

Icknield Walk First School

Poplar Drive, Royston, SG8 7EZ

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils consistently display high levels of interest and engagement in their learning. They are confident and inquisitive and enjoy finding out how to improve their learning.
- The behaviour of pupils in the classroom and around the school is almost always impeccable. They look after their school and each other with care and respect.
- Governors, senior leaders and the staff have a united vision and work exceptionally well together. They are ambitious for the school and are committed to maintaining a vibrant learning environment where pupils flourish.
- The school is very well led and the headteacher offers an excellent role model for both staff and pupils. Together with her effective leadership team, she has ensured both teaching and achievement are frequently exceptional.
- Governors ensure that all available resources are used well to ensure that all pupils make outstanding progress. The pupil premium is used very effectively to help minimise gaps in the achievement between different groups. The primary sports funding helps to provide a wider choice of sports and games opportunities for everyone.
- Pupils, including those who are more-able, make rapid progress in their learning and achieve standards that are consistently above those seen nationally.
- The curriculum is very imaginative and is well planned to enable pupils to make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils and they plan interesting and challenging tasks that inspire pupils of different groups and abilities to make good progress and achieve high standards.
- Pupils feel very safe at school. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school and have great confidence that it will keep their children happy and safe.
- Attendance has improved and is now well above the national average for primary schools.
- Governors and senior leaders listen carefully to the views of parents and pupils and try to ensure that they feel fully involved in all aspects of school life.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, including five joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. They looked at a range of pupils' work, visited an assembly and the school's breakfast club. They also visited some guided reading sessions and some individual and group support sessions.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, members of the senior leadership team, other school leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils, as well as, more informally, to pupils in lessons and around the school during breaks. Inspectors also heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at the school's records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, pupils' standards and progress and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documents and policies, including those relating to the management of the performance of staff, and the school's judgements on its own performance and plans for improvement.
- Inspectors considered the views of 72 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire called Parent View and inspectors also spoke informally to groups of parents at the beginning of school and during the Foundation Stage Sports Day.
- The views of 38 members of staff who also completed questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Gillian Scobie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Burton

Additional Inspector

Mark Vickers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Icknield Walk First School is a larger than average first school.
- Most of the pupils come from White British backgrounds and the remainder are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which, in this school provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action, school action plus or a statement of special educational needs are below the national averages.
- The school runs a breakfast club for its pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to plan and teach outstanding lessons that enable all pupils to learn exceptionally well and ensure that they are always appropriately challenged and encouraged to take risks with their learning.
- Improve the already good standards in writing and mathematics so that pupils reach the same very high levels seen consistently in reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the Nursery and Reception with the knowledge, skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. They make rapid and sustained progress in all areas of learning and develop an excellent range of social skills. They quickly become confident in their ability to recognise letters and sounds and are encouraged to develop an interest in books and a thirst for reading. They develop a good grasp of numbers and basic mathematics and of the world around them.
- By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment is exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. When pupils leave the school, at the end of Year 4 they have sustained these high levels of attainment. Standards are even stronger in reading than they are in mathematics and writing.
- Pupils sustain their good progress throughout the school and by the end of Year 4 a high proportion of pupils are making expected progress and a significant number are making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils all agree that they love reading and the school provides a wide range of books in classrooms and in the library. Pupils in all years are able to take home book bags on a variety of topics to inspire them to explore new ideas. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the bags contain books and toys which are used very successfully teachers to arouse the children's curiosity and foster a love of learning.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding make the same rapid progress as other pupils but at the end of Year 4 they are still working an average of two terms behind the others in reading, writing and mathematics. However school records suggest that the gap is closing, especially for pupils in earlier years.
- The very small number of pupils from other ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language generally make at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There are very few pupils on the school's Gifted and Talented register but the school offers all the pupils opportunities to develop learning outside the classroom through a range of events such as sports and music. As a result all pupils, including the more able, fulfil their potential.
- Pupils develop their skills in English, mathematics and the use of information and communication technology very well, and are very well prepared for the next step in their education. School records show that pupils across all years and groups have made at least expected progress since the beginning of the year and a high proportion have made more than expected progress.
- The phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1 shows that a large majority of pupils achieve well above the national expectations. Most of the pupils who retook the check in Year 2 achieved at least the expected standard. The school is expecting a similar pattern of results this year based on its assessments in Year 1.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is good and in many lessons it is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and set activities that challenge pupils of all abilities.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the attention to detail is outstanding. Classrooms are

