

Ivy Bank Primary School

Valley Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 8PB

Inspection dates

14–15 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The acting headteacher and her leadership team are driving forward improvements. They have established a culture of higher expectations. The school community is united in support of the changes she has made.
- The teaching of phonics is good. The majority of pupils reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1. This provides pupils with the skills to develop a love of reading.
- There is now a culture of high aspiration instilled in all staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are making more rapid progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Pupils have started to make quicker progress in mathematics. However, they are not making sustained, fast progress in this area because teachers do not consistently provide work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Ivy Bank is an inclusive school with high numbers of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Most make good progress from their starting points and integrate well into mainstream classes.
- Pupils make slower progress in the resource base because of the lack of staff with appropriate skills to support pupils who have complex needs. Leaders are addressing this.
- Pupils benefit from a wide and balanced curriculum that is complemented well by enrichment activities and extra-curricular clubs.
- Teaching has improved and is now good. Pupils enjoy their learning and feel challenged in most subjects.
- Some subject leaders have a secure understanding of pupils' progress in their areas. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Pupils feel safe and happy at school. However, the school does not provide enough opportunities for them to develop a deep understanding of a range of religions and cultures.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, both in the classroom and outside. They are keen to support and respect each other.
- The early years provision requires improvement. Provision in the Nursery is not as good as in Reception. The way in which children are assessed when they start the early years is not fully reliable.
- The early years outdoor area is under-developed as a learning resource.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all subject leaders have the knowledge and skills to be able to monitor pupils' progress in their areas effectively.
- Further improve outcomes for children in the early years by:
 - ensuring that staff work together as a team to assess and record accurately what children can do, particularly when they join the early years
 - developing the outside learning area, so that it is planned, organised and resourced in a way that fully meets children's needs and provides a range of valuable learning opportunities.
- Ensure that teachers provide consistent challenge in mathematics, so that pupils of differing abilities are able to achieve their very best.
- Ensure that pupils in the resource base make faster progress, by making sure that teaching staff have the appropriate skills to support pupils who have complex special needs.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of a range of religions and cultures.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The acting headteacher has been unflinching in her determination to ensure that pupils get the education they deserve. Her focused and determined leadership has led to rapid improvements across the school during a period of unavoidable changes to staffing. The school's own information is already showing the positive impact of her actions on the amount of progress that pupils are making throughout the school. The quality of teaching and assessment is now more secure and pupils are learning much more effectively than in the past. Staff work as a cohesive, hard-working and happy team, which is whole-heartedly supportive of the headteacher's actions.
- The headteacher is ably supported by an assistant headteacher who is responsible for the expanding inclusion team. The recently appointed seconded assistant headteacher provides the skills necessary for improving outcomes in mathematics. Together, the assistant headteachers monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and track the progress pupils make towards their aspirational targets in mathematics and English. Their leadership has been instrumental in ensuring that pupils are now making faster progress in reading, writing and, to a lesser extent, mathematics.
- The inclusion team is led very effectively. This has ensured that the very high numbers of vulnerable pupils, and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in mainstream classes, flourish at this school. Extra funding is used effectively to ensure that pupils' individual learning needs are being met. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- A large number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities join the school's resource provision from a wide geographical area. The profile of pupils entering this provision has become increasingly complex and diverse. As a result, leaders are recruiting more teaching staff with specific expertise, to ensure that these pupils make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced with opportunities for extending pupils' knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Leaders provide pupils with an array of extra-curricular opportunities to broaden their horizons. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to the school and they develop their knowledge and skills in a range of subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's approach to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is woven throughout the curriculum. Despite this, leaders have not ensured that pupils develop a deep understanding of a variety of religions and cultures.
- Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes and are provided with valuable opportunities for professional development to develop their teaching practice. Teachers and teaching assistants value their training immensely and can see how their own practice is developing and becoming stronger. Teachers also benefit from seeing outstanding practice in other schools, by working with colleagues from other local schools, and by working together as a team within school. As a result, teachers learn from each other and model strong practice. Teachers regularly moderate work with colleagues from within school and other schools. This ensures that their

assessments of what pupils can achieve are accurate.

- Some subject leaders who are new to their roles do not have an accurate view of the progress that pupils make in their areas of responsibility. This is because they have not been supported effectively to develop the knowledge and skills that would enable them to do this well. However, the subject leaders for reading, writing and mathematics demonstrate a secure understanding of the progress that pupils make. This is because systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have been greatly improved in these subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good because governors:
 - have the skills and information to hold school leaders to account
 - have carried out a skills review since the new chair of governors took up his post, which has increased their awareness of their strengths and weaker areas in the school
 - are skilled at interpreting the assessment information that they receive from the headteacher
 - ask informed questions, which they follow up to ensure that leaders address areas of relative weakness
 - ensure that their training is up to date and they take their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Up-to-date policies and procedures are in place and staff receive appropriate training and information. Consequently, staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a child's well-being and prompt action is taken to keep children safe.
- Records are well kept and stored securely. Leaders work closely with outside agencies when required. With a high proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities and vulnerable children in the school, leaders have developed a strong culture of keeping children safe.
- Staff know individual pupils well. The school goes the extra mile to support pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Improvements have led to good teaching, learning and assessment across the whole of the mainstream school. Shared time for planning, preparation and assessment encourages teachers and teaching assistants to have strong, professional conversations about teaching and learning. This feeds into their practice across a range of subjects.
- Teachers use information from the assessment and tracking system to understand the capabilities of individual pupils in their class. This is used well to inform their planning.

As a result, the majority of teaching is matched well to pupils' prior attainment and needs. However, there is sometimes a lack of challenge in the work set for pupils of different abilities in mathematics.

- Teachers and teaching assistants ask probing questions to develop pupils' thinking. They engage pupils by using interesting and varied strategies to capture their interest. As a result, pupils become immersed in their learning, and this supports the quicker progress they are now making.
- The most able pupils are making faster progress because teachers are becoming more adept at providing them with work that is carefully matched to their needs. Consequently, these pupils say they enjoy their lessons more than they have done in the past.
- Teachers set homework in a systematic way. It engages pupils and consolidates and deepens their understanding. Pupils particularly enjoy carrying out research for their topic work. They make good use of the well-stocked school library. Junior librarians actively select and purchase books linked to the curriculum, to encourage independent research. This is helping pupils to become skilled, independent learners.
- Other adults are used effectively during lessons and to support pupils who need extra support or challenge outside the classroom. Leaders have recently appointed a new member of staff to support the team of teaching assistants and to evaluate the impact of different strategies that are employed to help particular groups of pupils. As a result, leaders are developing a clearer understanding of which strategies have the greatest impact. This, in turn, is helping them to become more discerning in the support that they provide for different groups of pupils.
- The support for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and are integrated into mainstream classes is highly effective. They make good progress from their starting points. This is a strength of this highly inclusive school. However, teaching for pupils in the resource base is not as effective. This is because staff lack the skills and expertise to support pupils who have complex needs effectively. As a result, these pupils do not make consistently good progress in their learning. Leaders recognise this and are addressing the staffing issues.
- Without exception, the classrooms are happy, purposeful and stimulating places for pupils to learn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are confident learners. They are well equipped for their lessons and settle quickly to their work. They rise well to challenge and persevere even when they are finding activities tricky.
- Pupils have the confidence to express themselves and are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas during lessons and at other times in the school day. They listen to each other and are actively encouraged to show respect and consideration towards one another.

- Pupils learn how to make good choices about what they eat. They are supported effectively to maintain both their physical and their emotional health. Pupils have good opportunities to take on extra responsibilities, such as being members of the school council or anti-bullying ambassadors. 'Playground Buddies' are on hand to take care of younger pupils on the playground.
- Pupils benefit from lots of facilities on the playground to promote healthy lifestyles. Leaders also ensure that the additional sports premium funding is used effectively to provide a range of sporting opportunities, both on the school grounds and in the local community.
- Before- and after-school clubs are well attended. Pupils can enjoy a hot meal in the after-school club, before they go home. This is just one example of the many ways pupils are cared for at Ivy Bank.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and if they have any concerns they are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- A local authority initiative, of which the school is a pilot member, supports staff, as well as pupils, to maintain positive mental health.
- Pupils are actively encouraged to be aspirational about their futures. Staff provide pupils with personalised opportunities to develop clear ideas about what they want to do when they leave school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has a calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They hold doors open for adults and for each other and generally show consideration for others. Teaching assistants are attentive to the triggers that may upset vulnerable pupils. They are skilled at working with these pupils and intervene early, so they remain calm and happy.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They understand the values and principles that act as a guide to good behaviour in school. There is a strong community feel and a culture of caring in the school. Pupils reflect on, and take responsibility for, their own actions.
- Pupils enjoy school and do not like to miss their time in lessons or with their friends. Attendance is in line with national attendance figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the school became an academy, the results that pupils have attained in national tests at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have indicated that pupils' outcomes have not been good. In particular, pupils have made slow progress in key stage 2 in writing and mathematics. However, the improved teaching throughout the school means that current pupils are making significantly faster progress across the curriculum. As a result, outcomes are rapidly improving and are now good.

- Leaders' information about pupils' progress indicates that pupils started to make significantly faster progress during the 2016/17 academic year. These improvements led to a much higher proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The most impressive improvements were in reading and writing in key stage 2, and reading and mathematics in key stage 1. A significantly greater proportion of pupils achieved beyond the expected standard in Year 2 and Year 6 in almost all subjects. As a result, levels of attainment are getting closer to national averages.
- Despite these improvements, the amount of progress that pupils made by the end of Year 6 in 2017 was below national averages in writing and mathematics. This was the result of a legacy of weaker teaching in these areas. Many pupils had made accelerated progress during Year 6 but this did not adequately compensate for the slower progress that had been made in previous years. Leaders' information indicates that an increasing number of pupils are continuing to meet their aspirational targets in reading, writing and mathematics. Furthermore, more pupils are now making the rapid progress that will compensate for weaker teaching in the past.
- Teachers have been supported to take greater ownership of the progress of pupils in their classes by the introduction of a new assessment and tracking system. As a result, pupils are monitored closely and this information is used to plan their next steps in learning. This has resulted in pupils making quicker progress and the differences in achievement between different groups diminishing significantly.
- The most able pupils are now making good progress. Previously, the most able pupils had not made the progress of which they are capable because teaching was not carefully tailored to their needs. This is no longer the case.
- Leaders' information about pupils' progress indicates that pupils are making significantly quicker progress in reading and writing. This evidence is supported by the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making good progress as a result of improved teaching. This has not been the case in recent years. For example, the performance of these pupils in national tests in 2017 indicated that they had made weak progress compared to other pupils. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils are now making quicker progress following a period when their progress lagged behind others. This is a result of improved teaching and more effective strategies to accelerate the progress of pupils within these groups.
- Pupils' skills in mathematics are improving. However, they are not as strong as they are in reading and writing. This is because the teaching of mathematics is not as effective as the teaching of English. In particular, teachers are not as skilled at challenging pupils, particularly to develop their mathematical problem-solving skills.
- At key stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with national expectations.
- Pupils typically read with fluency and confidence. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a wide variety of different books. For example, reading books are found in every classroom and the library provides pupils and their families with a wide variety of texts.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. The proportion of pupils achieving the required

standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been in line with national averages for the last two years. Pupils' secure phonics skills enable them to enjoy a wide range of reading material, both fiction and non-fiction.

- Pupils are also making faster progress in subjects beyond English and mathematics. This is typified by the significant increase in the number of 11-year-olds who attained the expected standard in science in 2017. However, the rate of improvement is uneven in different areas of the curriculum because the quality of subject leadership is variable.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement. The early years team has undergone a staffing restructure since the recent acquisition of an independent community pre-school. However, leaders have not ensured that provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is equally good. As a result, provision in the Nursery is not as well matched to children's needs as it is in Reception.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff are fully accurate in their assessment of what children know and can do. Furthermore, there is no effective system in place for staff to share information about children's prior learning. As a result, staff do not routinely plan learning opportunities that are based upon an accurate assessment of children's capabilities. In particular, leaders have not ensured that arrangements for assessing what children can do when they join the early years are thorough and fully accurate.
- By the end of Reception, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been in line with the national average for the last two years. Children's learning records and school information show that most children, including those who are disadvantaged, make reasonable progress during the early years. However, leaders cannot demonstrate that this progress is consistently good.
- Teachers provide indoor activities that are generally well planned and engaging. These activities offer a range of learning opportunities across different areas of the curriculum, particularly in Reception classes. However, leaders have not ensured that the outdoor area is planned, organised or resourced to the same standard.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Children were observed working independently and making effective use of their phonics skills to write simple sentences.
- Inspectors observed many examples of children communicating capably. For example, children in the Nursery told an inspector they could buy packets of biscuits with different flavours from the shop. Children talk positively and confidently about their learning.
- Staff support children's personal development, behaviour and welfare well. Behaviour is good and children have positive relationships with each other and adults. Children follow instructions and show independence in their learning because adults have established effective routines.
- Parents and carers are very positive about their children's experiences in the early years. They contribute to the ongoing assessments of what their children can do. They speak highly of the opportunities the school provides for them to understand how children learn in the early years. Many parents spoke highly of the phonics workshop,

for example.

- The inclusion team works effectively with outside agencies to provide early help for the children who have SEN and/or disabilities. This ensures that they get the best possible start.
- The safeguarding and welfare arrangements are met in the early years. Parents agree that their children feel safe and are happy coming to school.

School details

Unique reference number	141792
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10042453

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	468
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Simon Yates
Acting Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Gill
Telephone number	01625 448014
Website	www.ivybank.cheshire.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@ivybank.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school recently acquired an independent community pre-school and now has the responsibility for children from the age of two.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has a resource base which attracts an increasing number of pupils with complex needs from outside the local area. There are currently 21 pupils in the base. Their needs are significant, so they are not integrated into the mainstream school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average and

increasing. Pupils who do not access the school's resource base are fully integrated into mainstream classes.

- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all year groups, some jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteachers. Inspectors looked at pupils' work with leaders, observed the teaching of early reading skills, listened to pupils read and spoke with them to evaluate the quality of their learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, and staff performance.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of plans for improvement. They also looked at the school's self-evaluation and documents relating to the work of the governing body.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, middle leaders, and the inclusion leader with responsibility for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They also met with the designated leaders for safeguarding and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. They took account of the 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and two responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Maggie Parker, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector

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