

Inspection of a good school: Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School

Scarborough Street, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN9 5TT

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 July 2023

Outcome

Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school. Pupils are keen to learn. Staff enjoy coming to work and being part of a supportive team. Parents have nothing but good things to say about the education, care and support their children receive.

Leaders want the best for every pupil. They have set high standards for pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Staff model and teach these expectations consistently so that pupils realise what it means to be a good learner. Pupils understand the importance of their school rules – 'ready, respectful, and safe'. Pupils know that they must be great walkers, great listeners, and great talkers – this is 'the Irthlingborough way'. As a result, a calm, purposeful atmosphere permeates the school. Classrooms are places where pupils can focus on what they are doing and immerse themselves in their learning.

Pupils say it is easy to make friends at Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School. They can always visit the 'friendship stop' on the playground if they need someone to play with. Pupils feel secure in this nurturing environment. One pupil captured the views of others perfectly when they said, 'All the adults are kind here and that makes me safe – I never feel scared or sad here.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is ambitious and well-organised. Learning is set out in small steps so that pupils can build on what they have been taught before. As well as the knowledge and skills that pupils must learn, leaders have thought carefully about the vocabulary that will be taught. This approach enables pupils to describe things in precise, technical terms. In the Reception classes, for instance, children use the words hexagon and trapezium correctly when naming two-dimensional shapes.

The development of pupils' spoken language is a priority. In the early years, staff make the most of opportunities to develop communication skills during children's free-choice activities. Staff get involved in children's imaginary play, using this time to check understanding and introduce new words. Throughout the school, staff emphasise the importance of being a 'great talker'. In mathematics, for instance, teachers show pupils how to put their thoughts across in full sentences. This approach empowers pupils. As one pupil said, 'Stem sentences help us to understand and explain what we are doing.'

Children learn to read from the moment they start in the early years. Leaders provide regular training and make frequent checks to ensure that phonics is taught consistently well. Staff encourage fluent sentence reading. They ask pupils to sound out the sentence in their heads if they can. Staff model speedy and expressive reading so that pupils get to hear what fluent reading sounds like. Pupils relish the 'ten books' initiative. They love reading these rich, diverse texts. The school's 'reading caravan' is a popular nook on the playground where pupils can enjoy the beauty and wonder of books.

The leaders with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) ensure that individual needs are met. Parents of pupils with SEND recognise and appreciate the high-quality support and care their children receive. Teachers are adept at making small changes to their lessons so that pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as everyone else.

Teachers refer to previous learning so that pupils can connect what they are learning now to what they have learned before. Occasionally, though, teachers do not check closely enough on pupils' progress in lessons. When this happens, teachers introduce new learning before pupils are ready to move on.

Leaders have recently reviewed their procedures for securing high attendance. They act early when pupils do not attend school as often as they should. However, reducing the rate of absence remains a priority because some pupils still have too much time off school.

The values of courage, community and kindness sit at the heart of the school. A wide range of trips, events and visitors enrich the curriculum. They open pupils' minds to the diverse world around them. Pupils learn about the importance of respect and equality. They said, 'We are all different but we're all the same' and 'everyone is welcome here – we can all play together.'

Governors and directors know the school very well. They check on the impact of leaders' work, providing effective support and challenge to drive the school forward.

Staff are passionate and committed. They feel valued and included. One teacher summed up the views of others perfectly when they said, 'This place is so special because of the people in it.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know what it means to feel safe. They also know what to do if they do not. As a pupil in Year 2 explained, 'We have "hands of trust" here. If we are worried, we can give our "hand" to our teacher, and they will know how we're feeling and sort out our problem for us.'

Staff report worries about pupils' welfare straight away. They know that small concerns can form part of a bigger picture. Leaders work well with other agencies to get the right support for families. Governors ensure that the safeguarding policy is carried out effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, teachers do not check closely enough on pupils' learning in lessons. As a result, pupils are sometimes moved on to the next stage of their learning before they have a secure grasp of the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders must ensure that teachers make precise checks on pupils' learning in all lessons and introduce new content when pupils are ready to move on.
- Some pupils are not attending school regularly enough. Missing so much time at school makes it harder for these pupils to achieve their full potential. It also means they cannot take advantage of all the opportunities on offer at Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School. Leaders should continue to work with families to reduce absence and make sure that all pupils have high attendance.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Irthlingborough Nursery and Infant School, to be good in May 2010.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141909
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10227923
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	329
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter French
Headteacher	Jan Marshall
Website	www.irthlingborough-inf.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Learning for Life Education Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection of the school since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and physical education. For the deep dives, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at subject plans and pupils' work for science, history, and art.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders and a sample of teaching and support staff. The inspector met with the leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, behaviour and personal development.

- The inspector met with the designated leaders for safeguarding to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The inspector reviewed safeguarding records, including the school's single central record.
- The inspector examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance, and documentation relating to pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read to a familiar adult. The inspector met with groups of pupils from across the school.
- The inspector met with directors from the multi-academy trust, Learning for Life Education Trust, and members of the local governance committee, including the chair of the local governance committee.
- The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer from Learning for Life Education Trust.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the results of the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Shaun Carter, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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