

Ilam CofE (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124337
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328112
Inspection date	13 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	60
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	Helen Baker
Headteacher	Les Biddulph
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ilam Ashbourne DE6 2AZ
Telephone number	01335 350316
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- The impact of the school's efforts to improve writing.
- The progress children make in the Reception Year.
- The progress made by less able pupils.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, the chair of governors, pupils and staff; visits to all classes; analysis of pupils' work; scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements; observations of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime; and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own views, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a very small school, with a small Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The school has gained the Healthy School Award, DfES Achievement Award, Active Award, FA Charter Standard and has Dyslexia Friendly status.

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 and improving school, where pupils' personal development and the quality of care are outstanding. Provision in the Reception class is excellent and gets children off to a flying start, which continues into Year 1. Most of the parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire are very supportive of the work of the school and rightly feel it is well led. Typical comments include: 'Staff are extremely caring, very approachable and helpful' and 'The children leave with confidence, valuable social skills and a respect for others, all of which give them a great start in life.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils take great care of each other. Behaviour is excellent and pupils act extremely responsibly and safely. Through links with other schools, they begin to develop a very clear understanding of the diverse faiths and cultures in England and further afield, for example through a school visit in France and links with a school in Nepal. Very effective arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Standards are high in English, mathematics and science and achievement is good. Speaking and reading skills are excellent. Pupils contribute confidently in class discussions and paired work. From the earliest ages, they justify their opinions and present their views cogently. By the time they leave, most pupils read fluently and have developed very good comprehension skills. Although there are examples of outstanding writing, on the whole it is not quite as well developed as reading. Written work is occasionally badly presented and for some pupils punctuation is not yet secure. Pupils' use of vocabulary and the strategies they use to engage the reader are occasionally a little limited. However, the wide range of actions the school has taken is beginning to have a positive impact. For example, spelling has already improved through the use of phonics. In mathematics and science, pupils have very well developed skills in enquiry and problem solving. Less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Good teaching is a major contributory factor to pupils' good progress and above average attendance. Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships which promote pupils' enthusiasm and strong enjoyment of learning. Pupils are well known to their teachers and planning builds well on pupils' previous achievement. Clear learning objectives and explanations ensure that pupils understand what they are trying to achieve. Work is well differentiated to match the wide range of needs, ages and interests within classes. However, occasionally pupils have to wait too long for support or to have their work moved along because teachers are engaged with other groups of pupils. This limits the pace of progress for some of the class. Academic guidance is good. Most pupils are aware of their targets and use them to improve their work. Marking and feedback in class often provide specific guidance on how to improve work, but this is too inconsistent.

The lively curriculum also makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement. A sound start has been made in introducing a skills-based curriculum, for example through the development of a range of observational, scientific, geographical and literary skills on walks in the stunning local environment. Provision for extra-curricular activities and enrichment is excellent. Many pupils learn to play an instrument, often to a high level, and a large number take part in dramatic performances. Despite the limitations of a small site, effective partnerships ensure that pupils have a full and varied experience of all aspects of physical education. This contributes to pupils' excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and their enthusiastic adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a very good contribution to the school and local community, for example

by fund raising for, planning and supporting an annual meal for village residents at Christmas. Well above average skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, coupled with excellent social skills, prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their lives.

Leadership and management are good. Staff have a clear grasp of how well the school performs and the areas it needs to improve, although occasionally self-evaluation is a little over generous. They work effectively as a team to bring about improvements, with clear direction from the headteacher. For example, standards in writing have begun to improve because effective action has been taken. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed effectively. However, the small number of staff means that some improvements, like curriculum development, move forward at a steady rather than fast pace. Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school, which is well placed to improve further. The school makes a very good contribution to the local, national and international community. For example, pupils have close connections with the local church and support fund raising at Harvest Festival. They make posters for the National Trust, which develops an excellent awareness of global issues, such as the management of the countryside and litter.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Levels of skills on entry to the Reception class vary considerably from year to year, because of the small number of children involved, but are usually above those expected for their age. Children settle very quickly because of excellent induction procedures, which are highly sensitive to the needs of children and their parents. Trusting relationships with others are formed very quickly, including with Year 1 pupils in the class and with adults, because of the excellent quality of care provided. This also contributes to children's outstanding personal development and learning. Older children provide very good role models in developing excellent listening skills and enjoyment of learning. Children very quickly become independent and extend their language because they are encouraged to develop their own ideas, activities and questions. Very skilful teaching enables children to achieve very well, reaching well above average levels on entry to Year 1. Progress is very closely monitored and an excellent programme of activities is organised, which covers all areas of learning. This meets their needs very effectively. Children love learning, and achievement is excellent in all areas. Attention to health and safety is meticulous. The staff make the best use they can of the very small outdoor area and the larger playground, but the layout prevents children from making free choices about where they want to learn. Leadership and management are outstanding and staff work as a very effective team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing by ensuring that marking and feedback in class consistently provide clear and specific guidance to pupils on how to improve the quality and presentation of their work.
- Improve the pace of learning by ensuring that all groups of pupils gain the attention of staff sufficiently quickly during lessons.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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**

14 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ilam C of E (VA) Primary School, Ashbourne DE6 2AZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. A number of your parents responded to our questionnaire and most of them told us how pleased they are with the education the school provides. We are pleased to tell you that your school provides you with a good education and that some aspects of its work are outstanding. Children in the Reception class do very well, because of excellent teaching, assessment and an exciting programme of activities. Personal development is excellent, because of the outstanding quality of care, especially to help children settle into school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is very well led.

These are the main things we found out about your school.

- You attend a good and improving school. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make sure it continues to improve.
- You make good progress. You do particularly well in reading, listening and speaking, science and mathematics and reach high standards.
- Teaching is good. The programme of activities is good and improving. Extra-curricular activities and visits are very good, especially links with other schools at home and abroad and provision for music, drama and sport.
- You make an excellent contribution to the school and local community and take your responsibilities very seriously.
- You have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and adopt a healthy lifestyle, especially by staying active.
- You work very hard and your behaviour is excellent. You are very considerate to each other and behave extremely responsibly.

The school is very safe and adults take excellent care of you and help you to develop confidence.

To improve things, we have asked the school to do the following.

- Improve the quality and presentation of writing by providing you with clear guidance on how to improve when marking your work or talking to you in class.
- Make sure you all get attention quickly when you need it in class.

You can help by trying to present your work as neatly as possible.

Yours faithfully Marion Thompson Lead inspector