



Icknield Infant and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117186
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290749
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Marianne Harris

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Archer's Way
School category	Community		Letchworth Garden City
Age range of pupils	3–7		Hertfordshire SG6 4UN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 620406
Number on roll (school)	252	Fax number	01462 620407
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms J Candy
		Headteacher	Mrs J Egan
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized infant and nursery school where the majority of pupils are from a white British background. The remaining pupils have mainly an Asian heritage, and a small number are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has some very good features. Parents are very supportive because their children are happy and make good progress. Pupils enjoy coming to school and report that they 'love learning.' The headteacher and staff are all fully committed to including all pupils and there is very good provision for those who are at an early stage of learning English, and those who have learning difficulties.

When children join the nursery their ability varies, but is generally below average. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 2 standards in national tests and in work seen during the inspection are average, with more pupils reaching the higher levels than is seen nationally. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to work hard and do their best. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and learn to work together and develop a thirst for learning. Pupils with learning difficulties, or who are new to learning English, make good progress.

Pupils' welfare is of utmost importance to the school and so the care, guidance and support that they receive is good. Every effort is made to keep them safe and the pupils themselves understand that there is someone they can go to if there is a problem. They know about keeping healthy, and staff encourage the pupils to be active in lessons and in the playground. Whenever possible visitors come into school to help the pupils understand about different cultures or talk about their work, so that pupils can develop a good understanding of their local community. The school offer pupils a great deal of support to enable them to develop the skills they will need in later life. The curriculum is good and well planned so that learning is fun and activities are appropriate and meets the needs of all pupils. Attendance is satisfactory. Although the school encourages good attendance there is more to be done to ensure that all parents understand that regular attendance is important.

The school is well led and managed. Senior leaders are very aware of the strengths of the school and know what needs to improve. The headteacher has been most successful in tackling the issues from the last inspection, strengthening the role of the subject leaders, raising standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and strengthening the links between the nursery and reception classes. There has also been much success in raising boys' achievement in writing. The governing body is satisfactory overall. Governors are well informed about the school and are very supportive, but there are many who are new and some vacancies have yet to be filled. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the governing body and ensure there are sufficient active governors to oversee the work of the school.
- Work with parents to ensure that attendance is improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From a low starting point, pupils make good progress throughout their time in school because teaching and learning are good. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and, by the time they enter Year 1, they have made good progress. Standards are broadly average and the children develop good attitudes to learning. They are keen and enthusiastic and this continues throughout Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average, although the number of pupils reaching the higher levels is above those normally seen, especially in mathematics. This is because there has been a focus on raising the attainment of boys generally and in writing in particular. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress because they are supported well in lessons. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are similarly well supported so that they can make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. The good relationships between the teachers and the pupils ensure that pupils like coming to school, enjoy their learning and adopt a positive approach to their lessons. Pupils said, 'It's nice to come to school, teachers help you, and you learn a lot.' Pupils are very sociable caring and supportive towards each other. Older pupils are keen to volunteer to become playground friends and to offer support to younger pupils who need someone to play with. All pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. There is no evidence of rough play or bullying. Attendance is satisfactory, although some parents do not place a high enough priority on ensuring that their children attend regularly. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the opportunities the school gives them to email children and families in other countries, and this makes a significant contribution to their cultural understanding. Pupils' skills in English, mathematics and ICT are being developed well and will contribute much to their future lives. The majority are knowledgeable about the need to eat healthy foods and to take regular exercise and beginning to adopt healthy practices. Pupils are very aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. They are keen to raise money for charity and to take part in community activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all pupils and manage behaviour well. Teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties well, although there are

occasions when they are not fully used, mainly during whole class sessions. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are very well supported so that they can join in with the lessons and learn the language quickly. The school has secured the services of experienced staff so that pupils learning English as an additional language are very effectively supported so that they can make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and encourage them to work together well. 'Talk partners' are used very effectively so that pupils in all classes can talk about their work and share ideas. This makes learning fun and encourages all to become involved in the lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all children well. The school provides a rich and varied curriculum that includes more extra activities than is normally seen in an Infant school. Pupils enjoy games and musical activities as well as themed days and weeks where they learn dance or work with artists. Much work has been carried out to improve the provision for ICT and resources are very good. The school now wants to develop the links between ICT and other subjects so that lessons become even more interesting for the pupils. There is a good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education and this results in a clear understanding about how to keep healthy and stay safe. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good and very well planned so that children are excited about learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support of pupils are effective. The school takes good care of its pupils, and provides effective support and guidance. Every effort is taken to ensure that the building is safe and welcoming. Many members of staff have received training in first aid and this is updated regularly. The pupils know that there is someone they can go to if they have a problem and are sure that it will be sorted out. Each teacher has set targets for their class and pupils know what they are. These targets are reviewed regularly so that the progress each child is making can be tracked effectively. Teachers discuss the pupils' work with them, but work does not always have comments on it that would remind the pupils what it is they have to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very effective direction for the school and is supported well by colleagues who have additional responsibilities. The school's self evaluation process is rigorous and accurate. The information is used well to inform the good school development plan. Good systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. This has led to better teaching and improved standards. The school liaises well with parents and

both pupils and parents are very appreciative of the support and guidance they receive. Responses to the questionnaire about the work of the school show that parents and carers are overwhelmingly of the opinion that it provides their children with a good quality of education. Governors are keen advocates for the school and work hard to ensure it offers good value for money. Many are very well informed about the school's quality and impact, asking searching questions that help to maintain the school's impetus for improvement. However, several governors are new and there are a number of unfilled vacancies on the governing body, which restricts its overall effectiveness.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	2

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

15 January 2007

Dear Children

Icknield Infant and Nursery School, Archer's Way, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4UN

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school a few days ago, and for telling us all about your work. We really enjoyed our time with you and, as promised, we are writing to let you know what we found out.

We think that you all go to a good school, and you told us that you 'love learning'. This was obvious in the lessons we visited. You all work hard and teachers make lessons fun, which means that you all make good progress. We were most impressed with your understanding about the importance of keeping healthy and having lots of exercise. You are friendly and polite and all get along well.

We have talked to your headteacher and teachers about your school. We have asked them to help you to improve your work and ensure that you come to school every day unless you really are too ill for learning. You can help by asking your parents to bring you regularly and not expecting to have a day off when there is no good reason. We have also asked the school to find more governors so that they can work more efficiently and help your teachers to make things even better for you.

Once again, thank you for your help and for being so helpful. We wish you all good luck in the future.

Marianne Harris

Lead Inspector

PS Thank you so much for the lovely assembly and for the delicious birthday cake.