Ickford School

Address: Sheldon Road, Ickford, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP18 9HY

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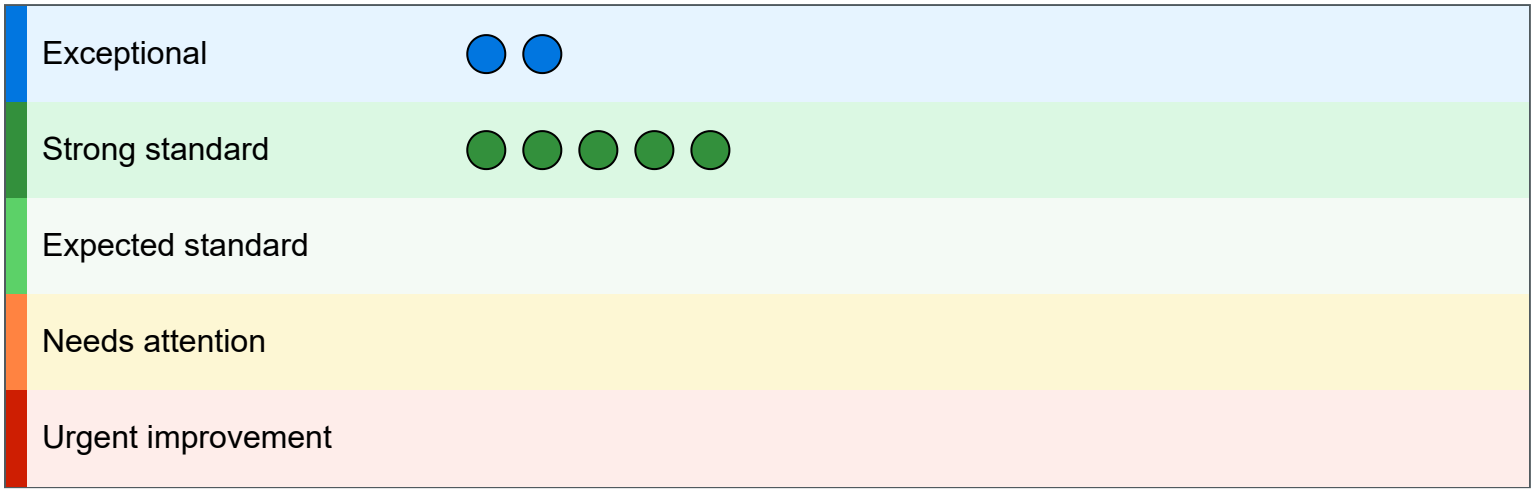
Inspection report: 9 June 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Exceptional

Achievement

Exceptional

Pupil achievement at Ickford School is exceptional. Pupils develop and remember highly detailed knowledge. They delight in being successful. Published outcomes show that attainment for all pupils is consistently above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Impressively, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve equally well from their starting points.

Leaders' actions have a direct impact on this level of achievement. They ensure that pupils secure the important building blocks of knowledge they need across subjects. Pupils can then tackle more complex and challenging work. Pupils make intelligent links between what they are learning and what they already know. Pupils produce work of a very high quality across all key stages and all subjects. For example, in computing, pupils expertly apply their knowledge to produce complex robots. In French, pupils write eloquent letters to their pen pals. Pupils develop into incredibly knowledgeable and articulate young people ready for their next stage of education.

Attendance and behaviour

Exceptional

Attendance in school is exceptionally high. Leaders have established a culture where pupils understand the importance of coming to school every day. This is embedded in pupils from the early years. Leaders take the time to understand the barriers faced by individual pupils. They take a highly personalised approach when required to help pupils to attend regularly.

Leaders have embedded a strong, consistent culture of positive behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their conduct and act as role models for younger peers. Pupils actively participate in lessons. They know that if they misbehave, they impact on others' learning too. Pupils know the school rules and appreciate that staff apply them fairly.

