

Ickniel Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109579
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	310030
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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	635
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Perrott
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Crick
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Birdsfoot Lane Luton Bedfordshire LU3 2JB
Telephone number	01582 534000
Fax number	01582 534009

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is large in size compared to other primary schools. It was formed through the amalgamation of Icknield Infant and Junior schools in 2003. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals are broadly in line with the national average. A similar percentage of pupils to the picture nationally have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion with a statement for their special educational needs is well above average. This is because the school houses local authority primary provision for hearing impaired pupils and additionally has a high number of pupils with statements for a range of diverse needs. A very high percentage of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and for many of these pupils, their first language is not English. The school has gained National Healthy School and Activemark awards.

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 that enables pupils to achieve well and to leave school as well rounded individuals who are ready for the next challenges in their lives. Many parents are supportive and appreciative of the work of the school. Strengths in a number of key areas contribute to the success of the school. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, there is great determination to improve further. This together with school's track record of improvement suggests that this vision could well translate into a reality.

From lower than expected starting points, pupils make good progress and reach standards that are broadly average and in science above average by the time they leave the school. Pupils who have difficulty learning and those with hearing impairment make similar progress because of effective and well planned support that is specifically targeted to pupils' individual needs. Standards have been on an upward trend since 2004 and continue to rise. This trend of improvement is matched by a similar one in the quality of teaching which is now good because many lessons are challenging and capture the imagination of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to make learning fun. There remain times, however, when work is not matched precisely enough to the capability of the individual pupils.

A great strength of the school is the commitment to the inclusion of all pupils. Pupils with a wide range of learning needs, including hearing impaired pupils, as well as pupils from many different ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. There are high levels of racial harmony and pupils across the school value and respect what each individual can add to the life of the school as a community. There is little doubt that pupils help to make the school what it is. They show an infectious enthusiasm and are more than ready to take on responsibilities. They behave well and have a good knowledge of what is needed to follow fit, healthy and safe lives. All these qualities hold them in good stead for the future although the school recognises that more could be done to help pupils develop greater independence, initiative and responsibility for their own learning.

The curriculum provides well for the very differing learning needs of pupils. A wide range of activities both within and outside of the formal curriculum contribute greatly to pupils' achievement and to their tremendous enjoyment of school which is reflected in the significant improvements in attendance. The care provided for pupils is outstanding because the uniqueness of the individual is nurtured and all staff go out of their way to meet pupils' needs. Academic guidance is not at the same level because there are some inconsistencies in teachers' confidence in precisely assessing the levels pupils are working at and setting work accordingly.

A good school often goes hand in hand with good leadership and Icknield is no exception. The headteacher continues to drive the school forward and with the support of staff and governors is setting the bar of expectation higher. Further work is rightly planned to increase the rigour in which standards and achievement are monitored and the continued development of the school is in safe hands.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children get off to a good start in the Reception year and achieve well. Good teaching contributes significantly to children's progress, which continues to accelerate with the introduction of 'synthetic phonics' teaching. Adults work very well together and enable the

