

Itchen Abbas Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115920
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312107
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	92
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Louise Waldron
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Robson
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Lane Itchen Abbas Winchester SO21 1BE
Telephone number	01962 779310
Fax number	01962 779310

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues.

- Whether the provision for English is a significant strength of the school.
- How well leaders are working to help pupils to do as well as possible in mathematics.
- How effectively does the school promote community cohesion so that pupils understand the world in which they live.
- How well the Early Years Foundation Stage and information and communication technology (ICT) have developed since the last inspection.

The inspectors gained evidence from lessons and from the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and a governor. A range of documentation was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and the views of parents were gathered from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small school in a rural environment. Most pupils come from favorable home circumstances with few receiving free school meals. All pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average; pupils' needs are wide-ranging but several have dyslexia. Children join the school in the Reception class and this forms the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Itchen Abbas is a good school that provides a well-rounded and very happy educational experience for its pupils. Parents have great confidence in the school and note such things as their children 'bursting with an eagerness to learn in a lovely nurturing environment'. It is not unusual for pupils to feel that the school is their second home. Pupils grow into very confident individuals who contribute a great deal to the school and local community. Pupils' commented that they 'make friends easily here' and 'learning is fun'.

Teaching and learning are good and this helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers have high expectations and organise their lessons well, so that the mixed-age classes have suitable challenges for their wide-ranging needs. Teaching assistants give good support and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well. Teachers ask challenging questions and encourage pupils to research things independently, and pupils like this. There is a good focus on discussion work and pupils keenly work in pairs and groups. The teaching of English, science and ICT are especially good, but mathematics is an area for development. Teachers mark pupils' work to give them praise, but there is inconsistency in how well teachers give guidance to pupils about how they might improve and develop their skills. For example, the marking in English is often better than in mathematics.

There is a strong partnership with parents and other educational professionals and they work well with the teachers and other staff for the benefit of the pupils and this aids their good progress. As the governors and headteacher correctly say, 'This is a small school providing a big education.' In this secure, safe, yet academically challenging environment the pupils' personal development is good.

Pupils gain an outstanding grounding in the basic skills needed for their subsequent education and their future lives. From higher-than-expected starting points pupils make good progress and this often leads to standards that are exceptionally high by the end of Year 6. There is, however, some variation between different year groups of pupils due to the very small numbers in each year. The current Year 6 are on track to reach well above-average standards in their work overall and this maintains the same pattern as was evident in 2005 and 2007.

Pupils often reach very high levels in English, science and ICT. In English pupils develop good handwriting skills and gain a clear understanding of how to use letters and sounds (phonics), which helps them with their reading and writing. Pupils enjoy writing for many different purposes and their skills build up in a progressive way; this is due to the changes that have been made to improve the curriculum so that it is more interesting and motivates pupils. There are missed opportunities for drama within lessons to make learning even more exciting.

Leadership is good. The headteacher has been the driving force behind the good improvements made since the last inspection. The accommodation, writing, the Early Years Foundation Stage, the curriculum and ICT have developed particularly well. When the headteacher joined the school, resources and teachers' skills in ICT were evaluated by the local authority as being inadequate and the former inspection noted that significant improvement was needed. Good staff training has taken place and the current effective provision ensures that pupils use many different skills and resources to aid their learning in a wide range of subjects.

The school has a good capacity for improvement. Good governance, together with the sensitive yet firm expectations of the headteacher, has helped staff to be receptive to change. Some staff found the change process initially very difficult, but are now blossoming with the support

and high expectations of the headteacher. His superb and excellent use of staff bulletins clearly set out exactly what has been planned and what is expected for the future. They also ensure that the school's developments and successes are celebrated. The good monitoring of lessons and evaluation of pupils' progress demonstrate the ways in which leaders and staff work successfully to evaluate the work of the school.

Leaders are correctly focused on helping pupils to do even better in mathematics. Although standards are above average in mathematics, they are not quite as outstandingly high as in other areas. There is still more to do to help pupils to tackle interesting and challenging mathematical problems so that they work on more complex skills. For example, pupils should be able to see how patterns emerge when doing calculations and should be more skilled at explaining exactly how they come up with their answers. Teachers do not always make patterns in mathematics clear enough to pupils, so that they can use these to help them to quickly solve other problems.

