

Isham Church of England Primary School

Church Street, Isham, Kettering, NN14 1HD

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils achieve outstandingly well in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. By the time they leave Year 6 their attainment is significantly above average.
- Children make outstanding progress from the moment they start school in Reception, and develop the skills and knowledge that they need for the next stage of their education.
- The headteacher's clear vision and strong sense of purpose are mirrored in the values and work of staff at all levels. The result is a harmonious team striving to do their best for pupils.
- Senior leaders, subject leaders and governors are highly successful in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- Governors are extremely ambitious for the school. They make use of their own specialist skills and detailed knowledge of the school to identify where it could do better, and challenge it to do so.
- Pupils' behaviour is exceptional, both in and out of classrooms, and they have extremely positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils get on extremely well with each other and feel very safe and secure in school.
- Teaching is outstanding in all age groups. Teachers inspire pupils in their learning. They have high expectations of themselves, other staff and pupils.
- The most able pupils make excellent progress overall. Just occasionally, staff do not challenge them to reach the highest levels possible in their work.
- Teachers take great care to ensure that the subjects they teach spark pupils' interest in learning and are highly effective in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of physical activities. This is reflected in their high levels of skill and their fitness and health.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons, including 10 that were seen jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also attended a collective act of worship.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, looked at their work in books and on display, and talked to them about their work.
- The inspector looked at information kept by the school to inform him of how well pupils are achieving.
- The inspector checked the school's evaluation of its work, its improvement plan and minutes of governors' meetings. Documents related to attendance, the safety of pupils, behaviour and bullying and the performance of staff were checked.
- Discussions were held with a representative of the local authority, four governors, the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The views of the 57 parents who replied to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account along with those of parents who spoke with the inspector during the inspection.
- The views of 15 members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, as expressed through the staff questionnaire, were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Andrew Bailey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Isham Church of England Primary is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years attend one full-time Reception class. From Year 1 onwards pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- No pupils currently in the school are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding to give extra support to disadvantaged pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority. In 2013 and 2014, no pupils in Year 6 were supported by the pupil premium.
- A smaller-than-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A smaller-than-average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils identified as disabled or having special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Challenge the most able pupils to make even better progress to achieve the highest levels of attainment.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's very high expectations for pupils are fully supported by the staff. As one said, 'Only the best is good enough for pupils.' Staff at all levels take responsibility for ensuring that all pupils are achieving the best that they can. The highly effective lines of communication within the school ensure any actions to improve the progress of pupils are timely and effective.
- Leaders have been extremely effective in providing the conditions whereby outstanding teaching can flourish and pupils' personal development thrives. This can be seen in the pupils' excellent achievement and behaviour.
- Leaders make excellent use of information about pupils' progress to compare how well the school is performing in relation to others. They use the results to make ambitious, yet realistic, plans for the school.
- Leaders regularly check on how effectively staff are teaching and how well pupils are learning by observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and analysing information about the progress of pupils. This is aided by the successful management of the performance of the teachers, including that of the headteacher. Leaders make skilful use of this information to take decisions that bring about improvements in teaching and learning.
- Middle leaders are highly effective. Those in charge of subjects know their subjects extremely well, including the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. They provide effective support and training for staff to continually improve their performance.
- Leaders are making plans to develop systems of assessment without the use of national curriculum levels. All staff and governors have been involved in such discussions.
- The local authority monitors the school's performance and provides tailored support to meet its needs. The school employs an independent consultant to check the accuracy of leaders' judgements, and to provide advice that enables leaders to build an accurate picture of the school and to draw up plans for improvement.
- The curriculum is outstanding. It has been designed to fire the imagination and interest of pupils by providing a memorable range of exciting and stimulating opportunities for learning. This includes a number of visits such as those paid by Year 5 and 6 pupils to a sewage works and landfill site to gather information for their project on pollution. The curriculum is effective in promoting core British values such as tolerance and respect, as reflected in pupils' views, their relationships and their work.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is promoted exceptionally well throughout the school, and this is reflected in pupils' work and play. Pupils learn about decision-making and democracy through the work of the school council. They know of other cultures and the main religious beliefs represented in Great Britain. By the time pupils are in Year 6 they can express mature thoughts relating to ideas such as faith, consequences, cultural diversity and the environment, both verbally and in writing. They are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- A very large majority of parents feel that the school is fully committed to doing the best that it can for their children by teaching them well and keeping them safe. They are very appreciative of the efforts it makes to include them, inform them about how well their children are doing and assist them in helping their children learn.
- Staff and governors show a strong commitment to equal opportunities and check that all groups of pupils are making outstanding progress. They ensure that pupils learn without any type of discrimination and foster good relationships throughout the school, the local community and beyond.
- Safeguarding arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils meet statutory requirements. Senior staff, including governors, are vigilant in ensuring that policies and procedures are rigorous and up

to date. The measures taken by the school have been highly effective in keeping pupils safe.

