

# Ickleford Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117401
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312601
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marianne Harris

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Margaret Holford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pat Salmon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Upper Green Ickleford Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 3YG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462459150
<b>Fax number</b>	01462453910

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The inspector looked particularly at the progress made by more able boys in writing and the ways in which the school maintains high standards, and also reviewed the curriculum and pupils' personal development and well-being. The inspector met with staff, governors and pupils. Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including self-evaluation, were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the schools' own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized school with pupils who come from a mainly White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above that usually seen. These difficulties vary, but are mainly for dyslexia, medical needs or physical disabilities. When they join the school the pupils' standards and prior attainment vary but they are generally close to those usually expected for their age.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an excellent school where pupils reach very high standards in all subjects. National test results have been consistently well above average in recent years and pupils, whatever their ability, achieve very well. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average, and by the time they leave school pupils have reached standards that are well above average. Pupils who find learning difficult achieve extremely well and those who are more able have work that is challenging so that they are not disaffected with learning. The outstanding displays around the school and work in books, demonstrate that standards are very high in all subjects, not merely in English, mathematics and science. Excellent leadership and management have resulted in exciting lessons that successfully link subjects together so that pupils really enjoy learning. Pupils benefit from the very rich curriculum that provides abundant opportunities for them to learn outside of normal lessons. Pupils comment on the many trips open to them, both locally and further afield, talking excitedly about what they have learned. These visits support learning very well, particularly in religious education where pupils enjoy excellent opportunities to learn at first hand about the beliefs of others by visiting their places of worship. There are many clubs providing sporting and other activities for all ages. One of the most notable strengths of the curriculum is the provision of swimming for all classes, made possible because the active Parents' Association funds the maintenance of the school's own pool. Another is the quality of provision in music, where all pupils are able to learn a musical instrument if they wish. Pupils are very proud of their singing ability and look forward to performing their songs in public. Parents are very positive about the school and many comment that they feel lucky to have such a good school in the local area.

Excellent care, guidance and support are given to all pupils. The standard of pastoral care is excellent. All required systems are in place and pupils are safe and welcomed into the school. Skilful teaching assistants ensure that pupils with particular needs, or those who find learning difficult, are fully involved in lessons and make excellent progress. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Every lesson has a clear purpose and all pupils are fully involved in their learning. There is a remarkable consistency in the quality of teaching and this is testament to the drive of the headteacher and senior leadership team to ensure that all pupils receive the highest possible standard of education and develop the key skills and insights they will need in later life. This is particularly evident in history and geography where pupils learn to find out for themselves by discussion what it means to be a good historian or a geography detective. All teachers have very high expectations of what every child can achieve and pupils respond positively to the challenges they are presented with. Teachers mark books very effectively so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Each child has targets set for them in order to maintain very high standards. In some, though not quite all classes, they are presented very clearly in pupils' books and in these cases, they catch pupils' interest and are very effective in involving them in assessing their own learning and in encouraging them to review progress towards their targets.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. They have a very good understanding of the importance of keeping healthy and safe. Many cycle to school and are very proud of this. They are also proud of the part they play in the school and local community. The school council was instrumental in providing new equipment for the playground and pupils in Year 5 take great pride in being 'playground buddies' to ensure that all pupils have someone to play with at break times. Much money has been raised for local and national charities. Behaviour is

exemplary, with pupils genuinely caring for each other in a school where mutual respect is taken for granted. If any unacceptable behaviour happens then pupils say that it is quickly dealt with and they are friends again. Pupils report that they really enjoy coming to school because learning is interesting. They particularly like the fact that during lessons they are taught skills that they will need and not just facts. Consequently they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The real success of the school lies in its high quality teamwork. Teachers have an accurate understanding of the strengths of their school and a common commitment to responding to the challenges they face. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is supported very effectively by the senior leadership team. Together they promote high standards and successfully combine the skills of established staff with those of new ones. Governance is very good. Governors understand the challenges the school faces as it seeks to maintain very high standards across all subjects, and have established a committee specifically designed to ensure that the school is successful. They are extremely supportive of the school and all visit regularly, reporting back to the whole governing body on their findings. The headteacher and her team have put in place a very effective and well coordinated tracking system to identify any child who falls behind and to provide the help they need so that they soon catch up. The issues identified from the last inspection have been tackled very successfully and the school goes from strength to strength. There is an excellent capacity to maintain very high standards and improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

There is excellent provision for children in the Foundation Stage. From an average starting point children make very good progress in all areas of learning and most have reached the standards expected for their age, with many exceeding them. The single issue identified at the time of the last inspection has been tackled very successfully and the children now benefit from a well resourced outside play area. Teachers plan exciting activities that encourage children to concentrate and work together effectively. Basic skills are extremely well taught so that children are confident when beginning to read and write and solve simple mathematical problems. Activities cover all areas of learning and children really enjoy learning in this stimulating environment.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Provide information on pupils' targets in a consistent form so that pupils find it easy to refer to them and check for themselves how many they have reached.

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## 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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

7 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ickleford Primary School, Hitchin, SG5 3YG

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school recently. I am now writing to let you know what I found out.

You go to an excellent school. There are many reasons for this. Firstly you are all so well behaved and eager to learn. I was very impressed by your politeness and friendly manner. Many of you asked me if I was having a good day and were very keen to tell me about the school and your work. I really enjoyed looking at some books and talking to you and your teachers. I am sorry to have missed talking to Year 5 because you were on a trip. However, Year 6 told me about your good work as 'playground buddies'.

Another reason that the school is outstanding is because your teachers are very good. I commented to Mrs Salmon that the school looked very attractive, particularly the beautiful displays. Your teachers expect you to work hard and make very good progress. They mark work effectively and set targets so that the high standards you reach can be maintained. I have asked them to help you even more by putting these targets into your books so that you can check for yourself when you have reached them.

The other reason that your school is such a positive place to be is the fact that there are so many opportunities for you. Lessons are interesting, there are many clubs with trips out and visitors into school that enrich your learning. Teachers' work together to make sure that this continues and that school is fun. I know that I did not see everything and I am very sorry I missed hearing the choir sing because that must have been beautiful.

Thank you once again for letting me know about your wonderful school. I wish you all good luck in the future.

Marianne Harris

Lead inspector