

Ingatestone Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114909
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378956
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Netto

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darren Cooper
Headteacher	Shelagh Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2008
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons or part lessons taught by six teachers. They met with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school plans, records of pupils' progress, school policies, minutes of meetings and school self-evaluation documents. They received and analysed 40 questionnaires from parents and carers, and also surveys from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Do girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make as much progress as others?
- How effective is teaching and the use of assessment in raising achievement so that pupils are more involved in their own learning?
- What is the impact of all leaders in inspiring staff to drive improvement and accelerate progress?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average infants school. Most pupils are from White British heritages. There are more girls than boys in the school. Most pupils live in the local area and come from affluent backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well below average. The school runs a breakfast club. It has formed a Trust with two other local schools. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy School status.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This small village school is providing an outstanding education. Comments typical of parents and carers reflect the findings of the inspection team. This is 'a very caring and happy school;' 'we can't speak highly enough of the school and the education she receives.' 'A wonderful place for a young child to begin education.

The school has made significant improvements in a number of areas since the previous inspection, led by a tenacious headteacher with high expectations. The school's outstanding capacity for improvement is reflected in the extensive development from good to outstanding in most areas of its work.

Attainment in all areas as well as attendance is now high. Pupils make outstanding progress, and achievement gaps between girls and boys have been eliminated. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make outstanding progress. Progress in writing is now similar to reading and mathematics. By the time they leave the school, pupils are confident and independent learners. The positive lead provided by the headteacher has resulted in a strong, cohesive leadership team, and the development of highly effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. The governing body plays a strong role in supporting and challenging the school. This has ensured that safeguarding procedures are good.

An increasing school roll has resulted in pupils in Key Stage 1 being taught in mixed-age classes for some lessons. The school has recruited an additional teacher so that single-aged classes in literacy and numeracy provide more focused concentration on basic skills. This has contributed to the high achievement in these areas.

Pupils are confident and articulate. They are kept very safe and happy by all adults, and behave responsibly in and around the school. Their outstanding behaviour in lessons makes a strong contribution to their learning. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive outstanding care and guidance, and as a result make excellent progress. An outstanding curriculum combined with teaching which is often exceptional ensures that all pupils make the most of the opportunities provided.

The school has retained its small village character, and is the focal point for many local events which are attended by many people from the community. Well established links with a school in New Zealand ensures that the school is making a good contribution to community cohesion. However, the school's rural context means that pupils don't regularly have contact with more urban parts of the country.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the strategies to promote community cohesion by improving the pupils'

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awareness of the backgrounds, beliefs and lifestyles of others who live in contrasting areas of the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. In 2011, Year 2 pupils performed well above the national average in all key subjects. Pupils of all abilities did well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the gap between girls and boys has now been closed. Current data and evidence from lesson observations confirm that achievement continues to be well above national levels. The dip in writing in 2010 has been addressed, and strategies which support sentence construction, such as linking letters and sounds and extensive use of speaking and listening activities, have had a clear impact on outcomes. Pupils now perform as well in writing as in other areas.

Pupils say they feel extremely safe, and this view is reflected by parents and carers in their responses to the Ofsted survey. The breakfast club is an example of how the school supports families. Pupils are joined by others from the local junior school in an environment which is secure and supportive. In class, their behaviour makes a strong contribution to their enjoyment of learning. They show excitement and curiosity when confronted with new challenges. Regular feedback from adults ensures that they are fully involved in their own learning. As a matter of course, pupils reflect on their learning and help others to review their work as well.

The pupils' day is enriched by a whole school aerobics session with staff participating. Pupils thoroughly enjoy and value this short burst of energy, and are equally energetic at break; they make the most of the varied equipment to exercise and have fun. This is followed by a 'drinking and thinking session', where the pupils eat fresh fruit and are encouraged to think about different topics. Pupils demonstrate a strong commitment to healthy lifestyles, often leading the aerobics dance, and participating in a number of different sports activities after school. This has contributed to the school achieving the Healthy School award.

Pupils' basic skills are extremely well developed. They demonstrated confidence in using information and communication technology, and all have passwords to an e-learning platform which is used both at school and at home. With literacy and numeracy skills highly developed, they are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. Good links with the local junior school, where most siblings go, and strong relationships with parents and carers have secured high attendance. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall; however, the cultural dimension is weaker. The school is aware of this and through its links with the Trust are planning events and links to enhance this aspect. During an assembly on the value of sharing and co-operation, pupil volunteers were able to demonstrate an excellent understanding of right of wrong.

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These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A large majority of the teaching is outstanding. Teachers regularly use success criteria so pupils can gauge how well they have achieved a task. Pupils are encouraged to talk with partners, review their own work and that of their peers, and respond to adult questioning. Typically outstanding lessons are briskly paced and geared towards pupils’ different needs so that all are suitably challenged.

Teachers in the Reception Year ran a session on linking sounds and letters to which parents and carers were invited. This offered them practical guidance on how children use different strategies to recognise words, and how to help them improve their reading, spelling and writing. In Year 2, a fast paced session on linking sounds and letters thoroughly engaged pupils, who showed expert skills in using sounds to break up words in order to recognise their meaning. They were challenged to use this knowledge to recognise patterns of consonants and vowels in other words. In a Year 1 class, the teacher effectively modelled pronunciation of words and syllables to help the pupils to link letters and sounds. In a fast paced session, pupils applied their learning to new words, and were excited and pleased with their success. As a result they made outstanding progress. In another Year 1 class, pupils were able to apply ‘bossy verbs’ in writing instructions for a game they had devised. Pupils are confident in writing for different audiences and in different styles.

