

Isbourne Valley Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135437
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	341644
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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 of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Workman
Headteacher	Lesley Marriott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. About half the time during the inspection was spent looking at learning. The inspectors saw three teachers at work in nine lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding and other documents. Questionnaires from 33 parents and carers, nine members of staff and 36 pupils were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- opportunities for independent learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of marking and the involvement of pupils in assessing learning
- how well pupils learn about cultural diversity
- the impact of all leaders, including the governors, on provision and progress
- how well care, guidance and support and links with parents and carers help pupils to enjoy school and to gain confidence

Information about the school

The school opened in September 2008 following the amalgamation of two very small village schools, and is housed in two buildings over a mile apart. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The school has a low proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most, but not all, of these pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. All classes have mixed ages and the Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils receive a good education at this friendly school. They benefit from small classes and appreciate the wealth of activities provided. They were right when they told us, 'We have fun when using our brains' and 'We play games when we are actually working.' Good care, guidance and support enable pupils to enjoy school and to gain confidence. Children learn quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where literacy and numeracy skills are taught especially well. There are too few chances for these children to plan and carry out their own ideas both indoors and outside. Good teaching between Years 1 and 6 enables pupils to build on what they have already learnt. Teachers plan interesting activities helping pupils to enjoy learning. They do not always plan tasks that help pupils to reach their individual targets, or show through marking how pupils can do their best.

Pupils' progress is good, leading to above average attainment by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are particularly good at reading because they are given good opportunities to practise and improve these skills. The school is working well to close the gap between reading and writing by increasing opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum. This is especially successful in history and geography topics. Pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of physical activities and consequently are helped to adopt healthy lifestyles. They develop good personal skills, although they have a limited awareness of diversity because they meet few people from different cultures and they are not taught enough about this.

Good procedures for self-evaluation enable senior leaders to appraise what needs to be done next to improve the school further. Governors are right when they say 'We are aware of where we are and where we want to be.' Leaders have successfully established Isbourne Valley as one school. Rates of progress and learning are good across the year groups, demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan their own activities and to make more choices in their learning indoors and outside.
- Improve the pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and globally.
- Make smarter use of assessment information, marking and target setting to ensure that all pupils are consistently challenged to do their best.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

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Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and learn well in most lessons. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils extended their knowledge of history well by discussing pictures and maps about the local railway. In a mathematics lesson in Year 2, pupils were challenged to explain the strategies they had used to find the difference between pairs of numbers.

Pupils feel very safe at school and behave well, although they said that behaviour is better in lessons than on the playground. On the playground, older pupils can be rather boisterous, although this is mostly channelled well through the use of games equipment. Pupils are keen to learn and attendance is not above average due to a few parents choosing to take their children on term-time holidays. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for tasks around the school. For example, school councillors are proud of the new mirrors they chose for the cloakrooms. Pupils cooperate with each other well when working in small groups or pairs and listen and respond sensibly in most lessons. In a literacy lesson in Years 3 and 4, pupils worked together well when identifying good features in a selection of informal letters.

Attainment is above average by the time pupils leave the school and pupils achieve well, especially in reading. In one lesson, Year 1 pupils enjoyed reading a text about a spider's web and were happy to answer the teacher's challenging questions. Pupils' good literacy, numeracy and personal skills prepare them well for the next stage of education and later life. They enjoy school and want to learn more.

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is evident in the way pupils respect one another and reflect on the world around them. They grow their own vegetables and enjoy looking after class pets. Pupils have few opportunities for meeting pupils from differing ethnic backgrounds and consequently they have a limited knowledge of cultural diversity. Pupils greatly enjoy taking part in physical activities and participate successfully in local competitive games. They understand what they should eat to stay healthy and mostly follow these healthy guidelines.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know the pupils well and build good relationships with them. Behaviour is managed calmly and pupils are right when they tell us that they learn a lot in lessons. Explanations are clear and teachers use information and communication technology and good subject vocabulary to help extend the pupils' knowledge. Good questioning helps pupils to listen and to think carefully. Assessment procedures are firmly in place and are used to set individual targets. This information is not consistently used when teachers are setting or marking work and, when this happens, not all pupils make progress as quickly as they could.

Links between subjects are being developed well, particularly in history and geography. In science, there are some missed opportunities for independent writing. Pupils have good opportunities to enjoy interesting activities in the early morning sessions. For example, older pupils enjoyed teaching younger ones the drumming patterns they learnt following the performance of a visitor. On another morning, pupils were learning how to play games with marbles. These activities contribute well to the pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school. Members of staff provide good care and support for all pupils by praising them and ensuring that they all take part in lessons. Pupils are confident that adults in the school care for them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Self-evaluation is good because leaders use information from monitoring provision and pupils' progress to identify the next steps for improvement, to embed ambition and to

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drive improvement. The school has a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination, and the progress of all pupils is monitored closely so that dips in progress can be tackled swiftly. Monitoring of teaching and learning is mainly carried out by senior leaders, although other members of staff are becoming more involved now that the two schools have become established as one. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is newly formed following temporary arrangements during the amalgamation. Governors are supportive and enthusiastic and are knowledgeable about the school. They are developing their roles in taking the initiative in challenging the school over its actions. At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding arrangements were found to be satisfactory because there were some minor administrative omissions. These do not compromise the safety and well-being of the pupils. Leaders have good relationships with external agencies and parents and carers, enabling them to support pupils who are finding life difficult. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Pupils currently have insufficient knowledge of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and globally. The school has suitable plans to extend pupils' understanding by forging links with schools in contrasting locations.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children join the school working within the levels expected for their age. They make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy, and attainment is slightly above average by the time children enter Year 1. Staff work together well as a team to

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meet children's individual needs. They support the learning of letters and sounds, vocabulary and mathematical calculations particularly well. For example, one child was able to describe 'George's Marvellous Medicine' as being 'explosive'. Occasionally, in some morning sessions, children sit and listen for too long and have too few opportunities to work on activities they have planned and chosen for themselves. When this happens, they find it hard to concentrate and can become quietly inattentive. At other times, when children are learning independently, they cooperate with each other sensibly and extend their knowledge and vocabulary well. For example, three children helped each other to make flowers from construction materials, chatting happily about the parts of a flower and how many they were making. In another activity, a child enjoyed sharing 10 pretend sausages with varying numbers of friends. Children are well behaved and keen to talk about what they are doing. Provision is led and managed well and close relationships with parents enable children to settle into class routines and gain confidence. Leaders work together well to develop the curriculum and are aware that there are too few opportunities for children to learn outside in cold weather. They are seeking ways of enabling children to come in and out without disturbing the older pupils in the class. Children's progress is carefully monitored and information is shared with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a high response to the parents' and carers' questionnaire. Most parents and carers are pleased with the work of the school, particularly that their children are happy, are taught well and that the school is led and managed effectively. A few parents and carers who replied to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed concerns over the way pupils' behaviour is dealt with and how well the school deals with their concerns. The inspection team agrees with parents and carers that pupils are happy and that teaching and leadership are good. The school manages pupils' behaviour well, and there was no unacceptable behaviour observed during the inspection. The school is aware that there have been a few concerns over communication following the amalgamation. They provide an open invitation to parents and carers to discuss any concerns, provide information on the school website and use home and school diaries to send messages home when necessary.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Isbourne Valley School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 60 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	52	16	48	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	58	13	39	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	42	17	52	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	30	19	58	3	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	55	15	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	48	16	48	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	45	16	48	2	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	27	18	55	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	36	16	48	3	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	18	22	67	4	12	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	24	21	64	4	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	27	24	73	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	42	18	55	1	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



11 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Isbourne Valley Primary School, Cheltenham GL54 5PF

Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. We are pleased that you enjoy coming to this good school.

These are the best things about your school

- You enjoy school, and are right when you tell us that you learn a lot in lessons.
- It is good that you behave sensibly and are polite and friendly.
- We agree with you when you say 'teachers are kind' and that school is 'not boring'.
- Your headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school even better.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next

- Give those of you in the Reception Year more chances to choose what you are going to do when you are working indoors and outside.
- Help you to learn more about the various cultures in the United Kingdom and beyond.
- Make smarter use of information on how well you are doing, marking and target setting to help you always do your best.

Thank you once again for talking with us about your school and showing us your work. You could help your teachers by being careful not to bump into each other on the playground.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector

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