

Ivy Bank Primary School

Valley Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8PB

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a school that takes pupils with a very wide range of ability. It values them all and helps them to do their best so that they make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Teachers have excellent data on how well their pupils are doing. They use these to help them ensure their pupils learn well, and this is reflected in rising standards.
- There is a mutual respect between the whole school community, adults and pupils, and behaviour is outstanding. Some pupils join the school with very challenging behaviour but are helped and supported so that they are able to settle and do very well over time.
- The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school and is strongly supported by other school leaders, who have clear roles that promote school improvement for which they are held fully accountable. The recent creation of this extremely effective extended leadership team is driving school improvement and raising standards.
- Governance is excellent and governors play an effective role in promoting school improvement.
- Outstanding monitoring of teaching and learning enables school leaders, including governors, to promote high expectations and drive improvement, resulting in pupils' good and, for some, outstanding achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although they have risen recently, standards in writing are not as consistently high as those in reading and mathematics, and there are not enough opportunities for writing at length in subjects across the whole curriculum, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Not all teachers' marking is yet as good as that of the best, especially in pointing out ways in which work might be improved.

Information about this inspection

- A total of 18 lessons were observed during the inspection, which included one taught by visiting music teachers.
- Inspectors looked carefully at samples of pupils' work from across the school and listened to some pupils reading to them.
- Meetings were held with the school's senior leaders, teachers with specific responsibilities, the Chair of the Governing Body and representative governors, and one of the local authority's corporate managers. A telephone conversation was held with an education consultant who has worked with the school. The views of staff as expressed in their questionnaire responses and through discussions throughout the inspection were taken into account.
- A total of 98 responses to the online Parent View survey were analysed. In addition, inspectors received a letter from one parent and spoke to as many parents as possible when they were bringing their children to school or attending sports day in order to gain their views.
- Formal meetings were held with two groups of pupils and conversations held with as many pupils as possible in lessons and throughout the inspection.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including data on the progress and achievement of pupils, teachers planning and assessment, schemes of work, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and a range of policies and procedures were looked at, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Geoff Lawrence

Additional Inspector

Tony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ivy Bank is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- It contains the largest specially resourced provision in the local authority area, designated for 20 pupils who have a range of complex learning disabilities including autism and Downs Syndrome.
- In addition, the local authority has worked with the school to admit other 'hard to place' pupils, including some who have been permanently excluded from other schools. As a result, the level of mobility within some year groups is high.
- Across the school the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. However, in part because of the specialist provision, the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or who have a parent in the armed forces) is a little below average. At Ivy Bank all such pupils fall into the first two of these categories.
- A high proportion of the pupils come from White British families and none are learning to speak English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which represent the minimum level expected for progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- There is some pre-school nursery provision on the same site but this is not run by the governing body and it was not looked at as part of this inspection.
- At the time of the inspection the school's deputy headteacher had been seconded to run another school in the absence of that school's headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of all teachers' marking matches that of the best in consistently including suggestions for ways in which pupils' work could be made even better.
- Reinforce the recent improvements in the quality of pupils' writing through:
 - promoting a consistently high level of challenge for the more-able writers
 - always seeking opportunities for producing longer pieces of writing in all lessons and subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children first enter the Reception class they often have skills and experiences which are typically below the levels expected for their age. Their progress is monitored carefully and good provision enables the majority to reach the expected levels by the time they start Year 1.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is generally in line with the national average. This picture of attainment does not, however, fully reflect how well pupils achieve. The complex needs of many pupils and the high levels of mobility in some year groups mask the good and, at times, outstanding progress made by different groups of pupils.
- The progress of pupils who have been at the school since joining in the Reception class shows that the proportion who make or exceed expected progress compares favourably with national figures. Overall, the attainment of these pupils is good. Sometimes, however, the most able are not fully challenged, especially in developing their writing skills.
- Recent successful work in enhancing the skills of pupils falling behind in reading has been adapted to also promote better writing skills. Specific teaching assistants are being trained to deliver this new provision, aimed at raising standards in writing, which is currently being introduced.
- Pupils are encouraged to enjoy reading right from the start and standards are above those found nationally by the end of Key Stage 1. In the Reception class children quickly start to learn letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) and a new scheme introduced in the current school year has seen standards rise significantly.
- The school demonstrates the strongest commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and helping all its pupils to be successful. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good and often outstanding progress from their starting points, far better than that of similar pupils nationally.
- The professional skills of staff working with these pupils support their often excellent progress, both in the base and in mainstream settings. Pupils from the base are encouraged to spend as much time as possible with mainstream classes and this enables them to benefit from being with their friends and peers, which helps their wider social development.
- The additional funding gained from the pupil premium is carefully targeted. For example, it helps fund the recently created post of learning mentor, and, as a result, the pupils who benefit are able to show strong gains in learning, reducing their attainment gap with other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in all subjects, including English and mathematics, is good and some is outstanding. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants; their effective teamwork gives excellent support to pupils. This means pupils make good progress and achieve well over time, whatever their starting points.
- Teachers record the progress of their pupils very carefully and feed the information into the school's tracking system at least once a term. This leads to pupil progress meetings in which anyone identified as not making expected progress is given additional, carefully targeted support. There is clear evidence that this supports them in making good progress to catch up with their classmates.
- The best lessons have several things in common, including the effective use of technology (such as the interactive whiteboards), high-quality questioning by teachers and careful marking that includes advice and support on how work could be further improved. One or more of these elements were not seen in a small minority of lessons. The inconsistency in the quality of marking means that for some pupils progress is not as rapid as it could be.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, who respond positively. As a result, pupils work hard and enjoy their learning. The range of lessons and topics that add to and develop the core

learning in English, mathematics, science and communication enable pupils to develop a wide range of skills and understanding. Pupils show good skills in analysing their own work and that of their classmates. They discuss their work together in a very mature way that enhances their understanding of topics being taught. Learning across a range of the arts reflects the creativity that is seen throughout the school.