The strong curriculum is characterised by well planned opportunities for cross curricular themes which build on the interests of pupils, and develop basic skills

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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which are applied in a variety of contexts. As one parent commented about her son, 'He is provided with an excellent balance of curriculum based learning as well as a broader education.'

Strong relationships with parents and carers ensure that pupils are well supported. The school identifies pupils' needs through careful observation and recording of progress, and close liaison with external agencies, especially speech and language. These specialists have ensured that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given excellent support and make outstanding academic progress and personal development. This is reflected in comments made by parents and carers: 'He loves going to school and we are happy with the environment and atmosphere of the school' and: 'He receives absolutely excellent individualised attention which means that he is valued and cared for as a single child.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Since her arrival, the headteacher has developed a strong and cohesive staff team. Her drive and ambition have secured and sustained continuous improvement. Leadership roles have been developed, and now middle leaders play an increasingly effective role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. Performance management is closely linked to the school's development plan, and staff contributions are much valued. As a result staff morale is high. As one member of staff put it: 'Lovely children. It is a lovely place to work.'

Governors provide good support for the school, though recent changes to the governing body have meant that several experienced governors have left. However, governors are taking an increasing role in the systematic evaluation of the school's performance. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They are kept informed by regular contact with the school and through detailed reports by the headteacher, including a detailed analysis of the school's performance in 2011, and the local authority reviews. As a result they ensure that all statutory duties are met.

Parents and carers are regularly involved in school events, and this strong partnership contributes well to outstanding outcomes. For example, parents and carers attend workshops on how children are taught sounds and letters, and how this supports early reading and writing. The school is a focal point for local celebrations

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such as the annual fireworks display which the pupils help to organise. The school’s e-learning platform helps parents and carers support their children at home. The school benefits from a range of partnerships; for example teachers gain professional development opportunities through its links with partners in higher education. The Trust links with the Anglo-European secondary school is supporting international curriculum developments.

All pupils are treated as individuals, and the school’s strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity is reflected in the successful narrowing of previous gaps in achievement between boys and girls. Safeguarding systems are thorough and go beyond statutory requirements. The school is highly valued in the local community, and with international links providing additional stimulus for the pupils, the contribution to community cohesion is good. Links with areas of the country with a contrasting social and cultural mix is less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception Year with just below average skill levels expected for this age. By the time they leave the great majority exceed the early learning goals. They display a remarkable degree of independence. Staff provide an excellent balance between guided learning and independent choice of activities. As a result their behaviour is outstanding. They are extremely well cared for, and are safe and happy. This helps them to develop confidence to try things out.

Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage work closely with Key Stage 1 teachers so that assessment and tracking systems are used to best effect. Information about pupils’ progress is regularly shared across the different teams, to ensure continuity in

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learning. The leader is an excellent role model and she communicates a strong sense of purpose to the team. Policies and procedures are effective, and build on a secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The setting has a wide range of learning areas, with outdoor facilities supporting and developing the indoor curriculum.

Children used everyday objects and toys as part of an investigation to help them predict and compare objects of different size. Careful questioning supported the children’s language development. Children in Reception Year were taught about time in different groups which combined teacher-led activities and tasks chosen by the children. The various groups provided a rich stimulus for them to explore different time zones across the world, differences between day and night, as well as being able to tell the time. As a result of carefully planned interventions by adults, children demonstrated high levels of understanding and engagement.

There are very effective links with local pre-school providers and also with the local junior school. This ensures that transitions are excellent. Children with any additional needs are quickly identified through the careful and rigorous tracking systems, and as a consequence their individual needs are extremely well met. All children make exceptional progress during this phase.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The response rate to the Ofsted questionnaire was around the national average. A vast majority of parents and carers who returned the form were very positive in their responses. A small number raised concerns about different matters, including how the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. During the inspection, inspectors found relationships with parents and carers to be strong, and consultation and communication to be regular and effective.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ingatestone Infant 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 112 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	83	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	83	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	25	63	15	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	48	21	53	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	70	12	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	28	70	11	28	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	63	13	33	2	5	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)	20	50	15	38	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	22	55	18	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	53	15	38	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	48	16	40	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	55	14	35	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	30	75	10	25	0	0	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



25 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ingatestone Infant School, Ingatestone, CM4 0DF

Thank you so much for making us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school because the learning is fun, and your teachers look after you well. You learn lots of new things, and enjoy being given extra challenges. Your parents and carers are also very pleased that you attend Ingatestone. We agree with these views as you go to an outstanding school. There are too many things to mention, but here are some of the best parts of the school.

- You make fantastic progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You are enthusiastic about learning, work really hard, and help each other.
- You get on very well with each other and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You feel very safe in school because teachers and other adults look after you and help you to understand how to keep safe.
- You have an excellent understanding about how to keep fit and healthy.
- Your headteacher, all the adults in the school and the governors want the best for you and work very hard to keep making the school even better.

You know about different ways of living in other parts of the country, but you could learn more about different religions and lifestyles. We have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to meet or talk with children who come from places different to your village. You can help by suggesting some places that you would like to learn about.

Your school keeps getting better and better. We know that you will continue to behave brilliantly and enjoy your learning. We wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto
Lead inspector

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