

# Ickniel Infant and Nursery School

Archers Way, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4UN

**Inspection dates** 15–16 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, achievement, pupils' behaviour, attendance and leadership have improved.
- The headteacher and her new deputy work very well together. They have the full support of the staff in improving all aspects of the school's work. Staff readily respond to the good quality training opportunities and other initiatives which are helping the school to move forward at a good pace.
- Teaching is good. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' increasingly successful learning.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their low starting points when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach average standards at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils feel safe because they know they are well cared for. They behave well and have good attitudes to learning.
- Governance has improved and is now good. Governors check the work of the school regularly and provide strong challenge and support.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet strong enough to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Occasionally, teachers do not make sure that pupils get on with their work as soon as they are instructed to. In a few instances, pupils do not produce the amount of work of which they are capable.
- Intermittently, teaching assistants do not support learning effectively throughout lessons.
- Although they have made a good start and are contributing well to improvements, some of the new middle leaders do not check the work of their colleagues closely enough to ensure that they help pupils make rapid progress across their subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers, of which nine lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, staff, including senior, pastoral and subject leaders, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation including teachers’ planning, the school’s analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans, information on pupils’ attainment and progress, records of the monitoring of teaching and governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and behaviour and reviewed the work in their books.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) together with other survey information collected by the school. They also spoke informally to parents as they brought and collected their children from school. The 36 responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.

## Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Jones

Additional Inspector

Rachel Welch

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than the average-sized infant school.
- The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, with the remainder coming from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- There is a Children's Centre managed by the governing body on site, which is subject to a separate inspection.
- The school belongs to the Letchworth Partnership of Schools, a partnership of all local maintained schools, three children's centres, the local City Heritage Foundation and The North Herts & Stevenage Integrated Services for Learning Team.
- Since the time of the previous inspection there has been a large turnover of staff. Most middle leaders and the new deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2013.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make rapid progress by:
  - teachers always setting the highest expectations to make sure that pupils get on with their work as soon as they are instructed to
  - teachers always telling pupils clearly the minimum amount of work they must complete in a set time
  - teaching assistants always helping pupils learn throughout all parts of lessons.
- Continue to develop the effectiveness of the new middle leaders by:
  - giving them more opportunities to observe teaching in their areas of responsibility so that they can coach their colleagues to improve
  - giving them additional leadership training, including on how to hold colleagues to account for the progress that their pupils are making.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typically expected for their age, especially in language and social development. As a result of good teaching, a stimulating learning environment and well-targeted support, children make good progress across the key stage. In 2013, the proportion of children leaving Reception with a good level of development and being well prepared for Year 1 was similar to that found nationally.
- Rates of progress across Key Stage 1 improved last year and were good. Inspection evidence confirms that, as a result of better teaching, improvements in pupils' current rates of progress are continuing.
- The school successfully addressed the 2012 decline in standards at the end of Year 2 and, as a result, in 2013, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics improved and was broadly average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 increased in writing and reading, the latter being well above average. In mathematics, it remained average.
- Pupils make good progress in their reading. The most-able pupils are increasingly making rapid progress so that at the end of Year 2 they are reaching the higher levels. Home reading is actively encouraged and pupils enjoy reading a great deal. Parents are invited to come into school and read with their children each Friday morning. Pupils who have specific difficulties or who are unable to read to an adult at home are given additional support and opportunities to read to adults in school.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing. In Nursery and Reception children are actively encouraged to write frequently. The language-rich environment and the continuous stimulating dialogue between adults and children ensure that they develop their language skills well. Across Key Stage 1, pupils have clear targets for improving their writing and teachers give them opportunities to write across all subjects. As in reading, the most-able pupils are increasingly reaching the higher levels.
- Progress in mathematics is good, but not as strong as it is in literacy. Leaders have identified that pupils need more support in their problem-solving skills and this is now a major focus across the school. Additionally, the more-able mathematicians are getting small-group support and current data indicate that, in Year 2, a higher proportion is on track to reach Level 3.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, are well supported and make similar good progress to their peers. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- In 2013, the attainment of Year 2 pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium funding was the equivalent of about five months below their peers in reading and writing and three months below in mathematics; a narrower gap than previously. Their standards however, were above those of eligible pupils nationally. This was a result of additional teaching support. The progress that they make across the school is slower than that made of other pupils but is increasing.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Better quality teaching since the time of the previous inspection has ensured higher achievement.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers and teaching assistants provide a wide range of activities and resources that interest the children greatly. As a result, little time is wasted and children engage in purposeful activities such as kite making, role-playing, writing, counting and cycling. They play well together and develop good social skills. Throughout, adults talk to and question the children, thus adding to the rich language environment so that children learn to think, speak, listen and write confidently. Frequently, adults adapt their planned activities as a result of their observations and conversations with the children so that they are helped to learn more and develop their skills further.
- Teachers consistently share their ‘top tips’ with pupils. These sequential steps of guidance help pupils to learn in an organised way so that they can succeed in their studies. For example, when teaching pupils in Year 2 how to use the partition method for adding two-digit numbers, the teacher demonstrated and then shared the ‘top tips’ of how to set out their sums and use this method to arrive at the correct answer. This guidance resulted in pupils getting on with their work without any fuss, as they understood clearly the steps they needed to take to apply this newly learned skill successfully.
- Most teachers have consistently high expectations of behaviour and work. As a result, pupils start learning diligently as soon as instructed to do so and produce a good quantity of quality work in the time given. In a few cases, expectations are lower and so pupils are slower in getting on with their learning and do not produce the amount of work of which they are capable.
- Books show that pupils take pride in their work and have made good progress since the start of the year. In the Year 2 books, for example, there is much evidence of teachers guiding pupils on how to improve the quality of their writing across the subjects and of pupils responding to their teachers’ advice to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils’ learning through the effective support they offer to pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. On a few occasions, teaching assistants’ skills are not used to the full, as they do not support any pupils’ learning during some parts of the lessons.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, helpful and welcoming to visitors. Their positive attitudes are demonstrated for example, through the way they wear their uniform with pride, clear up after lunch and the fact that the school is virtually litter free.
- Pupils are generally eager to learn and come well prepared to their lessons. These positive attitudes, reinforced through the school’s ‘Building Learning Power’ strategy, help them to make good progress. Occasionally, they take a little while to settle down to the tasks set for them by their teachers.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children follow established routines, play and share well together and happily tidy up at the end of sessions.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils at this school are at the early stages of understanding the various forms of bullying because they are so young. A few parents and pupils shared concerns about some pushing taking place, mainly in the dining queue and in the playground. At the start of the last academic year, school leaders reviewed the behaviour policy. The review included seeking pupils' views and a consultation evening to which all parents were invited. Consequently, changes to routines were made and a new rewards scheme was introduced. Inspection evidence, including pupils' views, confirms that these issues have been addressed.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know that they can turn to an adult to help them resolve any difficulties. They also know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, for instance, by not sharing passwords.
- Pupils and their families experiencing difficulties with learning, behaviour or regular attendance are well supported by the school's parent support worker, external agencies and through the Children's Centre.
- Attendance has improved considerably and consistently over the last three years and school records confirm that it is now close to the national average.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The school's leaders, including the governors, have secured the commitment of all staff to drive forward improvements in all aspects of the school's work. As a result, the school has progressed from requiring improvement at the time of the previous inspection to being good. All have the mind-set to strive towards outstanding.
- All leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and what it can do better. Detailed improvement plans make clear the intended outcomes for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' progress, behaviour and leadership. These processes are helping the school improve at a good rate.
- The headteacher and her deputy, who has a key role in improving the quality of teaching, observe teaching regularly. They scrutinise work and information on pupils' progress frequently. Senior leaders meet with each teacher half termly to discuss the progress of every pupil, to hold the teachers to account for addressing any underperformance and identifying and arranging training to support the teacher's further professional development. Teacher performance, pupil outcomes and the appraisal system are clearly linked.
- The school works well with the local authority, partner schools and external advisors to help teachers and leaders develop their expertise, as well as learn from and share best practice.
- The new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has established a culture in which all adults peer mentor and support each other. Together staff have established a happy, purposeful and stimulating indoor and outdoor environment in which children thrive socially and academically.
- Inspection evidence indicates that new subject leaders, especially for literacy and numeracy, are

