

Isleham Church of England Primary School

Malting Lane, Isleham, Ely CB7 5RZ

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| Inspection dates | 15–16 March 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors provide good leadership. They are determined to make further improvements. The culture throughout the school is one of ambition for all.
- Senior and middle leaders and governors monitor teaching rigorously. Leaders provide very effective professional development for all staff. Consequently, teaching is good over time and some teaching is outstanding.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been below the national average but is improving slowly. Key Stage 2 attainment is above the national average but not for the most-able pupils.
- Progress of the vast majority of pupils currently in the school is good in English and mathematics. This includes pupils who have special educational needs or disability, or who receive additional funding.
- Teachers use assessment information well. However, not all teachers systematically check on pupils' understanding of what they are learning.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported very effectively. Pupils are proud of their school and their work, and they behave well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. All members of staff receive regular safeguarding training and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. All pupils feel safe because they trust adults to help them.
- The early years learning environment is exciting and stimulating. The curriculum is rich and varied and teaching is of consistently high quality. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is just above that expected.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils have not yet developed confidence to work on their own.
- Lower attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as other pupils in writing and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils making good or better progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers build on and sustain the good start that children make in their education in the early years foundation stage
 - teachers systematically check on pupils' understanding of their learning and reshape tasks in response
 - all teachers have high expectations for lower attaining and higher attaining pupils' progress.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching within the school by:
 - routinely sharing the outstanding practice that already exists
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes to their learning
 - developing pupils' confidence to work on their own and eagerness to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has worked well with the two deputy headteachers to ensure that the actions they have taken have improved the school since the previous inspection.
 - Monitoring and evaluation are very strong. Senior and middle leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and work relentlessly to address them. They rigorously monitor pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. Plans for improvement are clear and leaders regularly track pupils' progress towards intended outcomes to ensure there is no slippage.
 - There is a culture of mutual respect and collaborative leadership throughout the school. All staff have benefited from professional development, which has played a key part in the school's improvement. The work that leaders at all levels have done with other schools has helped to keep the momentum of improvement live and constant.
 - Despite the recruitment difficulties in this area of the country, the headteacher has managed to secure good leadership of learning and teaching. As a result, outcomes of pupils currently in the school are improving and are largely good.
 - The curriculum is developing well and shared effectively with parents in regular year-group letters. Such topics as 'Living Things', 'African Adventure', 'Space' and 'Brave Britain' all enthuse the pupils and make sure that 'learning is fun'.
 - Pupils are elected as members of the school council and as sports captains, demonstrating well the essence of British values and the democratic process. Work is planned well so that pupils' basic skills are developed throughout subjects other than English and mathematics; for example, this was clearly seen in the work for science week during the inspection. Pupils were excited while conducting experiments to see how ice melted in different conditions around the classroom and the impact that wind resistance had on how far their rockets would travel.
 - The special educational needs coordinator has a very good relationship with both parents and other agencies. This means that children and families receive the very best support. Learning is personalised to meet the needs of children, especially those who have special educational needs or disability. These pupils are catered for extremely well, with very good provision and support, and they make good progress.
 - Funding provided for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. Through thorough monitoring and assessment, pupils are given timely and targeted support to ensure that they make the very best progress they can. The school's breakfast club is well attended and supports the good attendance of all pupils. 'I really like breakfast club because it makes you feel part of a special group,' said one pupil.
 - The school is making good use of the additional funding for sports. A sports specialist has provided guidance and support for staff. They report that this is aiding their knowledge and skills in many areas and is having an impact on pupils' well-being. The number of pupils who take part in competitive sport and extra-curricular activities is high and the school is successful in its many competitions with other schools.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. Their aspiration for the school to be outstanding is palpable. The governing body has been very proactive in planning for the good leadership of the school to continue when the current headteacher retires at Easter 2016.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching in the school and the school's strengths and areas for development because they meet with leaders and visit the school regularly. They work closely with school leaders at all levels to ensure that they understand and are aware of pupils' progress.
 - Governors have a good range of skills that benefit the school. They have specific responsibilities linked to particular areas of the curriculum or aspects of the school's work. This in-depth knowledge has helped them to drive improvement in partnership with school leaders.
- The governing body has ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. They regularly check on how this funding and additional sports funding are supporting pupils' development. Governors understand how the school makes decisions on pay progression and performance and carries out the headteacher's performance management diligently.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders ensure that all staff are fully trained and clearly understand their responsibilities. They also carry out rigorous checks on all adults to ensure that they are suitably qualified to work with children. Checks on the security of the school's grounds and health and safety audits are undertaken regularly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good. The strength of the good relationships between adults and pupils is clearly evident in all classes. Lessons are well organised and interesting. Teachers use the skills of learning support assistants very effectively to support pupils. As a result, the large majority of individual pupils and groups make at least the expected progress from their starting points and a large proportion make more than the expected progress.
- The teaching of reading and writing is effective. Pupils read widely and often and make good progress, benefiting from good support when needed. The older pupils in the school in particular use what they have learned in their reading to influence their writing. As a consequence, they are developing well as writers and practise these skills in subjects other than English. Leaders have rightly prioritised that spelling could be improved and actions to address this are already having an impact on pupils' work and their understanding.
- The teaching of mathematics is particularly strong. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident about what they are teaching and what is expected at each stage in the pupils' development. Consequently, all pupils make the progress expected in mathematics compared with pupils nationally. The school's current assessment information shows that there is a growing proportion of pupils throughout the school whose progress is accelerating. However, there is some inconsistency in a small minority of classes where current pupils' progress is slower. This is particularly so for some lower attaining pupils.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is very effective and pupils use these skills well when reading. However, some pupils are not as adept at using their phonics skills when writing. Pupils in Year 2 are achieving particularly well. The school's own assessment information and the evidence seen during the inspection confirm that achievement for these pupils will be above the national average in 2016.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of learning over time shows that teachers plan work that supports the needs of the majority of pupils and challenges them appropriately. Most adults have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. However, where expectations are not as high, pupils make less progress than they could, particularly the lower attaining pupils. A minority of teachers do not routinely check on these pupils' understanding of what they are learning or adapt what is being taught quickly enough. Teachers use the school's marking and feedback system well to help pupils to improve or to encourage them to think carefully about their work. Pupils say that this helps them, and some of them take careful note of the comments they receive. Books show that this is challenging some pupils, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6, to be more confident about their learning.
- There is some outstanding practice in the questions that teachers pose to gauge pupils' understanding. Teachers respond to pupils' answers by adapting teaching, challenging some pupils and guiding others to a better understanding. However, in a few classes, pupils cannot choose the level of challenge that they feel best suits them. When pupils do choose, their confidence in how well they are doing develops and they begin to challenge themselves about what they are learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are respectful and caring of each other, play well together and cooperate with each other when playing group games.
- Pupils enjoy coming to this 'fabulous, encouraging' school where learning is 'fun'. They have a keen sense of what their education can do to support them; as one girl said, 'it can help me to become a lawyer, that's what I want to be'.