- The school makes excellent use of the primary physical education and sport funding to develop the skills of staff and provide a wide range of sports, some of which take place before or after school. Pupils are very grateful to have so many opportunities to exercise and learn new skills, and have high levels of participation in sport. They reach a high standard, so that individual pupils and teams have enjoyed great success. Pupils also keep fit and healthy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is outstanding. Governors have taken steps to ensure that they are extremely well informed about the achievement of pupils. They closely monitor the performance of all groups of pupils, and supplement their own extensive knowledge by employing an external adviser to provide an independent assessment of pupils' achievement. This enables them to compare how well the school is doing with others nationally.
 - Governors have a wide range of skills to inform their decisions. Their astute financial management has enabled them to draw up and implement successful plans that have improved the school's performance.
 - Governors receive helpful information on the performance of teachers and appreciate how the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils affect staff pay increases. They ensure that the school's high level of performance is maintained through setting the headteacher challenging targets for her own performance each year. They are very aware of what the school would need to do in the event of any underperformance.
 - The expertise of governors has been recognised through them being asked to support the governing body of another local school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school and talk with affection of its family atmosphere and of what their teachers do on their behalf. Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around school is impeccable. They all treat adults and one another with courtesy and respect, and this creates a happy and harmonious atmosphere both indoors and outside.
- School records show that incidences of poor behaviour are rare. The school uses excellent strategies for promoting good behaviour and when, on rare occasions, it has been necessary to take firm action to correct poor behaviour it has done so with marked effect.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and can concentrate for long periods during lessons. They talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about what they are learning and are anxious to live up to the high expectations that their teachers have for them.
- Pupils thrive on the opportunities they are given to take responsibility and exercise initiative. This is demonstrated by the work of the school council, which made the decision to keep hens in the school grounds.
- Pupils are eager to support many fundraising appeals. This includes working with the local church to raise money for 'Water Aid' and the NSPCC.
- Pupils' books reflect the pride that they take in their work. The covers are unblemished, the work inside is neatly presented and the amount of work produced reflects a good deal of application. Their pride in and care for the school are reflected in the tidiness of the school and the litter-free grounds.
- The school promotes regular attendance well. Attendance levels been above average for a number of years, reflecting how much pupils enjoy coming to school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils know that they can trust the adults

who work with them and are aware of whom they can go to should they not feel safe. They are extremely aware of their own safety and that of others in and around school. Older pupils show genuine concern for younger pupils when they play alongside them.