successfully implementing well-thought-out action plans for improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They are well trained in their subject areas and these leaders have, in turn, delivered training to their colleagues. They do not, however, directly observe teaching enough to know how well colleagues are teaching their subjects and to hold them to account for their pupils' progress across the subjects.

- The curriculum is well planned to make learning engaging and fun and encourages pupils to develop good attitudes to learning, behaviour and safety. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through additional opportunities, such as visits to local places of interest, visitors and an annual creative fortnight, which includes an array of activities such as music, art and drama.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has been reinvigorated. With additional new members, there has been a sharpened focus on ensuring school improvement. Governors made it a key strategic priority to appoint a deputy headteacher with the experience and expertise to lead on improving the quality of teaching. Governors now check all aspects of the school with rigour, including the quality of teaching. Each term, they monitor progress against the school improvement plan and regularly visit the school, including for example, joining subject leaders meetings to discuss pupils' progress. Their training programme has enabled them to support and challenge school leaders and they have a good understanding of how to interpret pupil performance information. They know, for example, how the use of the pupil premium funding is closing gaps in achievement. Some of the school sports funding has been used to give additional training to teachers on the teaching of physical education, but the governing body has not yet concluded how it will be used to broaden opportunities and increase participation rates in sport-related activities. Governors use the headteacher's appraisal to set clear expectations for improved teaching and achievement and these expectations drive the performance management of teachers. Governors are clear that only teachers whose pupils make good progress will be rewarded. Statutory requirements regarding policies, finance and safeguarding are met.

## 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>	431622

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>	287
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Judith Candy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacqueline Egan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 September 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 620406
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