

Ingatestone Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114909
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326090
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	111
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	Mr Stuart Moore
Headteacher	Mrs Shelagh Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Fryerning Lane Ingatestone Essex CM4 0DF
Telephone number	01277 352803
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by and Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average although the roll is rising. Most pupils come from the village of Ingatestone although a few travel in from further afield. All are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) varies year on year but is broadly around that expected for children beginning their Reception year. Children start in Reception in September, although those who have birthdays in the spring and summer attend part-time until January. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award. Provision is made for an after school club 'Chuckles', which is privately run by a separate company. A new headteacher started at the school in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ingatestone Infants is a good school. Although there have been several changes in leadership and staff over the past few years, improving pupils' achievement has remained a top priority. The current headteacher quickly gained an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses when she started last year. She also gained the confidence and respect of staff so that improvements could occur quickly. This is why results in the national assessments for Year 2 pupils rose so much in 2008. Current standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve well in all three areas, although they do better in reading and writing than they do in mathematics. The school knows that the gap between literacy and mathematics standards is too wide and improvement in pupils' achievement in mathematics, especially amongst the more able boys, continues to have a high priority.

The overwhelming majority of parents are very pleased with their children's education. They value particularly the approachability of the headteacher and the willingness of staff to listen and respond to their concerns. Parents are also very impressed with the way the school has involved them in the new way of teaching literacy. One parent commented, 'I like the way the school runs sessions for parents to learn how to use and implement the new methods at home.' These effective partnerships, especially in literacy, contribute greatly to pupils' good progress.

Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good. All the adults are very welcoming to the pupils and this means they feel safe, secure and ready to learn. Teachers carefully check pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics so they can quickly identify those that are falling behind. These pupils receive support in small groups to help them gain confidence and take the next steps in their learning. Teachers have begun to involve pupils more in evaluating their own learning and are also trying to improve marking procedures to give pupils better advice. These are recent initiatives however and are not firmly established.

The school takes good care of its pupils; arrangements for their safety and welfare meet current requirements. Pupils thoroughly enjoy a wide range of practical, stimulating activities provided through the curriculum. They are confident, polite and respectful and they behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. They know how to keep safe, for example one Year 1 pupil described why electricity can be dangerous. 'You mustn't touch light bulbs,' she warned, 'because you could burn your fingers.' Pupils contribute much to school life through their efforts on the school council and as playground buddies. Their excellent attitudes to living healthy lives arise in no small part from the school's commitment to providing nutritious school lunches and good advice about fitness. They leave the school well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Governors provide good support and challenge to the headteacher and staff. The school rigorously reviews its performance and involves subject leaders well in analysing strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, school priorities are well founded and progress in them regularly checked. The momentum of improvement over the past year demonstrates the strength of its leadership at all levels as well as the school's good potential to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children quickly settle into school life because of the well-organised induction system which results in them feeling secure and ready to learn. They make good progress and the majority

reach the goals expected of them by the time they transfer to Year 1. Children make especially good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because they are encouraged from the very beginning to take responsibility and become independent learners. They thoroughly enjoy all the activities organised for them, taking turns and sharing equipment when necessary. The younger children, who do not attend full-time until January, reach lower standards than their classmates, especially in communication, language and literacy. Nonetheless, they still achieve well and most start in Year 1 with secure skills. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult led opportunities, with clear assessment systems to ensure children's progress is tracked systematically over the year. Staff give careful attention to children's welfare, health and safety. The classroom and outdoor area are safe, well-maintained and clean. The good relationships forged with parents during these early days form a firm basis for effective partnerships in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able pupils in mathematics, especially boys, to close the gap between literacy and mathematics standards.
- Fully embed strategies to provide effective advice to pupils about how to improve their work and enable them to be more involved in evaluating their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and typically reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. From 2005 to 2007, standards were just a little above average but the 2008 national tests showed a sharp rise in pupils' attainment. All pupils reached nationally expected levels and good proportions attained above the expected levels in reading and writing. Mathematics standards though much improved, were not as high, mainly because boys did not achieve as well as girls. The improvement seen in 2008 is continuing; the school's tracking data indicates that reading standards will be even higher, with a very large proportion of pupils likely to reach the higher level 3. Pupils make good progress in writing because of a school focus on literacy, which is helping to provide pupils with secure basic skills. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties do well, mainly because of the good levels of support they receive during lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning. They thoroughly enjoy all the practical activities organised for them, for example in information and communication technology, when Year 1 and 2 pupils made pictures of snowmen to illustrate the stories they had written. Attendance is above average and behaviour is excellent. Pupils play happily together in the playground and work together extremely well in lessons. They have a really firm understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. All pupils participate enthusiastically with staff in the daily aerobics session in the hall. They enjoy hearing about how to keep fit from one of the parents and know the benefits of a balanced diet, although those who take school lunches still look forward to chips on Fridays. Pupils know how to keep safe. They are confident that adults will sort out any problems they might have in the playground, although they say these are rare. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the village community, dancing at the Horticultural Show, performing concerts for friends and relatives, and competing in the 'Brentwood in Bloom' competition where they have won first prize for