- All pupils feel safe at all times and parents and staff agree. 'We know that adults wouldn't let anything bad happen to us' was how one pupil expressed it. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They trust adults will listen to them and will quickly take effective action to address any of their concerns.
- Pupils have a good understanding of all the different forms of bullying. They recognise that bullying can be 'when you are not hurt on the outside but on the inside, when your feelings and emotions hurt'. They say that bullying is very rare and that 'everyone is different but must be treated the same'.
- Through good role modelling, staff are teaching pupils how to be effective learners. There is clear consistency in what is displayed in each class to support learners, and pupils are beginning to use the prompts about how to work well that are displayed on the walls. The school promotes a 'growth mind-set' and there is a culture of risk-taking and learning from failure. Pupils enjoy trying something new, safe in the knowledge that this is 'good for us', as one put it.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has equipped them with a good moral compass. Pupils are involved in the development of a set of values for each school 'house' to which they belong. Themes such as 'good to be me' help to ensure that pupils are accepting of and celebrate differences. The school's motto, 'learning together, achieving the best' is evident in classrooms, on the playground and when observing pupils working together, for example, when carrying out science investigations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and pupils, staff and parents agree that it is. Pupils like the school's 'traffic-light' behaviour system and understand the consequences if they do not adhere to the school rules, which are displayed around the school. Pupils say that where behaviour sometimes is not as good as they know it should be, adults deal with it quickly.
- Pupils take pride in their work and are generally enthusiastic to learn so they behave well in lessons. Year 6 pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the visitor they had who animatedly talked with them about dinosaurs as part of their topic. Where learning is exciting and involves pupils fully, they are keen to explore and ask questions.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and at breaktimes. Expectations from the vast majority of adults are high and pupils respond politely and courteously to others. Pupils work well together and some get on confidently working on their own.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They undertake additional responsibilities with a keen sense of achievement. 'I like being a play leader as I can look back and say I am proud of what I did'.
- Leaders have ensured that attendance continues to rise. Pupils arrive on time and ready to learn. The breakfast club contributes well to this because pupils are engaged in productive play, craft activities and discussion.
- Work with parents continues to play a large part in the school's key focus. Parents therefore say that their children are well cared for, safe and happy. During the recent and very successful parents' mathematics morning, which 75 parents attended, one parent said, 'I have never seen children so happy to learn!'.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen for the last two years and was above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. Year 6 pupils made at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics but the proportion of pupils who attained the higher levels in writing and mathematics was below the national average.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has remained stubbornly below the national average for some time, except in mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieve the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics has also been below the national average. The school's own assessment information and pupils' work in their books show that progress and attainment for Year 2 in 2016 will be at least in line, if not above, the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils are achieving the higher levels as well. There is currently some inconsistency in progress between pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. Lower attaining pupils in Year 1 are not catching up quickly enough with their peers. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has consistently risen since the previous inspection and was above the national average in 2015.

