

Ickford Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110238
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	288609
Inspection date	2 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenny Johns
Headteacher	Mr Peter Bozier
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001
School address	Sheldon Road Ickford Aylesbury HP18 9HY
Telephone number	01844 339261
Fax number	01844 339261

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves a mainly affluent area, drawing pupils from three villages. Almost all pupils are White British. As children enter the school, their social, literacy and numeracy skills are better than is typical of the age group. A below average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties. The school has achieved the Active Mark for its provision for physical education and the Investors in People standard.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding all-round education so that pupils thrive and learn. Children make a good start in the Reception Year and by the time they start Year 1 standards are above those generally expected. Pupils' achievement through the school is outstanding and, by Year 6, they reach exceptionally high standards. This success is based on the staff's very good self-evaluation. Careful and regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress. The information about how well pupils are doing underpins the good teaching because it enables teachers to plan work that challenges all pupils. The good curriculum is kept under review and adjusted where necessary to make sure it consistently helps pupils to make very good progress. The school is rightly planning to create more links across subjects to further pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

Pupils themselves make an excellent contribution to the school's success. They are extremely positive about learning, thoroughly enjoy lessons and appreciate what the school offers them. Their behaviour is excellent. Attendance is consistently above the national average. Pupils feel safe and secure because the school provides excellent care, support and guidance. 'The care, attention, variety of subjects, enthusiasm and energy that is shown is second to none', was an endorsement by one parent. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because the school offers them extensive opportunities to develop and sustain good relationships and to develop strong moral values.

Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that high standards have been maintained over several years. The headteacher plays a pivotal role in this. He ensures that new ideas are carefully considered before implementation and there is a shared determination and commitment amongst staff to make them successful. Governors carry out their responsibilities extremely well and play a significant part in monitoring initiatives and evaluating the school's performance. The school's track record, together with the well-established strategic approach, means it has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further links across subjects to promote pupils' enjoyment and interest.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high. By the end of Reception, children have made a very good start in literacy and numeracy. They are self-confident, sociable and have very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils build well on this secure base so that, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. More able pupils are enabled to reach the high standards expected of them. Pupils continue to make good and often very good progress in Years 3 to 6. Standards in Year 6 are consistently above average. Results in 2006 were exceptionally high and similar standards are evident from this year's test results. This year, eleven of the thirteen Year 6 pupils reached the higher levels in reading, writing and science, and nine did so in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties also make good progress towards their individual targets due to the highly effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils gain an excellent understanding of cultural diversity through learning about how faith is central the lives of many people, and through events such as 'India Week'. Pupils take their fitness seriously, participating in a wide range of physical activities. Where possible, pupils walk or cycle to school. They have an excellent understanding of a healthy diet. Pupils have a remarkable degree of concern for their peers. Older pupils spontaneously support younger ones. Pupils' compassion for people in challenging circumstances is clear from their enthusiastic support of charities. Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life; for example, the school council suggested a playground buddy scheme and is monitoring its effectiveness. Members of the Road Safety group carry out their responsibilities extremely well. Pupils' excellent basic skills, high levels of independence and social maturity provide a first class foundation for their subsequent education and future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and have some exemplary features. The outstanding achievement through the school owes much to this and to pupils' high levels of motivation. Based on their on-going assessments, teachers set work with a good level of challenge for all groups, including the most able pupils. Lessons are lively and engage pupils' interest. Pupils are not spoon-fed but are successfully encouraged to use their existing knowledge and skills to tackle new work independently. For example, Year 3 pupils confidently tried out different methods of adding three numbers. Teachers provide useful feedback to pupils through marking. Their comments focus clearly on the specific criteria and include the next steps pupils should take to improve. Well-qualified assistants work alongside teachers to provide carefully planned and timely support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties. However, teaching assistants are not always involved in introductory sessions so, at this stage of the lesson, their skills are not fully utilised.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal, social and health education are promoted very successfully in lessons, assemblies, circle time and through themes such as 'walk to school week'. The school places special emphasis on the development of personal responsibility and independence. Activities such as entertaining local senior citizens and taking part in local festivals help pupils to develop a strong commitment to active citizenship. Links with schools in northern Finland and the Czech Republic provide an international dimension. The recently built multi-purpose hall is enabling the school to enhance opportunities for physical activities significantly. Partnership with the local college, which specialises in the arts and media, enables joint activities, such as the recent animated film project. The school's comprehensive website provides additional activities for pupils to complete at home or in school. The school acknowledges that it could find more creative ways to link subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment further and provide more opportunities for them to pursue their own interests. A register of gifted and talented pupils

is well established and a school priority is to help them develop advanced thinking and problem solving skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents value the care with which the school responds to their children's individual needs. One parent commented, 'This is a caring and very loving school where values and respect for each other are actively promoted.' Staff know pupils very well and give high priority to their security, health and safety. Close liaison with pre-school settings, including one that is based in the school, ensures accurate information about children as they start in Reception. Clear rules and expectations help pupils to develop positive attitudes. They benefit from excellent academic guidance and are fully involved in evaluating their own progress towards class and individual targets. This enables consistently high standards. Parents support their children's learning very well. They are kept well informed through regular curriculum outlines which include information about homework requirements. Guidelines for parents of Reception children, however, contain some educational jargon which some parents find confusing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Strengths in leadership and management lie in the outstanding direction for improvement provided by the headteacher, and the particularly strong support he receives from staff and governors. All are committed to providing a learning environment that stimulates and engages the pupils. Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. It identifies strengths and areas where improvements are needed. The school takes regular soundings on how well it is doing through checks on teaching, analysing the information about how well pupils are progressing and adjusting the curriculum to meeting changing needs. For example, a dip in achievement in writing by Year 2 pupils last year was successfully addressed. Governors are highly informed about pupils' standards and very supportive of the work the school undertakes. They are fully involved in the school's future planning and regularly review their own performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ickford Combined School, Aylesbury, HP18 9HY

Thank you for making me so welcome during my visit. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you. I agree with you that Ickford is an outstanding school. You play a large part in making it such a happy and successful place. These are the things that I found best in your school:

- you work hard and achieve high standards
- you behave extremely well and enjoy learning
- adults take great care to ensure you feel safe
- teachers keep a careful eye on how you are doing so they can help you build on what you already know
- you make a great contribution to school life through the school and class councils, the road safety group and by the way you help one another out whenever you can
- the people in charge of the school know what they need to do to make the school better and I agree with their plans to link subjects together to make learning even more exciting.

You are credit to your school and your parents. I am sure you will keep working hard to make the most of your time. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector