end of Year 6 by:
 - giving a higher priority to calculations from the Reception year upwards
 - identifying and providing carefully tailored support to those pupils whose attainment in mathematics falls below that in English
 - providing more mathematical experiences in the 'connected curriculum'.
- As a matter of urgency, enable the outdoor curriculum in Reception to be as effective as in the indoor curriculum by:
 - providing outdoor covered play space
 - improving the quality of the outdoor resources.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are keen to do well and are enthusiastic about their learning in a range of subjects. They respond well to their teachers and their behaviour is impeccable in most lessons. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 lesson pupils were highly focused on their calculating skills and not a moment was wasted in learning. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson, pupils worked well independently when studying the 'space race'. They enthusiastically gathered and analysed information from a range of sources to produce a time line which showed extensive knowledge of the subject.

The school's tracking data confirms pupils' good progress, especially in English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have good attitudes to learning and make good progress because of their clear individual education plans and the effective support provided by teaching assistants. Over time, there are no significant differences in the progress made by girls and boys although there have been some variations year by year.

Attainment fluctuates year by year because year groups are small and the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies widely. By the end of Year 2, improvements in mathematics mean that attainment is now above average and similar to that in reading and writing. By the end of Year 6, attainment has typically been high in English and broadly above average in mathematics. The higher priority given to mathematics has ensured attainment in the current Year 6 is in line with that in English. The gap remains more marked in other year groups, where pupils reach higher standards in English than in mathematics.

Many outcomes in pupils' personal development are strong because of the plentiful enrichment activities they enjoy and the good quality care, guidance and support. Many

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pupils are keen to attend school and do so regularly. However, attendance levels are reduced because a small minority of parents take holidays in term time. Pupils hold clear views about their learning and have, for example, given constructive feedback on the 'connected curriculum' and helped reshape the homework which is set. The school council has its own budget which has helped to purchase a range of new resources and its members are working on further ways to strengthen their voice. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the Christian and other faiths. Good links with other ethnic groups in nearby towns and a school in Ghana are providing pupils with an increasingly broad understanding of how other people live beyond the immediate community.

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 | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Teachers set high expectations for behaviour and constantly encourage their pupils to work hard and do their best. Interesting and varied activities are provided which are well matched to the needs of pupils of all abilities in the mixed-aged classes. In one class, the teaching assistant has been trained to a higher level and effectively acts as a second teacher in the classroom providing a strong boost to teaching and learning.

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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Pupils know their targets very well. Regular discussions about their progress and next steps in learning mean they have a very clear idea of how to sustain their good progress. In some classes, the pace of learning could be on occasions either quicker or even more creativity added to some of the tasks that are provided.

Many pupils enjoy the many clubs on offer such as 'hot shot' basketball and dance. Skills based projects in the 'connected curriculum' focus on either a cultural, scientific or historic theme each term. These have helped pupils to develop skills in greater depth and fostered pupils' independence and creativity. As one parent rightly wrote, 'As well as being taught the basics of numeracy and literacy pupils are given so many other opportunities to enhance their education such as trips to the science museum, space centre, ballet, philharmonic orchestra and pizza making.' The curriculum does not yet provide as many mathematical experiences as it could or base new topics on the interests of pupils.

Clear identification of pupils with special educational needs and the good partnerships with a range of local agencies ensures that they are supported well. The school has set up a thorough system of tracking pupils' progress. This has helped to close the gap between attainment in English and mathematics and identified where further intervention and support are needed in some year groups. Steps to improve attendance are meeting with some success, as requests for term time holidays are reducing.

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 | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Clear sighted and strong leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. A climate has been created in which everyone is focused on making the school even better and building on recent gains. Teaching is monitored well and through the feedback teachers receive, they have an honest and crystal clear view of how they can improve. New staff are well supported and they too are playing their part in focusing on ensuring all pupils do as well in mathematics as they do in English. In this inclusive school, the staff tackle discrimination well. The school's good approach to equal opportunities is also reflected in pupils' good achievement, the rising attainment in mathematics and the identification of where this needs to be improved.

The governors support the school well. They contribute effectively to monitoring and development through their streamlined and very effective committee structure and focused visits to school to see how well developments are proceeding. They have

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ensured that safeguarding practice is good and has a high priority. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures and policies are consistently applied. Parents support their children exceptionally well at home because of the high quality and regular reports and tailored guidance they receive. In turn, the school has acted decisively in honing the extended curriculum and completely reviewing the homework sent home in response to parents' views. The school has audited its involvement with the community in conjunction with other local schools. As a result, it has strengthened the cultural focus in the curriculum, developed good resources and is increasingly improving its links overseas to give pupils a wider international dimension to their learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

The improvements made to teaching, assessment and the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage this year have resulted in children making good progress across all areas of learning. Links with parents are very good. Parents receive good quality information when their children first join. The very well attended Friday 'book and biscuits' time allows parents to meet the teacher and read with their children.

Children display a good understanding of the daily routines, the benefits of physical exercise and of regular hygiene. Adults assess the progress of each child very carefully and their individual next steps for learning are built into the daily activities. There is a good balance between activities that are led by adults and those which children can choose in the classroom and outside. For example, in lessons seen the children were concerned because their class bear had gone missing. Some children worked with their teacher to produce 'wanted posters' which were displayed around the school whilst

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others imaginatively tried to tempt the bear back by laying out pots of porridge in the outdoor area. Good leadership and management have improved most aspects of provision and ensured that robust steps are taken to safeguard children at all times. The covering of the outdoor area now awaits planning permission and the higher focus on calculations is starting to pay dividends.

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

The school and its headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. Parents are particularly pleased with how well the school is led, with teaching and with how happy their children are at school. A number of individual comments spoke of how well the school cares and encourages all pupils and how well the improvements to the curriculum have enabled pupils to really enjoy school. The inspectors totally agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Isham Church of England 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 101 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 35 | 69 | 16 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 35 | 69 | 16 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 36 | 71 | 15 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 35 | 69 | 16 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 40 | 78 | 11 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 34 | 67 | 17 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 34 | 67 | 17 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 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) | 25 | 49 | 20 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 30 | 59 | 20 | 39 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 28 | 55 | 20 | 39 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 27 | 53 | 22 | 43 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 38 | 75 | 13 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 40 | 78 | 11 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



8 March 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Isham Church of England Primary School, Isham, NN14 1HD

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we visited your school and answering the questions in the survey I sent you. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. This is what we found.

Your school gives you a good education.

The school keeps a watchful eye on you and helps you feel safe.

By Year 6, you develop into assured and well-rounded individuals.

Your behaviour is excellent and your understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles is first class. Well done!

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and confidently work on their own or with each other.

Your attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. This means you make good progress from when you first start school.

The excellent links with parents help them fully support you at home.

Teaching is good and the curriculum provides you with many memorable experiences.

To help you make even better progress in your work, we have asked your school to do these two things:

- make sure attainment in mathematics is equally good as that in English in all year groups and high by the end of Year 6
- improve the outdoor area and resources in the Reception class.

Remember - you also need to do your bit by always listening carefully to what your teachers tell you to do. I wish you great success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Alan Jarvis

Lead inspector

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