- The school's own assessment information shows that currently, the proportion of pupils whose progress is accelerating is increasing in almost all year groups. Gaps in pupils' learning are being addressed by good teaching and pupils who are behind in their learning are catching up with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The vast majority of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making good progress. The number of pupils in the separate key stages in 2015 was too small to comment on their progress.
- Overall, pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making at least expected progress, with many making very strong progress from their starting points. This is because leaders have ensured that these pupils' needs are well met with effective teaching and support from experienced and well-trained teaching assistants.
- Pupils are generally prepared well for the next stage of their education. Leaders recognise that the good start that children make in the early years provision must be capitalised on in order for their learning to continue apace. Good transition arrangements are in place for pupils who leave the school in Year 6, in particular for the school's most vulnerable pupils.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership and teaching have secured good outcomes for the vast majority of children in almost all areas of learning. The Reception class teacher ensures that the support children receive from all adults is highly responsive to their needs. The early years team works closely with parents, and children thrive.
- Children enter the early years with development and skills that are more typical for their age than in the past. All children, including those with special educational needs or disability, those for whom the school receives additional funding and the most-able children, make good progress in relation to their starting points. As a consequence, at the end of Reception Year, more children attain a good level of development than nationally. Children are therefore very well prepared for Year 1.
- Children settle well into Reception and are keen to join in interesting activities. Experienced adults give children timely guidance and support. Children listen and respond well to adults and to each other. They are well behaved and work and play happily together. Two children were making 'chick kites' as part of the Easter theme. They were carefully planning how these would fly best, and used scissors and materials skilfully. One boy was adamant that his friend had added an extra strip to his kite and so 'it isn't going to be fair now'. A well-reasoned debate took place with the inspectors and the two children, who eventually took their kites outside to see whether what they thought would happen actually did.
- During the inspection, children demonstrated curiosity, imagination and sustained interest in the activities they chose or were directed to by staff. Learning is planned to incorporate children's interests and builds effectively on what they already know. For example, children were watching four chicks that had been brought into the classroom to complement work on Easter. The quality of discussion that children had as they drew pictures of the chicks, wrote their sentences or made their chick collages was impressive. One child made a very good attempt at writing 'the chick has soft feathers'.
- The early years environment is bright, stimulating and well organised, with good resources to support all areas of learning. Leaders adapt planned activities in response to very regular and accurate assessments. For example, leaders recognised the need to develop children's communication, language and literacy skills. Every opportunity is taken for teachers to talk with children about what they like to do and are interested in and to encourage them to talk about their learning. Assessment information about the current group of children shows that there has been considerable development of this area of the children's learning.
- The early years team and parents work effectively to support the children in their learning. Parents are very happy with the early years provision. They value the communication they have with all of the staff and are keen to share developments their children have made at home on the 'learning at home labels'. One such communication stated that, 'We have been practising counting at home from 10 and now she can count and write numbers up to 20'. Another parent showed how her child, who was becoming increasingly interested in writing, had been copying labels from various foods in the kitchen cupboard. This partnership between home and school undoubtedly supports children to make good progress.
- Children from a variety of pre-school settings join the school. Leaders are committed to working closely with all the providers to increase the communication, language and literacy skills of children who join the school.
- There are too few children in the Reception class eligible for additional funding to comment on this.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110791 |
| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 10001951 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 5–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 201 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Terry Malkin |
| Headteacher | Nicola Bramley |
| Telephone number | 01638 780336 |
| Website | www.isleham.cambs.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@isleham.cambs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26–27 November 2013 |

Information about this school

- Isleham Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and there are very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, whose parents are in the armed forces or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school grounds house the independently managed Isleham Pre-School, which was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The headteacher of the school is retiring at Easter. Acting leadership has been secured for the summer term and substantive leadership from September 2016 onwards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, a number of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made 20 shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors heard some pupils in Years 1 to 3 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and nine other governors, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of evidence was examined, including the school's self-evaluation and various development plans, the systems to track pupils' progress, and policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account 26 responses to Parent View, the online survey, two letters from parents and responses from 12 staff and 25 pupils who completed the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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