

Inspection of a good school: Ilam CofE (VA) Primary School

Ilam, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 2AZ

Inspection date:

11 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this small, rural school. They contribute confidently to discussions in lessons and are keen to learn. Pupils take pride in their beautiful surroundings and the local community. They help each other and feel safe in school. Pupils are respectful to each other and to staff. For example, during lunchtime, pupils chat happily as they eat the well-cooked meals. Older pupils help younger children with their cutlery, dinner manners and clearing away. Parents value the close-knit community within the school.

Staff are ambitious for all pupils' academic success and well-being. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The breakfast club and the range of after-school activities are appreciated by pupils and parents alike. Learning to swim is an important part of school life, as is 'forest school'. Regular trips, for example to London, mean that pupils experience a non-rural life. Leaders attend well to pupils' personal development. This continues to be a strength of the school.

Staff have recently revised the curriculum. They have considered what they want pupils to learn by the time they go to secondary school. However, the sequence of learning is not followed carefully enough in some subjects to ensure that all pupils make the progress leaders intend.

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

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. All staff completed online training in a new phonics programme recently. Reading books match pupils' phonic knowledge. This supports those at the early stages of learning to read. The progress of pupils in Reception is rapid. However, older pupils who are struggling to read are not learning quickly enough. This is because staff do not give older, weaker readers enough systematic practice in

phonics for them to read accurately and fluently. Pupils who can read enjoy reading independently, and staff guide their book choices well.

Teachers develop pupils' vocabulary well. In the early years, staff talk with children frequently, narrating their activities. For example, when children were making boats, adults talked with them about why different shapes floated, introducing new words for the children to use. In key stage 2, pupils use a range of scientific vocabulary accurately when talking about their learning.

Leaders are developing the curriculum. They have made a positive start. The resources purchased so far provide a useful structure in subjects like mathematics. In other subjects, leaders have started to set out the knowledge that pupils will learn. Leaders are clear about what needs to be learned by the time pupils leave for secondary school. However, staff are not clear enough about what this means in practice in their classrooms. There are too few checks to ensure that all staff are teaching the knowledge that leaders have set out. This means that some pupils miss essential learning.

Across the school, some pupils do not form their letters and numbers correctly. This is because there is not enough focus on teaching this in the lower part of the school. As a result, some pupils find it difficult to write fluently. Pupils sometimes make mistakes in mathematics because they have not set their work out accurately.

Governors have been proactive since the last inspection. When the previous headteacher left, a new head of school was appointed from within the school, initially on a temporary basis. In addition, an advisory headteacher provides useful support to the headteacher for half a day a week around curriculum planning and general leadership and management. Governors recognise the challenge that mixed-age classes present. They are trying different ways of organising classes to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, including pupils with SEND. For example, an extra teacher is employed so that in mathematics pupils can be taught according to their level of knowledge. Governors are monitoring the effectiveness of this additional resource.

The focus on pupils' personal development and well-being has been built on well since the last inspection. Leaders are conscious of the school's remote location and the impact of this on pupils' daily life. The sense of community and ethos in the school are to be commended. The building of community spirit starts in the early years. Nursery children learn to take part in whole-school assemblies and play alongside the Reception children in class.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the curriculum in English and in science may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all pupils are protected and kept safe. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and know what to do if they have any concerns about the safety or

welfare of a pupil. Where necessary, leaders work with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about road safety and the dangers associated with the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading interventions and the new phonics programme do not match. For some staff, it is not clear that phonics is the essential body of knowledge for pupils to be able to decode unseen words accurately. This prevents some pupils from building on what they already know and making progress towards reading fluently. Leaders should align the different interventions to the main programme for the teaching of reading so that pupils benefit from repetition and securing knowledge that is introduced in lessons.
- Leaders do not check that the programme of work they set out to teach is covered by all staff. This means that some pupils are not acquiring the knowledge they need in subjects like mathematics and science. Leaders should ensure that all teachers deliver the planned curriculum content to ensure that all pupils make the intended progress.
- Some aspects of the curriculum, such as handwriting and letter/number formation, are not given sufficient focus in the lower part of the school. This means that some pupils struggle to write fluently and are slow to complete work. Leaders should ensure that younger pupils are guided to use a comfortable pencil grip and learn to form their letters and numerals in the right direction from the start. They should have sufficient practice for good letter formation to become routine, including in the presentation of their mathematics.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2011.

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	124337
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10205144
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Suzanne Wiltshire
Headteacher	Rachel Linton
Website	www.ilam.staffs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	8 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The governing body manages a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was judged to be satisfactory in its most recent section 48 inspection in 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and advisory headteacher. They also met with teachers and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three governors. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils reading.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with leaders regarding the school's safeguarding procedures. They reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents and staff about pupils' safety.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including information on the school's website.
- Inspectors took account of the 26 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the 17 free-text comments. An inspector spoke with parents at the end of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Gill Jones, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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