hearing impaired children to participate fully in the wide range of interesting and fun learning activities. On occasions, teaching is a little too directed, rather than encouraging children to make their own choices. Accommodation varies between the classes but good attention is paid to ensuring all children have access to the outdoor provision. Management of the provision and links with parents are both good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure work is more precisely matched to the individual abilities and levels of pupils.
- Develop consistency in teachers' assessment skills to further improve their awareness of how well pupils are progressing.
- Provide pupils with the skills to function as independent learners so that they take more responsibility for setting and reviewing their own targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment when children start at the school is generally below and for a good number of children, well below national expectations. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and this is systematically built on as pupils move through the school. Standards continue to rise and are a little below average by the end of Year 2. Standards when pupils leave school are broadly average with science often above the national average. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the school's best results in recent years. The school sets challenging targets for pupils of all abilities and ethnicities and these together with the good teaching contribute much to the good achievement. Similarly challenging targets are set for the hearing impaired pupils and work is often precisely matched to their abilities to help them achieve these targets. However, the school fully recognises that for other pupils, consistently matching work more closely to their abilities and a more precise use of assessment data to guide learning are key factors in raising the school's performance towards the next level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school immensely and display excellent attitudes to learning. There are high levels of racial harmony because the individuality of pupils is celebrated. Uptake on sporting opportunities is high and pupils understand the importance of following healthy lifestyles, although is not always reflected in choices in their lunchboxes. Behaviour is good overall with just a small minority of pupils displaying challenging or inappropriate behaviour. Older pupils relish responsibility by becoming, for example, prefects or 'Play Leaders'. The school council shows great maturity in its work and makes a strong contribution towards the school and wider community. Pupils' functioning as confident, independent learners is work in progress. There is little doubt that pupils leave school well prepared for the next stage of their education. Effective monitoring has led to significant improvements in attendance, which has risen to average levels. This is a real success story.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Positive relationships between teachers and pupils enable lessons to run smoothly. Activities are lively, capturing pupils' interest and ensuring good progress. In the best lessons, there is a swift pace and a high degree of challenge so that pupils are left hanging on to every word. Teachers are very well supported by skilled and committed teaching assistants. Hearing impaired pupils receive outstanding support from highly trained staff. Teachers have a growing awareness of different learning styles and are increasingly using practical activities in their lessons. Where appropriate, they use information and communication technology well to support their work. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to develop as confident, independent learners. Teaching in ability groups has gone a long way towards meeting pupils' needs but further work remains to be done to ensure work consistently matches individual ability with greater precision.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the very diverse learning needs of pupils well. It provides a broad range of learning experiences and includes French and German for the older pupils. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and for pupils whose first language is not English. Hearing impaired pupils benefit greatly from an excellent balance of specialist teaching and inclusion in the full range of mainstream curriculum activities, together with an outstanding range of resources. A good start has been made for younger pupils in a thematic approach to learning, which sees key skills developed in a more cross-curricular manner. There are plans to extend this approach for older pupils although this is in its early stages of development. The strong emphasis on sport and Personal, Social and Health Education together with the good array of enrichment activities add much to pupils' enjoyment of school as well as contributing to healthy lifestyles and good citizenship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff go the extra mile in providing excellent levels of care and welfare to help ensure that the diverse needs of pupils are met. The individuality of pupils is nurtured and pupils are given a genuine voice in the life of the school. As a consequence, pupils feel very safe, valued and respected. Safeguarding procedures are secure. Very strong links with outside support agencies, alongside the school's internal mechanisms, including the effective on-site Family Support workers, means that help can quickly be called on to help pupils and their families. There are good systems in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. However, the accuracy of teachers' assessments and the quality of marking does not yet consistently match up to the best practice in school. In addition, pupils do not yet play an active enough role in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has played a significant role in the continued improvement of the school since the amalgamation. Her excellent leadership has been particularly successful in moulding together a cohesive team of staff that share her commitment to take the school on still further. She benefits from good support from the senior leadership team and the curriculum teams. Good systems are in place for analysing assessment data and monitoring teaching and pupils' work. Information from evaluation is used well to identify priorities for improvement. Members of the curriculum teams are not always taking a rigorous role in directly observing teaching in order to gain a greater insight into how well pupils are progressing. Governors are both supportive and challenging in their role. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Visits by governors to monitor the work of the school are not an established feature of their role.

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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

3 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Icknield Primary School, Luton, LU3 2JB

You will probably remember that we visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would first like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how you were all so helpful and polite. Through our discussions with you, it was great to hear how much you enjoy coming to school. It was also good to hear about how safe you feel in school, that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried.

We found many positive things about Icknield School. These helped us to believe yours is a good school. Your teachers and other staff help you to achieve well because of their good teaching. The curriculum, clubs, visits and visitors are strengths as are the ways in which the school helps you to keep safe and healthy. The school is well led and managed and all the staff and governors help make the school a good place to learn. There is a further strength of the school that I have not mentioned yet. That is you - the children. Many of you behave well and you show tremendous enthusiasm. The way you all get on together is a real credit to you. You make a real difference to the life of the school. Well done!

Even good schools like yours can improve. I have asked your school to make sure that work is always just at the right level for everybody, that teachers always know the level at which you are working and that they help you get better at working on your own. Following my discussion with some of the older pupils, you will be delighted to know that I think your suggestion of a staff race at 'Sports Day' is a very good idea and I have recommended that sufficient time is found for it to happen! Mrs Crick, the staff and governors want the school to become even better and I know you will play your part by all behaving well and continuing to work hard.

I wish you every success in your future. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead inspector