

The Ickniel Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110671
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310383
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kate Kendall
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Robins
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2004
School address	Lynton Way Sawston Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB22 3EA
Telephone number	01223 508750
Fax number	01223 508749

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average school serves the village of Sawston, although a number of pupils come from further afield. Virtually all pupils are White British. The proportions with minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is very low. Most pupils enter school with attainments that are in line with national expectations for their age. However, the school admits a higher than average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the number with a statement of special educational need is high for a school of this size. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher and two acting deputy headteachers.

The school has gained Health Promoting Schools, Investors in People, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Active Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Icknield Primary is a good school. Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress. Standards are above average because almost all attain or exceed the nationally expected standards for their age. As a result, the school has the overwhelming support of parents. Comments, such as 'Super school, love it', typify their views.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations. They plan work that makes significant demands, in terms of both intellectual effort and personal response. Pupils rise to these challenges because teaching is underpinned by a good curriculum that has outstanding attributes, especially in Years 1 to 6. The curriculum is based on developing thinking skills and creativity as the keys to effective learning and pupils' good academic achievement; outstanding levels of personal development justify teachers' belief in this approach. The school provides an excellent range of enrichment activities, educational visits, visitors and special projects that promote enjoyment and achievement in equal measure. Experiences such as working with local elderly residents on a film about the Second World War develop pupils' sensitivity to things of beauty, giving them good insights into human emotions and an understanding of what is right. By the time that they leave, most are very mature and confident. They show this in conscientious working habits and by striving to succeed. As a result, they are prepared extremely well for secondary education and the world of work.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Indeed, one parent described this as, 'A lovely warm, caring school'. Highly effective pastoral care and personal guidance build pupils' self-esteem and ensure that they remain healthy and safe. Teachers assess pupils' attainments carefully and use their marking and other evaluations to provide good quality guidance and targets to help them to progress to the next level. Pupils understand their targets, know how to achieve them and are well motivated to succeed. However, tracking does not always immediately identify when a pupils' progress begins to waver and refined procedures and a speeding up of the school's response to such situations are amongst current priorities.

At the heart of the school's success is the effective leadership provided by the acting headteacher and senior leadership team. They have high aspirations for the school and for the pupils, despite the temporary nature of their current roles. Their enthusiasm for the school rubs off on staff, builds morale and inspires commitment. A major strength of the school is its common purpose, because staff share the acting headteacher's vision. Furthermore, rigorous management and governance systems secure effective self-evaluation and a degree of consistency that ensures that standards do not fall. As a result, the school is going from strength to strength and has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception attaining standards that are broadly typical for five-year-olds, although communication skills and aspects of personal, social and emotional development are often at a lower level. They make good progress during their reception year because there is a consistent focus on developing communication and literacy and on providing children with the skills that they will need for future learning. Most children attain the Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage and some exceed them. Adults provide children with good individual and group support. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory. However, adults structure

some activities too tightly. They give children too few opportunities to develop independence by initiating their own learning and play. As a result, some children, particularly boys, do not engage fully with some activities and find it difficult to maintain interest and concentration.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give children in the Foundation Stage more opportunities to initiate their own learning and play.
- Improve tracking systems so that they provide teachers with clearer information about the progress of pupils in their lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average. This was the case in the 2007 national assessments, although there was a dip from the significantly above average levels of 2006. This dip resulted from the performance of boys who did less well than boys nationally and whose reading scores were particularly low. Standards in core subjects in Key Stage 2 have been above, and often significantly above, the national average for the last five years, although, here too, standards fell somewhat in 2007. Most pupils achieve well. Last year a third of pupils in Years 2 and 6 had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all of these achieved well in relation to their individual targets. The school has determinedly tackled the issues of early reading skills and of boys' performance and pupils' completed work. Tracking data show that this work is paying off. Most pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to make more progress than is normally expected in Key Stage 1. In Year 6, pupils overall achievement in core subjects is good. Pupils have made particularly good gains in English during Years 3 to 6, and in mathematics several gifted pupils are already working at levels significantly above those expected of 11-year-olds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils love school and consequently attendance is good. Moral and social skills are exceptionally well developed because the schools' core values of responsibility, resourcefulness, respect, resilience and the ability to relate well to others permeate all aspects of school life. The focus on thinking skills and creativity develops independence, confidence and initiative of a high order. Pupils show care for others through charitable activities, working with local elderly people and helping each other. School councillors take their responsibilities extremely seriously, are listened to and influence school life.

