

The Ickniel Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110671
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378143
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Sawcer
Headteacher	Sarah Robins
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2008
School address	Lynton Way Sawston Cambridge CB22 3EA
Telephone number	01223 508750
Fax number	01223 508749
Email address	office@ickniel.d.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild

Additional Inspector

Chris Read

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 16 lessons, taught by eight teachers, to look at learning, and made additional brief visits to each classroom to gather evidence about behaviour. They listened to pupils read and observed the after-school club. Informal discussions took place with parents and carers when they brought their children to school. Meetings were held with staff, representatives of the governing body and a group of pupils. The views of the local authority were gathered through a telephone discussion. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, school development planning, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors took into account views expressed in 59 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with those completed by 86 pupils and 28 staff.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage and only a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average and high in some year groups. The school does not meet the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Primary Science Quality Mark (Silver Award) and has Investors in People status.

A pre-school on the school site is privately run and subject to separate inspection.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and provides them with a wide range of interesting learning experiences. It is not yet good because pupils make satisfactory progress and there are some inconsistencies in teaching. The outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not contribute as fully as it should to children’s development. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- In recent years, attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 has fluctuated around broadly average but it dipped in Year 6 in 2011. The school is working in collaboration with the local authority to raise achievement and there has been improvement at the end of both key stages this year.
- Teaching is satisfactory and there is some good teaching. However, teachers do not consistently match work to the needs of different groups of pupils. At times, lessons lack pace, activities are not structured tightly enough or explanations made clear. Teaching assistants provide good individual support to pupils with a statement of special educational needs but are not always deployed as well as they could be when providing support to groups in class.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are enthusiastic and have good attitudes to learning. Most pupils conduct themselves well and teachers are generally effective in managing pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. A great deal of development has taken place over the past year to strengthen the management of performance. The school is now making better use of data to track pupils’ progress and hold teachers to account. The leadership of teaching is, nevertheless, satisfactory because monitoring is not as rigorous as it could be in continuously checking on key aspects of teaching or linking judgements to the learning of different

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groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring teachers identify clearly in their planning what they expect different groups of pupils to learn
 - using the different learning objectives for each group as the basis for planning tasks that offer exactly the right level of challenge
 - consistently utilising the skills of teaching assistants to full effect
 - ensuring all lessons proceed at a brisk pace and include activities that are sufficiently structured with expectations that are clearly explained.
- Strengthen the leadership of teaching and the drive for school improvement by:
 - continuously checking to ensure teachers use assessment information and their teaching assistants to full effect in meeting pupils' learning needs
 - ensuring that lesson observation is always sharply focused on the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- Develop the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it contributes fully to children's development in all areas of learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry to the school ranges from being as expected for children's age to below national expectations. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been satisfactory in recent years and good in personal, social and emotional development. Satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 has resulted in broadly average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection. Generally, progress has been satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has fluctuated considerably in English and mathematics, ranging from above average to low. This is partly explained by the high proportion of pupils with particularly low starting points in some year groups. Low attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011 and some underachievement by middle- and lower-attaining pupils meant that the school did not meet the government's floor standard.

There is improvement in pupils' attainment in some year groups, and most parents and carers are happy with the progress their children are making. An increased focus on the teaching of basic skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage has led to an improvement in children's literacy and numeracy skills this year. However, children's progress is slowed by limited experience of outdoor learning. Accelerated progress in English and mathematics is evident currently in Years 1 and 2 and Year 6. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are now reaching above average standards in reading. They use their

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knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) effectively, together with other strategies, to tackle unfamiliar words. Younger pupils enjoy books and can see that reading is valued in school. Older pupils talk about favourite genres and authors and are encouraged to read widely.

There are no clear differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils but the amount of progress pupils make in lessons is variable. In some lessons, progress is good for all groups but where teaching is satisfactory rather than better, work is not matched precisely to pupils' prior attainment. In these instances, more-able pupils sometimes finish early and their progress slows because they do not have the opportunity to extend their skills. At the other end of the spectrum, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs sometimes rely on support to complete work that is too similar to that being undertaken by the rest of the class. Their overall progress is, therefore, satisfactory despite the good skills of teaching assistants and the fact that pupils with a statement of special educational needs make good progress when they receive one-to-one support.

Quality of teaching

Over time, teaching is having a satisfactory impact on achievement. There is some good teaching but not enough to accelerate progress further. Nevertheless, relationships throughout the school are good and teachers are successful in motivating pupils. Activities are varied and interesting, and pupils have plenty of hands-on experiences through the imaginative use of resources. In the best lessons, teachers are clear about what they want different groups of pupils to learn and ensure that activities provide the right level of challenge. In a literacy lesson in Year 1 where teaching was good, the teacher provided tasks at significantly different levels of difficulty. More-able pupils were presented with pieces of non-fiction text that revealed the teacher's high expectations and pushed them to use their reading and thinking skills to full effect. The needs of less-able pupils were met equally well as they worked with teaching assistants to order and record words. In Year 6, thorough use of assessment has also been key to the improvement in standards this year in English and mathematics. Pupils have detailed targets and are closely involved in evaluating their own progress, as well as setting learning goals for themselves. Marking provides them with clear guidance about how well they are doing and what to do to improve.

