

Ickford Combined School

Sheldon Road, Ickford, Aylesbury, HP18 9HY

Inspection dates

11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a highly effective partnership and are central to the good improvements made. Other leaders and the governors have improved their understanding of the best things about the school and those which still need to move on.
- Pupils achieve well, especially in reading, and their attainment at the end of Year 6 is usually well above average.
- Pupils are taught well, especially in the mixed Years 1 and 2, and Years 4 and 5 classes.
- Systems for identifying and supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have improved since the previous inspection. These pupils now make good progress.
- Pupils are well cared for. They behave well, are happy and feel safe in school.
- The school works well with parents and carers to support pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More pupils could reach the higher National Curriculum levels in their work in writing and mathematics.
- The outstanding features which exist in teaching are not yet fully shared across the school. A few weaknesses remain.
- Although the school sets long-term targets for pupils and shares them with parents and carers they are not made clear enough to pupils so that they know how well they are doing and can improve further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 10 lessons taught by seven teachers and/or teaching assistants. Three of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher and/or deputy headteacher. The inspector listened, together with the headteacher, to some Year 2 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders, and a school improvement advisor from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 46 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the seven questionnaires completed by staff in forming his judgements. He also spoke to several parents and carers informally on the playground.
- He observed the school's work and looked at a range of other documents. These included self-evaluation documents, the school's own data on pupils' progress and policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ickford is much smaller than most primary schools. Most of its pupils live in Ickford or two other neighbouring villages.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils are known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. This is a much lower proportion than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school provides for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage through one mixed Reception/Year 1 class.
- The headteacher joined the school shortly before the last inspection. The deputy headteacher took up post in September 2011. Similarly, nearly all the teachers are recent appointments to the staff.
- There are before- and after-school clubs on site but these are not managed by the governing body and were not inspected.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring the best features of teaching, including the use of ongoing assessment in lessons, are fully shared across the school
 - ensuring that questioning is used consistently well to keep all pupils involved and motivated throughout the lesson
 - ensuring that work is always well planned to challenge more-able pupils.
- Make better use of pupils' personal targets in the classroom and for homework to help them to understand better the levels they are working at, to become more skilled in self-assessment and to support their learning over time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children enter Reception with levels of skills and knowledge typically seen for their age. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are making good progress and their attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- From an early age pupils benefit from very regular reading homework. This encourages them to read a wide range of texts for pleasure and helps them to understand challenging, enjoyable stories during lessons. More-able pupils skim-read quickly, picking out and correcting the teacher's intentional errors to improve the quality of the text. Most less-able pupils understand clearly how to sound out tricky words and read confidently and accurately.
- The attainment of pupils in Year 6 dipped to average between 2008 and 2010. Attainment rose to well above average in 2011 and this was maintained in 2012.
- Pupils achieve particularly well throughout Key Stage 2 in reading. A broad range of successful initiatives, including partnerships with parents and carers, is now firmly established to support pupils' progress, especially in reading. Most Year 6 pupils achieve the higher Level 5 in this skill, but fewer do so in writing or mathematics.
- Pupils use a wide range of vocabulary in their creative writing but sometimes make simple spelling errors. On a few occasions, pupils find it difficult to think imaginatively when required to use and apply their mathematical skills to more complex problems. Leaders have recently introduced useful plans, including more investigative work in mathematics, to tackle these relative weaknesses.
- All groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for additional funds, achieve well. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified early and tracked closely. They make good progress, especially in those lessons where teaching assistants probe their thinking, skilfully draw them into group-work and build their confidence to contribute to whole-class discussion.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and there are some outstanding features in the mixed Years 1 and 2 and Years 4 and 5 classes. In these classes teachers' planning is highly effective and they choose and organise resources skilfully to engage pupils' interest and actively involve and challenge pupils in their learning.
- Their pupils learn at a fast pace because teachers vary their questioning very effectively to make sure all pupils are paying attention. Teachers build on individual answers to test out pupils' thinking, to deepen their understanding and to enable pupils to see for themselves how they can improve their work.
- In these lessons teachers intervene at well-chosen intervals to summarise learning. They help pupils assess how well they have understood new ideas and, if necessary, they alter their planning to take account of how well pupils are progressing. Teachers use a wide range of methods to manage pupils expertly and to encourage them successfully to be responsible learners when working individually or in pairs and small groups.
- Pupils have a high regard for their teachers. Older pupils support each other with ready words of encouragement. Warm relationships ensure that teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Additional adults work well with the teachers to drive pupils' learning.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well in lessons, particularly when more experienced teaching assistants adapt teachers' planning to suit the needs of individual pupils. This was shown in a Year 6 lesson where these pupils created a clear storyboard to draft out their ideas for encouraging more teaching of Shakespeare in schools.
- Teaching in a few other classes is also good, but less consistently so. On a few occasions, there