Pupils are exceptionally well-behaved and friendly. They say they feel very safe and any problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils lead safe and healthy lifestyles. They eat healthily, drink lots of water and take regular exercise. Good standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), combined with a strong work ethic, prepare the pupils exceptionally well for their lives as young adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and response and of their capacity to cope with challenging work. Planning is thorough and well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers plan exciting activities, such as film making, that require pupils to engage and be creative. There is a strong and consistent emphasis on developing pupils' thinking skills, for example when teachers take on the role of 'expert witness' and pupils are called on to 'interrogate' them. These approaches bring the best out in pupils, promote enjoyment and improve the quality of their learning.

When teaching is less successful, despite careful planning, teachers' monitoring of work in progress is not sharp enough to ensure that staff meet the needs of all pupils equally well. Activities for the youngest children are sometimes over-directed by adults, giving them little opportunity to express themselves independently. Occasionally, therefore, pupils do not make the progress that they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Despite the fact that the Foundation Stage curriculum is rather restrictive in some areas, the overall quality of the curriculum is a good and there are a number of outstanding features. Pupils learn French from Year 1 and the oldest pupils have learnt some Italian. Subjects are combined to make learning more enjoyable and relevant. Pupils make extensive use of ICT to aid their learning in all subjects. Detailed planning, and constructive links with the Village College, ensure that there is good provision for pupils of all abilities. High quality provision for enrichment activities means pupils enjoy stimulating experiences in sports, languages, music and the arts. An extensive range of visits and visitors makes learning more interesting and enjoyable. Pupils particularly value the frequent 'creativity days' and special projects which enable them to experience challenging and exciting activities, such as the chance to make a film about the Second World War.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The welfare of the pupils is central to the work of the school. An extremely caring and supportive ethos results in happy, well-motivated pupils who clearly love their school. The support provided for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective. Parents speak very highly of the help they receive. Teaching assistants are very knowledgeable and supportive, and their help is much appreciated by pupils. Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure the safety, security and health of the pupils. Academic guidance is good. Pupils have individual learning targets that are well matched to their ability and reviewed regularly. Marking is of a high standard, recognises achievement and often suggests how to improve. Very effective induction procedures ensure a smooth transition into Reception and on to the Village College.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher and senior leadership team have successfully maintained standards and improved the quality of education. They have done this by building on positive professional relationships with staff, maintaining rigorous regimes of monitoring and evaluation and bringing forward exciting curriculum development initiatives. The school's use of performance data is generally effective in identifying relative strengths and weaknesses. However, the school leaders have, rightly, identified the need to refine pupil tracking procedures in order to ensure a more speedy response to pupils' whose progress wavers. The acting headteacher has put creativity, thinking skills and learning to learn firmly at the heart of the curriculum and has the confidence to wait for these well-conceived developments to impact on academic standards. This approach has won the respect of staff, pupils and parents alike and, together with accurate school self-evaluation, gives the school a good capacity to improve further.

Governance is outstanding. Governors gather a wealth of first-hand information in order to provide an excellent balance of support and challenge and to ensure that standards and quality do not decline.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Icknield Primary School, Sawston, CB22 3EA

I am sure that you remember that inspectors visited your school a little while ago. Thank you for making us so welcome and for taking time to talk to us and to answer our questions. I particularly enjoyed seeing the DVD of your film project about the Second World War. You clearly gained a lot from working with the local elderly people and with the film-makers. I thought that the acting and singing were excellent.

We thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school.

There are many good things happening in your school.

- Almost all of you make good progress in English, mathematics and science and overall standards are above average.
- You enjoy school because teachers, educational visits, visitors and special projects make learning interesting and very enjoyable.
- Your excellent work on thinking skills is making you into more effective learners.
- You cooperate well and help each other, and your behaviour is excellent.
- Your teachers and other adults take exceptionally good care of you, help you when you have problems and give you good advice about your work.
- Mrs Robins, the staff, governors and pupils work hard to make your school a better place.

We have asked Mrs Robins and the other adults to do two things.

- We have asked the school to provide more opportunities for the youngest children to learn in lively, active way.
- We have asked the staff and governors to check more regularly on how well you are all doing, so that teachers have the information that they need to help you do even better, especially if you are struggling a bit.

I hope that you all continue to work hard and do well at Icknield.

With best wishes

Glynn Storer Lead inspector