arranged beautifully every morning to welcome the children and encourage learning. All the equipment, including the sand pit and water areas, are very well prepared to entice the children into high quality work and imaginative play. As a result children love their learning, achieve well and talk enthusiastically about what they are doing and the progress they are making.

- Lessons are carefully planned to develop pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy and often include opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural awareness and further their understanding of the world around them. For example, pupils applied their numeracy skills very accurately in a practical activity which involved designing a Viking shield, to ensure that it was symmetrical.
- Teachers and teaching assistants consistently ensure that learning moves forward and ask pupils probing questions to help them make new connections in their knowledge and understanding. As a result pupils of different groups and abilities are willing to explore new learning confidently and often make rapid progress. Should the challenge become too demanding for individual pupils, teachers are usually quick to recognise the problem and help them to find a solution by offering them a simplified model on which to build.
- Marking is completed regularly and is nearly always detailed. It celebrates what the pupils have done well and gives careful guidance on what they need to do to improve. Pupils respond positively to the guidance they receive and are able to improve their work quickly and accurately as a result.
- Teachers monitor pupils' progress constantly to ensure that pupils are making expected progress and they give excellent guidance so that pupils know what to do to move forward. Often, especially in younger year-groups, initial planning and first attempts to write a piece are completed on white boards where pupils can alter words and sentences with a wipe following new guidance. Consequently they are encouraged to take risks with their learning and are not afraid to make mistakes.
- Teachers always plan lessons that inspire pupils to do exceptionally well and develop a sense of awe and wonder about their learning. They capture pupils' enthusiasm to help them understand the issues and topics they are studying. For example, in Year 2, a pupil, dressed as a fisherman to answer questions about his life, and Year 4 recorded the main points of their interview with 'Queen Victoria'.
- Teachers take every opportunity to make learning 'come alive'. In a Year 1 lesson the children had read 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Wife' and were creating horrible sandwiches to deter the seagulls from eating them. The teacher was dressed as the lighthouse keeper's wife and during the lesson, a young pigeon had unfortunately flown into the classroom window and stunned itself. Immediately, the teacher transformed this incident into one involving a greedy seagull who was trying to take the pupils sandwiches, thus bringing their learning to life and adding urgency to their task.
- Homework is set regularly and tasks completed which demonstrate the excellent quality of pupils' work at home and reflect the love of learning fostered across the school. The homework set is appropriate and reflects what has been covered in the classroom. Their work contains excellent examples of extended writing and reflects the imaginative tasks that are set in all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. There is an excellent atmosphere of shared enthusiasm for learning across the school and their attitudes to their learning to each other and to adults are exemplary. They have outstanding attitudes to their work and are always ready to share their

ideas and listen carefully to each other. This has an excellent impact on their progress in lessons.

- Pupils say they feel very safe at school. They have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying and say that incidents are very rare. When poor behaviour does occur, they have confidence that their teachers and those who care for them will deal with it quickly and effectively.
- Pupils know right from wrong and know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are using the computers.
- The school does not have a School Council but every pupil is part of a 'Talking Circle' that includes pupils from each year group. Here they share their views and raise any concerns. Through their Talking Circles pupils have successfully designed a very well used outside quiet space where pupils can go to read, write or draw quietly during breaks. They also decide on the charities that the school will support each year. Pupils value their role in this process and the opportunity it gives them to actively participate in the life of the school.
- Pupils in Year 4 are able to apply for jobs across the school. These include supporting children in Reception and in Year 1, helping to organise and patrol sporting and music activities, and taking an active role in Assembly. Year 4 pupils are proud of their responsibilities and become reliable and dependable members of the school who are ready for the next stage of their education and social development.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is excellent. The vast majority of staff, parents and carers agree that behaviour is outstanding and school records show that incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. Parents and carers agree almost unanimously that the school keeps the pupils safe. They have an extremely high level of confidence in the ability of the management of the school to keep their children safe and ensure they make excellent progress.
- Attendance has improved and is now well above the national average for primary schools. Pupils enjoy school and arrive punctually to lessons and to school. Both they and their parents say they appreciate the way breakfast club makes them so welcome in the mornings.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and managers, including the governors know the school very well. All staff share their vision for making the school an excellent learning environment in which pupils can thrive. Their own evaluation of the school's performance is modest because they feel there is always more to be achieved and as a result they constantly drive for higher standards in teaching and learning. They have been very diligent in ensuring that the school has fully addressed all the improvement points from the last inspection report.
- The processes and strategies used to monitor pupils' progress and attainment are very effective and are evaluated regularly. Leaders use the information effectively and work cooperatively with class teachers to ensure excellent outcomes for all groups of pupils. As a result the school is able to maintain high levels of progress and achievement across the school.
- The headteacher is ambitious for her staff and has built a strong and supportive team who readily share good practice and newly acquired expertise. She ensures that all the staff, including support staff, have the skills they need to be able to move learning forward effectively and maintain excellent standards of teaching and learning through a carefully managed policy of

professional development. Subject leaders lead their areas of responsibility very well.

- The curriculum is very imaginative and has been developed to create a sense of awe and wonder and foster a love of learning. The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness underpins pupils' learning at all stages. The school is very successful in inspiring all groups of pupils to want to learn. It makes excellent use of trips and excursions to develop educational opportunities but also ensures that pupils have outstanding opportunities to extend their knowledge in school.
- The management of all available funding is closely and rigorously monitored by the governing body. Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to support the learning needs of individual pupils. The school monitors pupils' work carefully to identify any issues that may hinder learning and ensures that appropriate support is put in place so that eligible pupils are able to fully access all the opportunities available to them. As a result eligible pupils make at least good progress and school records suggest that the gap is gradually closing.
- The school has used the funds available for primary sports funding to extend the range of sporting activities available to pupils in school and to widen participation in local school sports events such as the Olympic Challenge for Year 4. There has also been a programme of training to improve the sporting knowledge and expertise amongst the staff and to ensure that sports education is built on a firm foundation. As a result of this careful planning, the school has increased pupils' interest in sport generally and ensured that over a third of the school now attends sports clubs regularly.
- The school has worked closely with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and the use of data to ensure that the assessment and moderation of pupil progress is accurate. The local authority has confidence in the leadership and management capabilities of the headteacher and has, on occasion, called on her expertise to guide and support other primary headteachers within the authority.
- The governors and senior leaders see safeguarding as central to their role, and as a result of their diligence and attention to detail, the school's safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The well-established governing body is very well informed and plays a full and active part in the life of the school. Governors visit regularly and know the school's strengths. The governors are ambitious for the school and proud of its achievements. They work closely with the headteacher to constantly drive standards forward. They have an excellent understanding of how to monitor the school's progress and achievement using all the available information and regularly ask challenging questions about all aspects of school life. They consistently hold school leaders to account and ensure that they deliver high quality teaching that is able to help pupils maintain their excellent levels of progress and achievement. They set rigorous targets for the headteacher and teachers at all levels and ensure that staff are appropriately rewarded for their continued hard work. They monitor the use of all available funding very carefully and are fully aware of how the pupil premium and primary sports funding are being spent and closely monitor the impact on learning and achievement. They work well with parents and carers and actively seek their views on how to develop the life of the school.

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	117278
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	439628

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicole Morgan
Headteacher	Jane Sherwood
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
Telephone number	01763 243392
Fax number	01763 244764
Email address	admin@icknielwalk.herts.sch.uk

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