Where teaching is satisfactory, pupils of different abilities are given essentially the same or overly similar work to do. When planning lessons, teachers do not always identify what they intend different groups of pupils to learn. Though broadly meeting pupils' needs, this leads to the whole class working on tasks that are too similar and sometimes has the effect of limiting opportunities for more-able pupils. It also means that teaching assistants strive to make tasks accessible to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs which are not closely linked to the next steps in their learning. As a result the teaching assistants' skills, such as good questioning, intervention and challenge, are not given free rein. The pace of lessons is sometimes too slow and potentially exciting tasks are not always structured tightly enough or

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explained clearly to ensure all pupils get the most out of the activities.

Teachers promote pupils' personal development well. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups, do much to raise their self-esteem and encourage them to respect one another's ideas. Most parents and carers express positive views about teaching and pupils say that teachers make learning interesting and fun.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The views of most parents and carers and of pupils confirm that the good behaviour seen in nearly all lessons during the inspection is typical of pupils' everyday experience. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and most conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. Pupils work with sustained concentration, get on well together, and cooperate sensibly when asked to work in pairs and small groups. The school has some pupils with behavioural difficulties but their classmates say that they are dealt with effectively so that their difficulties do not disrupt others' learning. In most instances, teachers manage challenging behaviour well and records indicate that incidents are dealt with thoroughly. Attendance is above average and the school has rigorous procedures for ensuring pupils attend regularly.

Parents and carers agree that their children feel safe at school, and pupils themselves confirm this. They are able to talk knowledgeably about cyber-bullying, racist and other prejudice-based bullying. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and that they are dealt with effectively. School records indicate that this is the case. In an assembly during the inspection, pupils were able to explain clearly how they would respond to situations both in and out of school that might put them at personal risk.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are improving even though there remain some weaker areas related to the monitoring of teaching. Strengths include the way senior leaders ensure that the school is a caring community where everyone feels valued and pupils enjoy learning. Staff morale is high and teamwork is strong. Work with the local authority is helping to bring greater rigour to the management of performance and strengthening the systems that underpin pupils' academic progress. The school has a wealth of data and the way it uses this has been significantly improved this year. Senior leaders are now holding teachers more closely to account through pupil progress meetings. They are using tracking more rigorously to identify any pupils who need intensive support to prevent them underachieving, which is helping to address any gaps in learning and to ensure that all groups receive equal opportunities. The impact of these initiatives is evident in the increase in pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 this year, which indicates that the school has the capacity to improve.

Staff have good opportunities for professional development and training, and these

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are having a positive impact. For example, a revised approach to the teaching of phonics has contributed to improvements in pupils' reading. However, checks on the quality of teaching are not all giving leaders the regular and well-targeted information they need to fine-tune their strategy for the school's development. Leaders' observations do not always focus closely enough on the learning and progress of all groups of pupils or convey to teachers the importance of always matching work to the next steps in learning of different groups. The governing body provides good support for the school, holding it to account for its work through increasingly focused visits to gather information at first hand. Members ensure that statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection are fully met.

The curriculum supports pupils' learning satisfactorily in English and mathematics and well in science, which has a high profile. The wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as film-making, visits by musicians, theatre groups, artists-in-residence, living history days and numerous clubs, do much to bring learning to life. Together with a strong personal, social and health education programme, these experiences contribute significantly to the good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In the after-school club, different age groups mix happily together and take part in a range of interesting creative and physical activities.

The school has, rightly, identified the need to develop the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage because it does not contribute as much as it should to children's development. There are missed opportunities to use both the outdoor area and the extensive school grounds to extend and enrich children's early learning.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Ickniel Primary School, Cambridge CB22 3EA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. I would like to express a particular thanks to those of you who shared your views with us through the questionnaire, who spoke to us about behaviour and about your work, and those who read to us. I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.

The school is providing you with a satisfactory education, which means it does some things well and could do some things a bit better. Most of you have made satisfactory progress during your time at the school, although there are signs this year that attainment is beginning to rise. Your teachers plan interesting activities for you and this helps to motivate you and explains why you enjoy school. Most of you behave well and show that you are keen to learn. You told us that your school is a happy place and the staff look after you well. We could see from your thoughtful answers in assembly that you have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe.

Your headteacher and the other staff are working hard to improve your school. We want to help them with this and so we have asked them to:

- make sure teachers always give you work that is not too easy and not too hard
- make the most of the skills of teaching assistants to help you
- make sure no time is wasted and that you are clear about how to organise your work and what is expected of you
- make the outdoor area more exciting for children in the Reception class
- keep a closer check on how your lessons are going.

You can help by letting your teachers know if your work is too easy or too difficult.

Again, thank you for your help and we wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild
Lead inspector

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