

# Clarkson Infants and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	110649
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	378140
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Nick Butt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	239
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Barker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike English
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Trafford Road Wisbech PE13 2ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01945 584867
<b>Fax number</b>	01945 584867
<b>Email address</b>	head@clarkson.cambs.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	12–13 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	378140



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Nick Butt

Additional inspector

Michael Lafford

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 15 lessons and all teachers and some teaching assistants were seen teaching; meetings were held informally with parents and carers, and with pupils; two members of the governing body, including the Chair; and a wide range staff, including leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation documents, strategic plans and other development plans. Inspectors scrutinised 65 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others returned by staff.

## Information about the school

Clarkson is an average-sized infant school. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is average. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. A new leadership structure was introduced consisting of the headteacher and four senior leaders in September 2011. The Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body have been appointed recently.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- Clarkson is a satisfactory school. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and the new leadership structure is enabling senior leaders to take on a broad range of responsibilities that are helping the school to improve.
- Children make a good start in the Nursery, where consistently good teaching and thorough assessment strategies enable them to achieve well.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils have maintained average standards over time from starting points a little below national expectations.
- The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because the support is tailored specifically to their needs.
- The rate of pupils' progress has improved faster in mathematics than in writing. While pupils have opportunities to write at length, writing lags behind mathematics because expectations of pupils' writing vary between classes and they receive inconsistent guidance about how to improve their spelling.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There are also strong elements of good teaching, especially in Year 2. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and pupils cooperate together. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows if pupils do not have enough time to work independently. While teachers match work to the needs of most groups of pupils, sometimes, more-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Parents and carers agree with pupils that the school is a safe environment and that the very rare instances of bullying are dealt with promptly by staff.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and leaders have focused on the right priorities for improvement. Leaders and managers track the progress and attainment of pupils in detail, but the system they use makes it difficult to access the data easily. While all key subject leaders are involved in aspects of monitoring the quality of teaching, they do not all have the opportunity to observe lessons to see at first hand the impact of teaching on learning.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and achievement in writing by:
  - having consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve through their writing
  - developing effective strategies to improve spelling.
- Ensure most teaching is good or better by:
  - conducting all lessons at a brisk pace
  - giving pupils more opportunities to work independently
  - providing sufficient challenge for more-able pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - refining the tracking system to provide easily accessible data about pupils' attainment and progress
  - ensuring all key subject leaders observe lessons as part of their monitoring of the quality of teaching.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to take an active part in lessons. They get on well together in class, working in groups and independently. The impact of teaching on their progress is satisfactory. The school promotes early reading and writing skills through systematically teaching the sounds that letters make. This enables pupils to blend sounds together to read new words and to recognise familiar words. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils find it more difficult to apply the skills they have learnt to write spellings correctly because they are not given clear strategies to do this consistently.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in the Nursery, where an exciting range of purposeful tasks engage and challenge them. In Reception Year and Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress. Interventions to improve mathematics have been successful in accelerating the progress of particular individuals who were falling behind. While more-able pupils make satisfactory progress overall, tasks do not always challenge them sufficiently to achieve well.

Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs are assessed carefully when they join the school and are given appropriate support to enable them to make satisfactory progress like their peers. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, which gives them the confidence to join in activities as the benefit from adult attention. Specialist support for pupils who speak English as an additional language meets their individual needs well, so that they make good progress. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make the same progress as their peers. The school has worked hard to engage boys in writing and the gap in attainment with girls is narrowing. All parents and carers who returned questionnaires were, justifiably, satisfied with the progress their children were making at school.

## Quality of teaching

Teachers make learning interesting for pupils by linking themes together and choosing subject matter that engages them. The planned curriculum has a positive impact on teaching. In Reception Year, children enjoyed finding out about dinosaurs and having their own 'dinosaur dig'. The teacher used model dinosaurs for a counting activity, which motivated the children. Year 2 pupils found their research on the Great Fire of London very interesting and studied texts as part of their guided reading activities. They asked informed questions, such as 'Did the king escape from the fire?' Parents and carers were strongly of the opinion that teaching is good, although inspectors found that it is satisfactory overall. For example, at times, pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet at the start of lessons and do not have enough time to practise their skills independently. Teachers make good use of technology to bring learning to life; they question pupils well, ensuring that they understand what is being expected of them. Pupils said that they find their lessons interesting, although occasionally the work can be too easy. This view was supported by inspection findings that more-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and there is some variation between classes in how much writing pupils are expected to complete. While there is evidence of writing at length, this is not consistent in all classes.