the last four years. Pupils grow in confidence and leave the school with good skills and abilities, well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships in lessons are very good and the stimulating activities provided engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Lessons usually move at a good pace and pupils spend a good amount of time working independently rather than just listening to the teacher. Grouping arrangements within and between classes ensure that pupils of different ages receive appropriate levels of work. Skilled teaching assistants provide good levels of support for those who have moderate learning difficulties or speech and language problems. Consequently, these pupils play a full part in lessons. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to successfully engage pupils' interest and maintain their concentration. They use interactive whiteboards very successfully to demonstrate new skills and help pupils understand new concepts. Pupils in turn use these confidently, showing good skills and understanding. Teachers are beginning to set clear success criteria for pupils so they can judge how well they have done in lessons. In addition, they are beginning to provide more guidance to pupils through marking about how to improve their work. These systems are fairly new however, and are not fully embedded in practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of practical activities to ensure that pupils are actively engaged and consolidate their learning successfully. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The new strategy for teaching literacy, which began two years ago, has been very successful in improving reading and writing standards. The school is currently working to improve standards in mathematics. Teachers have attended training to improve their questioning skills in mathematics and to encourage them to provide pupils with more investigative activities. This is showing signs of success with Year 1 pupils working together to solve 'bear problems'. They had to work out how many biscuits and plates were needed for the bears to have a snack. Pupils used a range of strategies to solve the problems rather than being taught one specific method. Pupils benefit enormously from an excellent variety of visits to places of interest such as Bethnal Green Toy Museum. These help them to develop good personal and social skills as well as bringing different subjects to life. At present, the school is reviewing its curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of the current organisation of mixed-age classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for children well. Arrangements for safeguarding children meet current requirements. Risk assessments are fully in place. Staff are aware of child protection procedures and what they should do if they have any concerns. They know pupils well and are able to spot problems quickly, offering support and advice when needed. Good links with pre-school playgroups ensure a smooth transition into Reception. Similarly effective links with the local junior school mean that pupils are prepared well for transfer and settle in quickly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good levels of help and advice. Their needs are carefully identified and programmes implemented to help them take the next steps in their

learning. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is developing assessments in science this year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and subject leaders work well together in leading the drive for improvement. There is a clear focus on raising standards and teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils. The school's evaluation of its performance is realistic and soundly based on outcomes in pupils' academic and personal achievements. Staff and governors also provide a useful input so that all are aware of strengths and areas for improvement. The very thorough analysis that is made of assessment data to identify patterns and trends and the regular monitoring of teaching quality, guide the focus of the school's priorities. Actions taken to improve performance have proved effective in turning around weaknesses. Targets are effectively used with pupils to drive up standards, and to provide a clear focus to teachers' work. Successful links with businesses and organisations in the local community, for example the library and bookshop, and with a school in India demonstrate a good commitment to promoting community cohesion. Governors monitor and challenge the school's work in many ways, including an Annual Governors' Day when governors attend for a full day to gain a picture of school life. Good levels of information from the headteacher and subject coordinators mean they have an accurate view of performance and are able to direct resources appropriately.

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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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
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	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

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?	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

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

8 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ingatestone Infant School, Ingatestone, CM4 0DF

Thank you for the warm welcome that I received when I visited your school recently. I spoke with many of you and I am now writing to tell you what I found out about the quality of education that you receive. Yours is a good school. You and many of your parents told us how much you enjoy school life; your good rate of attendance shows this and you work well together in lessons. I was very impressed with the way you have adopted healthy choices in your lives through your diet and involvement in sport. I really liked the way you and all the adults take part in the daily aerobics sessions! You are keen to take on responsibilities through your work on the school council and as playground buddies. You also play an important part in village life, taking part in the Horticultural Show and putting on concerts for your parents, brothers and sisters. Together you are making a good contribution to the school and locally in Ingatestone; well done!

You make good progress in your learning. Your lessons are interesting and challenging and the teaching is good. Standards are going up in the school. Teachers are currently working hard to improve your mathematics skills even more so they become as good as your skills in reading and writing. I think that this focus on mathematics should continue. Mrs Harvey, the staff and governors look after you well and regularly check on your progress. They also look for ways in which the school can become even better. They are trying to give you more advice when they mark your work, about how you can improve. They are also trying to introduce ways in which you can become even more involved in assessing your own learning. I think these are good ideas and will help you make even better progress.

With all good wishes for your future

Mary Summers

Lead inspector