Staff are knowledgeable about pupils' needs and circumstances, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those with other barriers. They make appropriate adjustments as needed, which enable pupils to make the right choices. Pupils are courteous and respectful and act with integrity when moving around the school. They rarely need reminders to behave well and respond quickly when instructions are given.

Pupils have been taught to recognise the difference between a 'falling out' and bullying and have been taught 'Steps to Stop' to help them manage disagreements themselves.

Strong standard

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have developed a broad, balanced, well-structured and ambitious curriculum. It is rooted in current research and takes the local context into account. Leaders maintain a detailed understanding of its quality and make informed decisions about how it should

evolve. Staff add their own creativity and expertise to deliver challenging and engaging lessons in which pupils thrive. Pupils remember prior learning in detail due to strong building blocks of knowledge. This helps them to embrace challenge with confidence and resilience. Theoretical knowledge is supplemented with hands-on activities, trips and visiting speakers.

Classes are carefully organised to meet pupils' needs closely. Assessment is embedded in daily practice. Staff use clear modelling to explain new concepts and promptly address misconceptions. Pupils confidently use independent checking routines. Staff prioritise the teaching of early skills in mathematics, reading and writing, where precise teaching secures early fluency. Pupils are proud of their work and pay attention to their presentation in books.

Staff use scaffolded resources, visual supports and targeted intervention so all pupils access the curriculum while developing independence. As a result, pupils with barriers to their learning engage positively and make good progress alongside their peers.

Early years

Strong standard

Children settle quickly into school due to consistent, well-established routines and structured start-of-day activities. Staff build secure, caring relationships that help children feel confident and ready to learn. The environment is intentionally organised, with carefully chosen resources that promote independence, purposeful play and sustained engagement.

Staff swiftly identify gaps in reading, writing and mathematics and provide targeted support so children develop strong early skills from the outset. Reading is prioritised, and all children make excellent progress from their starting points. Staff promote communication and language effectively. Children are exposed to high-quality interactions, rich vocabulary and targeted interventions such as the Poetry Basket and Drawing Club. Staff choose high-quality texts to foster a love of stories and rhymes. Outdoor provision further strengthens language development, offering meaningful opportunities for talk, exploration and problem-solving. Children are confident to learn successfully on their own, in groups or with staff.

Leaders sequence the curriculum carefully so children learn the key knowledge they need by the end of Reception. The curriculum is deliberately flexible, allowing adaptations in response to children's interests. Partnerships with parents are strong, and regular communication ensures they are fully involved in their children's learning. As a result, children thrive and are extremely well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Staff and pupils recognise inclusion as a significant strength of the school. Pupils know that everyone gets what they need to be successful. Leaders identify pupils' needs with precision. They act swiftly so that support is well matched and consistently effective. Staff use accurate assessment to understand barriers early, enabling tailored provision that secures both pupils' wellbeing and academic progress.

Staff use well-chosen adaptations, including visual scaffolds, flexible seating and targeted interventions. This ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access learning successfully and make excellent progress across the curriculum. Pupils who require support from external agencies are recognised quickly and receive

timely, targeted intervention. Staff have the same high expectations for pupils with SEND as they do for others. They are supported to participate in all opportunities and experiences that the school offers. Adaptations and scaffolding are used effectively to enable this approach.

The school's pupil premium strategy is aligned with its inclusive ethos. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from strategic use of the additional funding. All pupils who face barriers to their learning receive coordinated pastoral and academic support that improves attendance, engagement and social development. Support is carefully adapted to remain discreet, promoting inclusion and independence. As a result, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils achieve extremely well.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders at Ickford School are determined to make it the very best it can be. There is a culture of high expectations and professionalism which all staff subscribe to. Leaders are reflective and evaluative. They use their insightful analysis of school performance to know what is working well and to recognise the school's many strengths. Equally, leaders, including trustees, remain highly ambitious about what comes next. They are not complacent and constantly strive to make well-considered improvements. Decisions are made in the very best interests of all pupils. Leaders make pragmatic decisions around staffing to ensure the very best outcomes for pupils. Leaders are highly effective in removing barriers to ensure that all pupils achieve, belong and thrive. Inclusion is a key priority.

