

Istead Rise Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118452
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312945
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Slater
Headteacher	Caren Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2004
School address	Downs Road Northfleet Gravesend DA13 9HG
Telephone number	01474 833177
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils are White British, with the remainder from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including several children from Traveller families of Irish Heritage. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or 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: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Under the clear direction of the headteacher, the school has continued to move forwards since its last inspection, so that some aspects of its work are now good. Good progress has been made in developing the curriculum, including the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Health and safety and child protection arrangements are fully in place. The school's strategy document and its development plan indicate that the right priorities have been identified. Determined action has been taken to tackle these priorities, but there is scope to accelerate this process of change to raise standards further.

Children currently make good progress in Reception because of good teaching and most children exceed the standards expected of them by the time they start Year 1. Across the rest of the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. In 2007, pupils did particularly well in mathematics, as a much higher proportion than average gained the higher Level 5. This was not the case in English and science. The results were slightly above average in English but were slightly below average in science. Although raising standards in science is currently an area for development, the school's actions have had little impact so far.

The good curriculum helps pupils to develop a range of thinking, problem-solving and creative skills which are important for their future lives, as well as motivating them to want to learn. Although some teaching is good, overall it is satisfactory because it is not consistent across the school. Not all teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to share ideas, discuss their own work and that of others, or give them regular feedback of their progress in meeting their individual targets through the marking and assessment of work. As a result, pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. Many pupils, including the more able pupils, are capable of doing more demanding work. Staff have a real concern for their pupils and give them good pastoral care and support. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are polite and friendly and their behaviour is satisfactory. They clearly enjoy school and the opportunities it provides for them to make a good contribution to the school and local community. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep fit and healthy, and are well prepared for their future lives. They feel safe in school and know there is an adult to whom they can turn to if the need arises.

Despite the clear leadership provided by the headteacher, with the good support of the governing body, leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The senior leadership team is very new and its members have not yet had time to make a difference in their areas of responsibility. A large number of parents express considerable anxieties about aspects of the school's work. It is evident that some parents do not fully appreciate the rationale for some of the changes that are being made in the interests and safety of all the pupils, either through a misunderstanding of the issues or because the school has not explained the reasons for the changes clearly enough. Both the school and parents have much to do to resolve these differences if the school is to accelerate its current rate of progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Reception with skills and experiences that are typical of this age group, but with weaknesses in their literacy and numeracy skills. They make good progress as a result of good teaching so that by the start of Year 1 standards are above average, although their literacy skills remain weaker than other areas of their development. There are strengths in their personal, social and emotional development, and in their physical and creative development. Children behave well and they show good levels of concentration, for example when drawing and colouring. The planning of the curriculum does not ensure adequate balance or full coverage across the six areas of learning. There is too much focus on activities directed by teachers at the expense of those initiated by the children themselves. This limits their opportunity to learn independently. Adults assess children's progress on a regular basis, but the assessments are not systematically linked to all the elements in each area of learning. The outside play area and its equipment are not being maintained to a high enough level.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science to match those in mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils, especially the more able, always receive work that stretches them.
- Rigorously use assessment, including marking, to help pupils make faster progress.
- Take robust action to improve relationships and communication with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children currently make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Throughout the rest of the school, their progress is satisfactory because the work is not always challenging enough to accelerate their progress, especially for the more able pupils. For the past three years, the national tests results at the end of Year 6 have improved year on year from below average in 2005 to above average in 2007. The tests results at the end of Year 2 have been above average since 2005. In 2007, there were particular strengths in the test results in mathematics in both Year 2 and Year 6, when they were well above average. Standards were slightly above average in English but slightly below average in science. The school's plans to improve pupils' performance in science, including participation in a local authority project to improve teaching and learning, have not taken place as yet. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress at the same rate as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and they speak positively about the range of activities provided for them. They are friendly and polite, and relationships are good. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils play well together at break times, but the midday assistants are not active enough in managing pupils at lunchtime. In a few lessons, some pupils lose their concentration and affect the learning of others. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are confident in approaching staff when they have worries, but are less sure how staff respond to their concerns. Pupils make a good contribution to the school as peer mediators, play leaders and monitors, as well as through