- The school does much to inform pupils of issues that affect the safety of children. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils can talk and write informatively and movingly about child abuse.
- Parents have a great deal of confidence in the care provided for their children by the school.
- Pupils are very aware of different forms of bullying, including racist, homophobic and cyber-bullying. They know what to do should it occur and are confident that they would be well supported by adults. However, in their opinion little or no bullying takes place in their school, despite the anxieties of a very small minority of parents.
- Staff receive regular training on safeguarding. Policies relating to safety and child protection are up to date and closely monitored.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Pupils attain high standards because their teachers have very high expectations for their learning and are skilled in drawing up plans that make sure that pupils are extremely well taught and make rapid progress.
- Teachers put a great deal of thought into creating attractive classrooms that provide pupils with information about the projects they are studying. Displays in each classroom colourfully and creatively announce to pupils and any visitors what the focus of learning is for the term.
- Pupils' work is clearly explained to them by their teachers. This builds pupils' confidence and means that little or no learning time is wasted. Teachers are skilful at designing lessons that will fire the imagination and enthusiasm of pupils so that they are motivated to do their very best. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 came to school excitedly discussing an incident that their teacher had secretly contrived the previous afternoon. Damage to their 'secret forest' area within the classroom became a crime scene and they were eager to begin writing their crime reports.
- Teachers are adept at assessing what their pupils know and use this knowledge to make informed judgements about what they need to do next in order to move learning forward, by planning appropriate activities to challenge all groups of pupils. Just occasionally, they do not challenge the most able pupils to reach the very highest standards possible.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are very well taught throughout the school. Pupils are often given clear purposes for using skills and knowledge they have acquired in these subjects. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were taught how to develop the skill of writing persuasively in order to raise awareness of the destruction of rainforests.
- Teachers use marking effectively to identify mistakes and to give advice to help pupils improve their work. Pupils say that they value and learn from this. They also gain confidence from comments that recognise their successes and celebrate their achievement.
- Teaching assistants work very effectively alongside teachers. When working with pupils they follow clear teaching plans, which they successfully put into action to support the learning of pupils. They do this by listening carefully to them, closely observing what they are doing, questioning them about their learning and providing clear advice on how to improve their work.
- Teachers make parents aware of what their children need to achieve and how they are progressing. Parents value the attractive homework packs, which enable them to work with their children to produce work to a high standard.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- All groups in the school make excellent progress regardless of their different starting points, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the most able pupils.
- Children join the school in Reception with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age, except in reading and writing where they are a little above. As a result of the carefully planned activities that excite their interest and build upon what they know, children make rapid progress and by the time they move to Year 1 standards are above average.
- Pupils enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors. Their skills are well developed by the end of Year 1 and their good understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) helps them to make rapid progress thereafter. By Year 6 pupils are reading a range of books with a deep level of understanding that enables them to extract a great deal of enjoyment and information from the text. By the end of Year 6 pupils are approximately a year ahead of the majority of pupils of the same age nationally in reading.
- Pupils write with enthusiasm and style on a wide range of topics, stimulated by the excellent ideas that teachers give them. By Year 5 and Year 6 they have developed the skills to write about complex themes, such as child abuse and ecological balance, lucidly expressing mature and moving thoughts. Pupils are approximately two terms ahead of the majority of pupils nationally by the end of Year 6 in writing.
- Pupils quickly acquire good mathematical skills and knowledge, which they are taught to use and apply to solve increasingly difficult problems. By the end of Year 6 pupils are approximately two terms ahead of where other pupils of their age are nationally in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified early and make excellent progress as a result of the support that they are given. The school engages specialist support from outside agencies with telling effect.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress. Regular opportunities for speaking and listening help to ensure that they quickly gain confidence in English.
- Throughout the school the most able pupils are typically given work that challenges them in line with the high expectations that their teachers have for them. Because of this they make outstanding overall progress. Occasionally they are not pushed as much as they could be, and so not all of them reach the very highest standards possible by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are achieving extremely well across a range of subjects, particularly in music and physical education. Performance standards in music are high throughout the school and pupils apply their well-developed physical skills and highly developed sense of teamwork to a range of sports with great success.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Adults assess the learning of all children from their first days in school, then knowledgeably plan to build upon what children already know and provide interesting activities for them. As a result of outstanding teaching, all groups, including disabled children and those who have special educational needs, make rapid progress in their first year of school, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff take the utmost care to provide attractive areas in which children can learn. A great deal of thought is put into how the indoor and outdoor areas can be used to stimulate learning. During the inspection the children pounced upon subtle changes made to the class number line, and delighted in sharing what they had discovered and correcting errors.

- Adults are skilled at asking questions that encourage children to think and develop their own ideas. This was seen when a group of children playing in the outdoor area were asked what they could do to prevent the houses they had made from being blown over in the breeze.
- Children are developing very positive attitudes to writing at an early age because they are provided with stimulating ideas. They respond with enthusiasm, as when they took great care writing letters to a 'Friendly Little Wolf' who visited their classroom.
- Parents are regarded as valued partners and are welcomed into school at the start of each day, so that the learning of children, either at home or at school, can be discussed. Parents value such opportunities. All parents support the weekly 'book and biscuit' sessions when they can stay at school and read a book with their children and look through their work with them.
- The staff consistently apply clear and robust policies and procedures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children. Children's behaviour is outstanding and shows that they have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They listen carefully to their teachers when they are required to do so and follow advice and instructions. They work and play together sociably and cooperate well together, as seen when a group of boys were helping one another to find the ideal mix for the 'cement' they were making.
- The leadership and management of early years provision are excellent. The leader's high expectations have ensured that staff are well trained so that their teaching is highly effective and brings about outstanding learning.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122023
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449627

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	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Humphrey
Headteacher	Kirstin Howarth
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 March 2010
Telephone number	01536 723956
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