Leaders and staff have successfully emphasised a curriculum that it is more fun and flexible, with the result that pupils are well motivated. For example, closer links are being made between subjects and there are more visits to support pupils' understanding of new things. Pupils enjoyed a recent visit to The Tate Modern Art Gallery and the Watercress Railway. Opportunities have increased for music and sports and these contribute much to pupils' all-round enjoyment of school. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles and love such things as the 'Fit for Life' activities, dinghy sailing and cricket. Pupils have a very good knowledge of how to be safe. Their knowledge of internet safety is excellent. The improved accommodation has increased spaces for small-group teaching and support work. This has further enhanced the good care given to pupils. The school is working to develop the library.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent; they are kind and respectful. Pupils are gaining insights into the lives of others. They know about some different religious beliefs such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam. They thoroughly enjoyed a special project called 'Ticket to Africa', which helped them to become more aware about the diverse lives of others. There is more to do to make sure that pupils understand that Britain is made up of many diverse cultures. This is especially important in the school's all-White British community. The project on France promotes their understanding of life in Europe. Leaders are right to be proud of the good local community cohesion. The school has a clear and focused development plan overall, but the plans for developing community cohesion are not as strong as they could be. This aspect of leadership still needs strengthening so that pupils know more about Europe and global issues. As governors said, 'We want to push boundaries; and we are excited to do more of this.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When the headteacher joined the school he found that the provision in Reception was not good enough. At that time the youngest children were mixed in with Years 1 and 2 due to limited classroom space and aspects of the provision were inadequate. Consequently the progress made by pupils was not as good as it might have been. A new classroom has been provided and this means that the youngest children can now work as a separate group. Leadership is good and there has been a strong drive for improvement. Appropriate and accurate monitoring and evaluation has identified relevant areas for development. For example, the curriculum has been reviewed to allow children to learn in the way that suits them best.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Now, children do some formal activities with the teacher and her assistant while also having plenty of opportunities to investigate things for themselves. Excellent relationships exist and children enjoy school. They are getting a firm grounding in learning letters and sounds, which helps them with their reading. There is room for the range of resources to be wider so that the children are inspired to be as creative as possible, and to make the very most of opportunities to write within a wider range of activities. Equally, the outside area, although satisfactory, does not have enough construction, gardening or clambering resources. Plans are well underway to improve this. Children join Reception showing skills and knowledge that are often higher than expected for their age. Many speak with confidence, clarity and enjoy having a simple conversation. Standards are now on track to be above the expected levels by the end of the Reception Year, which demonstrates satisfactory achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help pupils to do investigation work in mathematics so that they have to work out different ways to solve problems and recognise patterns in mathematics.
- Extend work on community cohesion by helping pupils to find out more about the lives and cultures of others who live in Britain, Europe and the wider world.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Itchen Abbas Primary School, Winchester, SO21 1BE

You may remember that two school inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and polite. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

You go to a good school in a lovely place where all of the adults look after you well and you are happy and do well. You leave this school really well equipped with the things that will help to make you successful in the future. Your teachers work hard to help you to learn new things and we are especially pleased that you do so many different and interesting activities. We especially like your English writing work, your science and ICT. We are delighted to hear that you are doing plenty of sports. It is good that you have some special music teaching. We know that you like school and your behaviour is excellent - well done! Your headteacher and all of the other adults are working hard to make the school even better for you. I have asked them to:

- help you to do some more exciting investigation work in mathematics. We want you to have more opportunities to think hard, work out different ways to solve problems and explain exactly how you came up with your answers. In particular, we want you to be able to see the different patterns in mathematics, so that you can use these to help you to quickly solve other problems.
- help you to find out more about the lives and cultures of others who live in Britain, Europe and the wider world. You have already started on this, which is great, but we know that you love learning about new things and this would help you to have a really good understanding about the world in which you live.

It was lovely to see how the Reception class is doing and I hope that you soon get your new and extended outside area, as the plans for this sound wonderful.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector