

Inspection of a good school: Ilchester Community School

Somerton Road, Ilchester, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8JL

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 March 2022

Outcome

Ilchester Community School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Ilchester School everyone is valued. Many pupils who attend the school have parents in the armed forces. Staff know pupils and their families well. They work hard to understand the challenges that pupils might face. Pupils say that the school is 'kind and caring, where everyone gets the help they need'.

Pupils live the Ilchester values. They show 'bravery and curiosity' in their learning and 'kindness and equity' towards their friends. They develop belief in themselves and in others. Pupils work hard and behave well. They play well together in the playground. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, staff take it seriously. Pupils feel safe. They are confident that if they have a problem, an adult will sort it out.

Staff want the best for pupils. Pupils learn well in reading and mathematics. However, some of the other subjects need strengthening to make sure that pupils build on their knowledge year on year.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive high-quality support that is tailored to their needs.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and staff do the best for their pupils. They have a strong moral purpose. Whatever talents or challenges a pupil might have, all pupils are welcome and thrive. Staff are determined that Ilchester School reflects the whole community. They instil a knowledge of local history, for example of the village of Ilchester, with its rich heritage. They also incorporate pupils' own experiences, whether pupils are local or from other parts of the world. Pupils talk excitedly about different cultural or religious occasions that have made their time at school memorable. Pupils behave well. They are engaging and polite. Staff's work to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND mean they achieve well.

Senior leaders have recently taken action to strengthen the teaching of reading. From Reception, there is now a systematic approach through the school. There are strong routines that are helpful as pupils know what to expect in each session. Pupils engage enthusiastically. Staff have good knowledge. They are precise in their work. This means that pupils learn sounds well and become fluent readers. Regular assessments mean that pupils who are having difficulty are identified quickly. They receive individual or small-group sessions to help them catch up. Staff carefully choose books for pupils to read so that they can practise words and sounds and develop their vocabulary. Daily story time, the 'hundred club' of reading books, and visits to the school library are some of the ways staff encourage pupils to enjoy reading.

The mathematics curriculum is strong. Leaders keep it under constant review so that it is influenced by good practice and meets the needs of pupils. This has been particularly important so that teachers can tackle any gaps in learning that pupils might have due to irregular attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have identified the key knowledge pupils need. There is a very clear sequence of teaching in place. Staff give a high priority to pupils talking about their learning. They start to introduce the language pupils need in the early years. Through regular practice, problem-solving and having the right equipment to help them, pupils become confident mathematicians.

Leaders are aware that the systematic approach that is in place for reading and mathematics is not always as robust in some other subjects. The curriculum covers major topics and is frequently engaging. Pupils can remember activities and facts. However, they do not always deepen their knowledge and skills over time. Activities or vocabulary development in the early years do not always prepare pupils for the subjects they will learn in school. Leaders have clarified their expectations. There is a common framework in place. They are strengthening each subject in turn. This is already leading to pupils knowing and remembering more. However, it remains early days.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support of leaders to manage their workload while they tackle improvements. Governors are ambitious for the school. Many are new. They are strengthening their work so that they can support the school more. There has been some recent turbulence in staffing. Leaders are therefore working with the local authority and other schools to strengthen middle leadership. This is important work as currently too much responsibility falls on a few leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's work in safeguarding is underpinned by staff wanting to do the best for all its pupils. Staff are well trained in policies and procedures. They are knowledgeable about their pupils and families. Leaders take appropriate action. They work effectively with the local authority and external agencies to meet the needs of families. Staff ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Leaders carry out the necessary recruitment checks on staff before they commence employment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have recognised that some foundation subjects need strengthening. In some subjects the current topics taught do not ensure that pupils build knowledge systematically over time. Leaders should continue to determine what pupils should know and achieve in different subjects by the time they leave. They should design a curriculum that, from the earliest years in school, enables pupils to build their key skills and knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that teachers implement this curriculum well.
- There have been recent changes in middle leadership and governance. Governors, senior leaders and the local authority should continue to work together to define roles more clearly and ensure that individuals who are new to their roles have the confidence and knowledge to lead effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	123735
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10199792
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dan Green
Headteacher	Nicholas Heath
Website	www.ilchestercommunityprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ilchester Community School is on two sites. It now has pre-school provision on the infant site that caters for two-, three- and four-year-old children.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils are from armed services families.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school throughout the year is greater than average.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, middle and subject leaders, and the chair and members of the local governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. He met with subject leaders, talked to pupils and teachers, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read to adults.

- The inspector checked the procedures used to keep pupils safe. He reviewed the checks carried out by leaders on the suitability of adults who work in the school.
- The inspector considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. He considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Stephen McShane, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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