

# Ickniel Infant and Nursery School

Archers Way, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4UN

**Inspection dates** 18–19 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires Improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires Improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires Improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Levels of attainment have dipped slightly in writing and mathematics, and boys perform significantly less well than girls in writing.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to develop key writing skills within other subjects or participate in practical, problem solving tasks in mathematics.
- Teachers do not routinely make use of information on pupils' achievements to plan their lessons; as a consequence, in the large majority of lessons, work is not pitched at a suitable level to challenge all pupils, particularly the more able.
- Progress is sometimes limited because pupils are unclear about what they should be doing or what progress they are making.
- Governance is currently weakened by a number of vacancies that exist, and the newness of some governors to their role, which limits support to school to bring about rapid improvements.
- Subject leaders are insufficiently involved in raising achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's vision for the school is clear, well defined and shared. Teachers' performance is suitably managed to bring about some improved classroom skills.
- The school is a happy, active place where most pupils have positive attitudes and relate well. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those on school action plus is well planned and the gap with the national average for these pupils is closing rapidly by the end of Year 2.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs through effective support and interventions.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are very secure. Parents report that their children are well cared for and valued as individuals.
- Standards in reading have improved.
- The school benefits greatly from good partnership links with other schools, the Children's Centre; and also engages in supporting other local schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short observations of learning support assistants teaching or working with small groups.
- Inspectors made visits to classes to look at displays and observe pupils at work and play, listened to them read and spoke to them about their experiences at school and about their learning.
- They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, class teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised samples of pupils’ work, teachers’ planning, the school’s systems for tracking pupils’ progress, and documentation relating to management, the curriculum and safeguarding.
- Informal meetings were held with parents during the inspection. Inspectors took account of 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and considered 34 staff responses.

## Inspection team

Raminder Arora, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
James McAtear	Additional inspector
Christopher Gray	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Icknield is a larger than average, three-form entry school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. One-fifth of all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The largest groups are of Indian and Bangladeshi origin.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- Only a small proportion of pupils are disabled or supported at school action. The percentage supported at school action plus is slightly above average. Of these, most have either speech and language difficulties or behavioural and emotional learning needs.
- There are morning and afternoon Nursery classes and three Reception classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a Children's Centre managed by the school's governing body, and a breakfast club, neither of which were part of this inspection.
- The school has recently gained 'Investors in People' status.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching in order to increase the rate of pupils' progress by:
  - securing consistently high expectations of work and behaviour, and setting challenging learning targets that are discussed and reviewed regularly for each pupil
  - ensuring that teachers' feedback, including marking, always includes guidance for pupils about how to improve their work
  - improving the quality of outdoor learning in Early Years Foundation Stage, and consistently providing challenging experiences with clear learning outcomes.
- Improve attainment and achievement in writing and mathematics by:
  - providing well planned writing tasks that interest boys in particular, and further opportunities for regular extended written work across the curriculum
  - developing pupils' skills in sentence structure and use of interesting vocabulary
  - providing more well-planned opportunities to develop pupils' practical skills in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - strengthening subject leaders' ability to analyse, interpret and use effectively performance data, to aid pupils' learning and progress
  - ensuring that the governing body strengthens its recruitment and operates to full capacity, enabling the new members in particular to develop a sharper understanding of how to rigorously monitor and evaluate the school's work to bring about improvements.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most children begin school with attainment that is broadly in line with national expectations, although some have limited skills, especially in literacy, language and communication. By the end of Year 2 attainment remains broadly in line with national expectations.
- Achievement and progress are uneven. The clear emphasis through the school on the systematic teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is making a difference and pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress in reading, but the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels has gone down in both writing and mathematics. Currently, boys' performance in writing is significantly weaker than that of girls. More-able pupils do not do as well in writing and mathematics as they do in reading.
- Children's progress in some Early Years Foundation Stage classes requires improvement because the outdoor area is not yet fully developed and learning outcomes are not sufficiently clear to ensure well organised learning. In particular there is not always an appropriate balance between teacher-directed and children's self-initiated activities when they are in the outdoor classroom.
- In the minority of lessons where pupils made good progress, they were fully engaged in their learning, the pace was brisk, work was well matched to their needs, and tasks were generally well planned and interesting. This was seen, for example, in a physical education lesson in which four teams had to think of best strategies to win. However, inspectors' observations of pupils' work in class and in books confirm that too few pupils make good progress, mainly due to lack of challenge and the quality of guidance in marking.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and those who speak a first language other than English make the same progress as their peers. Pupils on school action plus are showing more rapid progress while others at school action are beginning to catch up to be in line with their peers. More-able pupils are not making good progress, and too few pupils reach the higher levels as a result of a lack of consistent challenge and high expectations in some lessons.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Too few lessons are good or better. In the small minority which are, teachers ensure there is a range of interesting activities and a clear match of tasks to ability. An example of challenging teaching was seen in the Nursery, where adults were effective in extending children's responses. The teaching of reading throughout the school has improved as a consequence of better targeting of pupils' learning needs in Years 1 and 2 and daily reading and spelling sessions taught in ability groups.
- Where teaching is less effective, it is often because teachers do not stretch the learning of more-able pupils, or provide opportunities for extended writing activities across the curriculum, not just within literacy-based activities.
- Teaching of mathematics is weak as pupils do not get enough 'hands on' opportunities to