membership of the school council. They are involved in local community projects and in raising funds for charities. Pupils are prepared well for their future lives, benefiting greatly from activities like the 'Business Challenge' week which develop their problem-solving and team working skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Typically, lessons are well planned and organised, providing pupils with a range of interesting activities to help them learn. Teachers take care to ensure that pupils understand the purpose of their work but do not do enough to check what learning has taken place during and at the end of the lesson. At times, learning is constrained because of a rather leisurely pace and insufficient challenge in the work, especially for the more able pupils. The good use of interactive whiteboards enlivens lessons and encourages pupils' engagement with learning. A priority for the school is to extend the opportunities for pupils to work together to share ideas, evaluate their own work and that of others, and receive more immediate feedback on their progress towards their individual targets. These approaches are happening in some of the more effective lessons but are not securely established in all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning well. The provision for ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection when it was a key issue. The school's approach to integrating subjects under a variety of themes provides greater coherence to pupils' learning. In addition to developing their knowledge and understanding across subjects, it enables pupils to develop their problem-solving, higher-order thinking and creative skills. The school is reviewing these themes to ensure that they continue to cover the required knowledge, skills and understanding. A range of visits and visitors has enhanced the themes in individual year groups, adding to their impact. The 'Creative' week and a 'Business Challenge' week, which tested pupils' resilience and ability to work with others in tackling an extended problem-solving activity, have been particularly successful. Such opportunities prepare pupils well for their future lives as well as enriching their learning and personal development. The extra-curricular activities, both before and after school, add to pupils' experiences and are valued by them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive good pastoral care and support from adults and know there are staff to whom they can turn if they have worries. Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe meet requirements. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and pupils looked after by the local authority or considered vulnerable, are given the necessary support, and staff work closely with a range of support services. Close links exist with pre-school settings to ensure a smooth transfer into Reception, while older pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their next stage of education. Class teachers monitor pupils' systematically and identify those who may be in danger of underachieving, so that appropriate intervention can be provided. Not all pupils are aware of their targets or what they need to do to improve further, which restricts their

progress. Although supportive, teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not give pupils enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides clear direction to the work of the school, bringing a sharp focus to curricular planning and robust monitoring systems to check progress. Her approach has been to ensure that developments are capable of being sustained, which takes longer to make a difference. However, the school is now in a position to accelerate the rate of progress further. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is mostly accurate and its priorities are reflected in the school's strategy document and its improvement plan. The leadership team has been restructured very recently and its new members are in the early stages of undertaking their whole-school responsibilities. As a result, the school's leadership and management overall and its capacity to improve are satisfactory rather than good. The school's resources are managed satisfactorily, with necessary improvements being made to the school's environment to enhance learning. Governors provide good support to the school and undertake their responsibilities effectively. Together with the headteacher, they need to do more to reassure the large number of parents who have concerns about the school's work and its future direction.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
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?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

20 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Istead Rise Primary School, Gravesend, DA13 9HG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed talking to so many of you and seeing you at work and at play. This letter is to tell you what we found. The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory but it is improving under the leadership of the headteacher.

- You make satisfactory progress in your work and standards by Year 6 are similar to those found in most schools. You do particularly well in mathematics, as the school's test results in 2007 show.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start and settle in well to school life.
- You have a good understanding of the need to keep healthy, and make a good contribution to school life and to the wider community.
- Teachers plan interesting activities for you to do and the 'Creative' week and the 'Business Challenge' week sounded great fun.
- You clearly enjoy school and like the range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides.
- Staff look after you well and make sure that you are safe.
- The adults that lead and manage the school know what needs to be done to make the school even better.

I have asked the headteacher and staff to do four things to make the school better:

- Help you to do as well in science as you do in mathematics.
- Give some of you more challenging work to stretch you further.
- Through the marking and assessment of your work, give you more help on how you can improve it and make faster progress.
- Help some of your parents to understand a little more clearly the benefits of the changes that the school is making.

You can help improve the school by working hard in lessons and doing your best at all times.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Greenfield Lead inspector