are minor weaknesses in planning, the organisation of group-work tasks or in the use of ongoing assessment. This slows the pace of learning and pupils, including the more able, become less keen to learn. Sometimes, teachers do not make sure all pupils are involved in answering questions and when this happens a few pupils are silent or lose concentration.

- Teachers' marking provides pupils with good guidance on how they can improve individual pieces of completed work. No use is made of targets to help pupils to become more skilled in self-assessment and take greater responsibility for their long-term progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Children, recently arrived in Reception, show that they have quickly formed trusting relationships with each other and with staff. They engage happily in paired activities without direction from adults. Equally, children show that they are capable of being 'self-starters' in the way they confidently select equipment for work and play.
- Pupils are friendly, polite and behave well in lessons and around school. Their behaviour and response in assemblies is excellent. They have a strong sense of community values and are proud of their school. They recite the school prayer perfectly together, prepare thoroughly for public performances and willingly celebrate each other's achievements.
- Pupils enjoy school, including the daily 'wake and shake' routine which involves pupils and staff alike and gets the day off to a lively, positive start.
- In spite of its small size the school has created an enviable range of opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility, such as monitors, house captains and school councillors. Councillors are entirely certain that their views are acted on by staff. They confidently report that they have the third most important job in the school after teachers and governors. Older pupils willingly assist staff in helping the younger ones.
- Pupils trust adults, say they feel safe and can express clearly the school's 'three-step strategy' for preventing unsocial types of behaviour. They report that bullying incidents are almost non-existent and that misbehaviour is rare. This is confirmed by responses in the Parent View questionnaire and in school logs which show that exclusions are very rare.
- On a few occasions, when the teaching is less consistently good, behaviour is adequate rather than good.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are consistently well above average. Leaders are not complacent and they work determinedly with parents and carers to ensure very regular attendance supports pupils' good achievement.

The leadership and management

are good

- The dynamic headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, drives improvement well. Rigorous monitoring arrangements, particularly for assessing the quality of teaching, are being used purposefully to challenge staff and take the school forward.
- The school development plan gives less experienced colleagues helpful advice on how to raise pupils' achievement. Strong strategic planning, including the reorganisation of classes, has had a significant impact on raising pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2.
- Senior leaders check up carefully on the progress of individual pupils and different groups. They then use this information to adapt the curriculum where necessary. Until this year, no pupils had qualified for pupil premium funding. Leaders have suitable plans in place to spend the anticipated funds for newly eligible pupils.
- Clear performance management arrangements ensure staff are accountable for pupils' progress and set firm expectations for the development of staff's teaching expertise. Staff have benefited from well-planned induction and other training. Lesson observations, conducted largely by the headteacher, provide colleagues with precise, constructive feedback to improve their practice. Morale is good and leaders have recently put useful plans in place for staff to learn from good

points in each other's teaching.

- The curriculum fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. It ensures pupils' good achievement and, overall, promotes equal opportunities well.
- The local authority has supported the school effectively in improving leadership and teaching, especially in 2010 and 2011 when there was a very large turnover in staffing. As the school has shown, it is increasingly able to direct its own improvement, and so the local authority's role has reduced in the last year to light touch monitoring.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has improved and is now good
 - acquires first-hand knowledge of pupils' achievement and welfare and the quality of teaching through a programme of regular visits, including attendance at senior leadership meetings
 - has considerably increased its capacity to hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement, and has helped to ensure that the overall effectiveness of the school has improved since the previous inspection.

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

Unique reference number	110238
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	401109

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	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sian Goard
Headteacher	John Ronane
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 July 2010
Telephone number	01844 339261
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