Trustees are knowledgeable, experienced and fulfil their statutory duties comprehensively. They provide robust challenge and support, using their expertise to hold leaders to account and contribute positively to further improvement.

Staff feel valued and listened to by leaders. They appreciate the thoughtful consideration given to workload and wellbeing when leaders make decisions. Staff, including early career teachers, value the high-quality training and professional development they receive. Staff are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning in addition to the statutory programme. This combination of self-directed and essential training ensures they continually improve their expertise.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They value the quality of education their children receive, balanced with the caring and supportive ethos that leaders have created.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have constructed a thoughtful and purposeful personal development programme that weaves through all aspects of school life. Pupils demonstrate a strong and well-embedded understanding of all areas of personal development. They can speak eloquently about how important it is to discuss even the most challenging topics. They make meaningful links between school values and fundamental British values. For example, they understand the importance of respect in the wider community, and this is mirrored in their behaviour in school. Leaders are proactive in systematically identifying and supporting pupils' pastoral needs. There is a strong emphasis on good mental health and wellbeing.

There is a wide range of clubs and trips that nurture pupils' talents and interests. Leaders carefully track participation. Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully. Leaders adjust timings and discreetly provide funding where necessary to ensure that there is a high take-up. Trips are embedded into the curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding about the world around them.

Pupils develop secure knowledge across personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education. Pupils acquire the skills they need to recognise and manage risks. They learn how to keep themselves and others safe in the real world. They know about river safety and how to administer first aid and CPR. Pupils have a sophisticated knowledge about how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils understand what makes a healthy relationship and how to respond to unkind behaviour. They have ample opportunity to debate and discuss their beliefs and experiences.

Pupils take their leadership responsibilities seriously. Roles such as house captains, school councillors, librarians and gate monitors are seen as badges of honour. The 'Spirit of Ickford Award' is highly valued and celebrates the school's values of kindness, honesty, respect and determination.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils thrive at Ickford School. Pupils want to come to school every day because they enjoy learning. This is reflected in their very high attendance. Pupils and staff share a culture of high expectations, which is tangible. This means that all pupils achieve well in all aspects of school life.

The school's vision to promote a 'vibrant, inclusive and inspiring learning community' is fully realised. This begins in the early years, where children receive a positive start to their education. As soon as pupils join the school, leaders quickly identify and remove barriers to learning effectively. All pupils are prepared extremely well for their next stage of education.

Behaviour is exemplary at this school. Pupils say it is a safe and happy place to be. Instances of unkind behaviour are rare. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop excellent communication and language skills. These enable them to use the embedded 'Steps to Stop' approach to manage minor disagreements themselves. Pupils know there are staff they can go to if they have a concern. Pupils do not consider bullying to be an issue because people treat each other fairly and with respect.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. This includes the biennial residential trip to France, where pupils can practise their impressive language skills. Pupils are rightly proud of their sporting prowess. All pupils play musical instruments, and older pupils celebrate their ability in the Summer Music Concert.

Pupils take great pride in their work. They know that to be successful means working hard, and they thrive on this approach. Older pupils act as role models for younger pupils and relish the responsibility of setting a good example to others.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their clear and focused oversight to ensure that they sustain high standards in all areas of the school's work.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Ickford Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Niall McWilliams.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with members of the Trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Dawn Basnett

Lead inspector:
Vanessa Mason, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Charlotte Wilson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

134
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

140
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

2.99%
Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.49%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.45%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	98%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	94%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	100%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	100%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	98%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	94%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	100%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	100%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
2022/23		59%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
2022/23		79%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	2.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	2.1%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	2.3%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	0.8%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	0.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	0.0%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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