Teaching makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have opportunities to discuss their beliefs and show respect to one another when sharing ideas. In the Nursery, children were in awe of a 'beat baby' that emerged from its hiding place when they kept a steady beat. They develop the social skills to work together in groups and the perseverance to work independently. A focus on learning key vocabulary for mathematics and science activities enables pupils to apply their literacy skills across subjects and benefits especially those who speak English as an additional language. Marking shows pupils how to improve, but they are not all secure in their understanding of their personal targets in literacy and numeracy.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say they feel safe in school and free from bullying and harassment, which they say hardly ever occurs. These views are supported by almost all parents and carers and confirmed by the school's internal records. The school has a calm, caring ethos and a family atmosphere that ensures all pupils are valued as individuals. Children settle quickly in the Nursery because routines are very well established and they learn to respect one another from the start. Behaviour is typically good, both in classrooms and around the school. Pupils are considerate towards one another, and have positive attitudes to learning. They take responsibility willingly, for example helping to lead games in the playground. Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep safe. For example, they know what to do in the event of a fire. Most pupils attend well. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has seen rapid gains in the past year.

## Leadership and management

Recent changes in the school's leadership structure and on the governing body have

provided an opportunity to drive improvement even more rigorously. Leaders and managers have identified that the school's tracking system is unwieldy and not sufficiently accessible to all members of staff and the governing body. This is being transferred to a central electronic database. Joint observations by the inspection team with the headteacher showed that there is a good understanding of where the strengths and areas to develop in teaching lie. Teachers are given clear feedback about how they can improve their practice even more. Professional development is appropriately focused on school priorities, especially in raising standards and achievement in writing. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. While all key subject leaders monitor planning and pupils' work, those who are class-based are not always able to find the time to observe lessons to deepen their overview of the quality of teaching and learning across the school and give advice. Strategic plans set out clearly how the school can improve and include challenging and measurable targets by which they can be evaluated. The governing body supports the school well and members make regular visits to monitor its work. The governing body has not always had the data it needed to ask searching questions of senior leaders and this is being remedied by the changes to the tracking system. The school has maintained its performance since the last inspection and shown improvements in key areas, demonstrating that it has the capacity for improvement.

The curriculum has been redesigned to provide more opportunities to link learning across different subjects. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and their social development. The curriculum is enriched with themed days such as 'Victorian Day' and visits to places of interest. An extended project involving a storyteller from a traveller background generated much enthusiasm for drama and writing and made a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. This is extended further through their links with children in Guatemala.

The governing body takes its responsibilities to promote equal opportunities, tackle discrimination and ensure safeguarding arrangements are secure very seriously. The school is inclusive and celebrates diversity, reaching out to families from a wide range of different cultures and backgrounds. Leaders and managers track the progress of different groups of pupils to identify any gaps in achievement and close them, ensuring that all groups make at least satisfactory progress. The school meets all requirements for safeguarding pupils. All the relevant checks are made when staff are appointed and training is good in keeping all staff up to date with safeguarding procedures. Accident records and risk assessments are thorough.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



16 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Clarkson Infants School, Wisbech, PE13 2ES**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently and for sharing your views with us. Clarkson is a satisfactory school and is improving all the time. Here are some of its strengths.

- Your behaviour is good and you have a good understanding of how to keep safe.
- You find lessons interesting and are very keen to take an active part in them.
- You are able to tackle new words when you come across them in your reading.
- The school cares for you well if you are having difficulties.
- Children in the Nursery get off to a good start.

We have asked the school to improve further by:

- helping you to do even better in writing, especially by having high expectations of what you can do and by improving your spelling
- making sure the work is not too easy for you and keeping you on your toes the whole time
- making sure teachers and members of the governing body have the information they need to see how well you are doing.

You can help by doing your best and telling your teachers what you enjoy about your learning and if anything is too easy. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt  
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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