enable them to learn fast. In Year 2 lessons in particular, the activities did not match pupils' interest or abilities. Most pupils found the tasks too easy. As a result some were off task and made limited progress.

- Evidence from lessons, the school's checks on pupils' progress and scrutiny of learners' work suggests that teachers are not making sufficient use of pupils' learning targets and reviewing these regularly with them. Pupils do not sufficiently review their own work to see what they have done well, the mistakes they have made and what they need to do to improve.
- In general, teachers ensure that lessons promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through everyday topics.
- Typically, teachers develop positive relationships so that pupils are keen to learn. In a few lessons, teachers' classroom management is less effective, and low-level disruption continues as a result.
- Most teachers promote the effective use of teaching assistants, who are suitably trained. For example, in Reception, teaching assistants skilfully guided children working on letters and sounds. They were also seen providing support to pupils with special educational needs through appropriate interventions to improve their progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Pupils behave well in most lessons and this makes a positive contribution to their achievement. Relationships in most lessons and around the school are generally positive. However, learning is disrupted in some lessons due to a few pupils' lack of engagement and interest in learning.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to play together safely, cooperate and share as part of their learning.
- There is very little bullying of any type and if pupils are worried about anything, they are fully aware of what to do and confident that action taken in response will be swift and effective. Pupils say they feel safe and play harmoniously at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The school council, which is run just like a local council, has brought about positive changes to the way their school is run, such as through encouraging personal responsibility for tidying up. The use of 'Building Learning Power' strategy is proving successful in developing pupils' personal responsibility in learning through, for example, perseverance, concentration and reflection.
- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is improving. The school has made considerable effort resulting in fewer pupils now taking holidays during term time.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leaders and managers have a broadly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teamwork is strong and school leaders are now addressing identified areas of relative weakness. For example, the workshops in reading have significantly helped to improve

achievement across the school; and there have been clear benefits arising from the development of a positive behaviour policy. The early impact of such initiatives demonstrates the school's capacity for further improvement.

- The management of teaching has led to some improvements in the quality of classroom practice, particularly in guided reading. Appropriate training and support is being provided for teachers to develop their skills in the use of data on individual pupils' progress, and there is a clear focus on how their teaching influences learning.
- The school's curriculum is secure because it covers all required elements and is effective in promoting good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is additionally a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, for example gardening and art, to enhance learning and make it enjoyable.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted and pupils confirm that discrimination of any form is not tolerated. Any groups of pupils not progressing well enough are carefully identified and measures are put in place, as is the case, for example, with boys underperformance in writing; the action taken here is showing early signs of improvement. Pupils eligible for pupil premium receive appropriate support and are beginning to perform in line with their peers.
- While most parents and carers in their responses, express their satisfaction with the school; a few others show concern. The school is continuously reviewing and working on strengthening its positive behaviour strategies by involving parents.
- The partnership with various organisations, local schools and the Children's Centre has been beneficial in improving the quality of curriculum. The local authority school improvement partner has provided valuable support to aid improvements in reading and is currently supporting on raising the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and boys.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - ensures that statutory requirements for safeguarding are met
  - is currently below strength and with some inexperienced governors; strategies are being put in place to speed up recruitment and improve the training for the induction of new governors
  - is increasingly strategic in monitoring and evaluating the school, drawing on the experience of long standing governors, including the Chair of Governors.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117186
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401650

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Judith Candy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacqueline Egan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 September 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 620406
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