- Standards in writing, although showing rapid improvement over the past year, have not been as high as in reading and mathematics over time. Teachers do not always ensure that opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces are maximised in literacy lessons and in other subjects.
- The skills of staff in the resourced provision enable pupils to make exceptional progress. Their expertise is widely acknowledged and they increasingly work with other schools to help them support their own pupils.
- A range of effective teaching strategies, including appropriate homework, meet the widely differing needs of pupils. Huge care is taken to ensure that, whatever their starting point, pupils are allowed to learn effectively. As a result, they are very positive about learning and form very strong relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in and around school is exemplary and pupils show a high level of maturity in the way in which they relate to each other and to staff. In part, this is the result of the mutual respect that is evident between all members of the school community. This extremely positive approach sees pupils committed to doing their best in class, both in their own work and also in terms of valuing the ideas and suggestions of others. It is a major reason why lessons are so positive and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils play together exceptionally well and it was a delight to see traditional skipping games in the playground, with staff and governors joining in. Positive play is also encouraged by excellent play equipment, some of which was paid for through fundraising by the 'Friends of the School' and some by the pupils themselves through sponsored events.
- Some pupils join the school with behaviour that is very challenging. Care and support of the highest quality combine with an effective behaviour policy that is implemented consistently by all staff. This enables such pupils to moderate their behaviour and behave in a socially acceptable way.
- Effective behaviour management also involves close work to support parents and wider families. One parent said, 'I am extremely impressed by the support the school has given me and (my son)...it has gone the extra mile in tailoring strategies to him personally.'
- Parents, staff and the pupils themselves all believe that this is a place of safety and pupils are rightly very proud of their school. Some who have joined from other schools say that they find it much easier to behave and to do their best here.
- Pupils understand bullying in its different forms, including cyber-bullying, and the dangers of misusing social networking sites. They say that bullying is very rare but that incidents of any kind are dealt with very effectively.
- The extremely positive way in which pupils get on with each other and support those who have additional needs is a reflection of the outstanding provision for their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. This is also seen in the very positive contribution that art, music and performance make to the life and culture of the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher brings a dynamic vision and the effective senior leadership team shows strong commitment to making this a place of excellence. Leaders at all levels in the mainstream school and the resourced base willingly accept responsibilities for raising achievement and standards. All are firmly held to account and have risen to the challenge effectively.

- Changes in the structure of leadership and management, especially the creation of a wider, more devolved team, have had a positive effect on raising standards. This is reflected in the most recent national test results, which confirm the school's view that it now has a leadership structure that is supporting rising achievement.
- The very strong support given by staff, governors and parents creates a strong capacity to sustain improvement. It allows pupils to demonstrate high levels of achievement and personal development, whatever their starting points. The school is a vibrant learning community where all are valued for what they can contribute.
- Monitoring systems are innovative and promote the ideal of teachers and teaching assistants as reflective professionals. Teachers are not only monitored by senior leaders but also nominate a colleague to observe them on a termly basis and also self-assess their own performance.
- Monitoring shows rising numbers of outstanding lessons. The school has some teachers who are still quite new to the profession and they are being given positive support in developing their skills. This is reflected in the improving monitoring outcomes over the course of the year.
- Senior leaders are well aware of the strengths and areas for development of staff and this feeds into highly effective arrangements for managing staff performance and professional development.
- Teachers are aware of the link between performance and pay, responding positively to their annually negotiated performance objectives. Those on the upper pay scale willingly accept greater levels of responsibility.
- The school's self-assessment is accurate and enables it to create effective priorities for ongoing improvement focused on maximising outcomes for pupils.
- There is a relentless focus on raising standards within this strongly inclusive school that allows every pupil to succeed at their own level. Pupils are valued irrespective of academic ability and those with quite challenging levels of disability are valued as full members of the school community. All are able to learn at the right level and to make good and, for some, outstanding progress across the whole range of learning experiences.
- Parents give very strong support to the school, holding the headteacher and all staff in high regard. Links with other professionals are also strong, sometimes supporting wider family needs.
- Financial control is rigorous and managed very effectively so that there is a clear focus on funding being used to maximise the outcomes for pupils.
- Local authority support is 'light touch'; it values the expertise available within the school and the way it shares this with other professionals to support wider inclusion across the authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Under the leadership of a new Chair of the Governing Body, governance is highly effective and governors bring a range of highly relevant skills and a strong commitment. They have an excellent understanding of the quality of teaching, and ensure that any underperformance is tackled and that those pupils with additional needs are fully supported. They understand the data on pupils' progress and challenge the headteacher effectively, understanding how the performance of the school compares with that of others. Governors set challenging annual objectives for the headteacher and keep a close eye on the performance management and professional development of all staff, ensuring that good performance is appropriately rewarded. Careful oversight of funding arrangements enables governors to maintain an accurate overview, including monitoring the impact of the pupil premium. Governors carry out all their legal responsibilities effectively, including those for safeguarding.

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	111022
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	411973

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	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Hardy
Headteacher	Quentin Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2009
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