

Ickford Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110238
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337456
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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 of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sian Goard
Headteacher	John Roane
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven lessons with five teachers being seen. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 75 questionnaires from parents and carers, eight from staff and 42 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of teaching at providing the right level of challenge for all pupils, especially in mathematics and science
- pupils' involvement in decision making and their understanding of how to improve their work□
- how well leaders are tackling the dip in attainment that has been evident for the last two years at both key stages
- the use of assessment information to track the progress of groups and individuals.

Information about the school

This small rural school takes most of its pupils from Ickford and two neighbouring villages. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a single-age Reception class. There is pre-school provision on site but this is not managed by the governing body and was not inspected. The headteacher took up post in January 2010. The school has several awards including Activemark and Healthy School accreditation

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

This satisfactory school is improving steadily under the strong guidance of the new headteacher. He has quickly established an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and has made a good start to tackling the decline in attainment. Many parents and the majority of staff are pleased with recent changes. The headteacher knows that he needs to build on recent improvements and to strengthen relationships among the staff by ensuring that all members of staff feel that they are valued and are able to contribute to school improvement.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They get off to a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and then continue to make satisfactory progress in the rest of the school. Pupils' attainment is maintained at above average levels up to the end of Year 6. While there is some good teaching, too much is of a satisfactory quality. Inconsistency in the match of work to pupils' needs is the main factor preventing more teaching from being good across the school. A start has been made to setting targets and using marking to help pupils understand how to improve their work but this is inconsistent across the school. The curriculum includes all subjects but some, such as history, geography and science, are not studied in sufficient detail. There are occasions when curriculum planning does not take enough account of pupils' prior learning.

Pupils are good ambassadors for the school. They are very happy because teachers are kind and caring and take good care of their pastoral needs. Pupils are sociable and articulate and take on responsibilities keenly. School councillors contribute well to school development. For example, the new climbing wall was erected based on one of their suggestions. Pupils rightly feel that they are kept safe and this is reflected in the school's good safeguarding arrangements. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. They are very enthusiastic about taking part in sport and grow healthy food in their gardens.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory. There is a clear understanding that attainment and progress should be better. The new headteacher and governors are strongly committed to tackling this. However, the role of leaders below the headteacher in taking responsibility for monitoring provision and driving improvement is still in the early stages of development. Nevertheless, there have already been some helpful changes that are beginning to have a positive effect. Recent improvements include, for example, introducing sharper systems for assessing pupils' attainment. As a result, the progress of individuals and groups is now being tracked carefully in most classes. The new headteacher is rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and priorities for improving this are being quickly identified and addressed. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved and

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they receive more individual support. These developments demonstrate that there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

The school has a good partnership with others and engages well with parents and carers. Parents and carers make a good contribution to the work of the school by supporting their children with homework and preparing for national tests.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2011, build the school's capacity to improve more quickly by:
 - ensuring that leaders below the headteacher play a full part in monitoring provision and identifying strengths and tackling weakness
 - working together so that all staff feel they are valued members of the new school team and understand the part they have to play in school improvement. □
- By July 2011, improve the quality of teaching so that at least 75% is good or better by:
 - ensuring that teachers always pitch work at the right level for all pupils □
 - making more use of marking and target setting to help pupils understand how to improve their work.
- By January 2011, review curriculum planning so that it takes more account of pupils' prior learning and ensures that subjects such as science, history and geography are covered in sufficient detail.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and make at least satisfactory progress in most lessons. In a numeracy lesson, pupils worked together enthusiastically on calculating averages from sets of data and they supported each other well. In a literacy lesson where pupils looked at settings and characters in stories, not all pupils concentrated well enough because the pace of learning was too slow. Where progress in lessons is good, differing needs are met well. For example, in a science lesson, pupils made quick progress in learning because they were fully engaged in a purposeful activity that involved producing graphs showing the patterns of sunsets in different cities.

Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in lessons, although their learning slows when the work is not suitable for them.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because they develop good self-confidence and self-esteem and learn about managing budgets through the school council and other enterprise projects. They make a good contribution to the community. For example, road safety officers work with villagers to suggest how to improve the safety of parking outside school. Pupils are given a good voice in decision making and

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behave well most of the time, although they can become inattentive when work is dull. Pupils very keenly adopt healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in the well-deserved Activemark and Healthy School accreditation.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In this small school, where everyone knows everyone else, members of staff willingly 'go the extra mile' to provide high quality pastoral care. There are good links with outside agencies to get extra help for pupils when it is needed and the new headteacher has improved provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is now satisfactory, with their needs being met effectively both in and out of lessons.

Where teaching is good, teachers make effective use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to introduce new skills. Some teachers assess learning carefully and, where teaching is good, they use this information to plan what to teach next and to ensure that there is a good pace to learning. Such good practice is not yet evident in all lessons, especially in mathematics and science, and this is the main reason why much of the teaching is satisfactory.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The curriculum effectively promotes the above average attainment in basic skills. However, planning does not always build well enough on pupils' prior learning or do enough to ensure that all subjects are studied in sufficient detail. The curriculum includes a very wide range of enrichment activities. These are greatly enjoyed by pupils and give them new experiences such as a visit from a local opera company. Partnerships with others, especially with regard to sport, contribute well to pupils' personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The purposeful leadership of the new headteacher is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. He is well supported by governors who are becoming well informed and are beginning to provide good challenge to the school. Together, they are passionate about improving provision and ensuring that they do their best for the pupils. There is a good understanding of priorities, including the need to ensure that all staff feel that they are an important part of the team. The headteacher knows that he needs to tackle this issue so that his ambition and drive for improvement can be more firmly embedded across the whole school. Leadership below the headteacher is in the early stages of development. Most leaders are enthusiastic but they have only a limited role in monitoring provision.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. Leaders deal appropriately with discrimination and are beginning to make sharper use of data to check that all pupils are doing well enough. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils develop a good understanding of life in the local community and beyond through activities such as the 'Comenius Project', which has involved visits to the school by students from other parts of the European Community.

The school has good safeguarding procedures. Pupils' safety is given a high priority and this is reflected in every aspect of school life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are well cared for and settle quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although there is some variation from year to year, most children are working at or above the levels expected for their age when they start school. Children build steadily on their skills and their attainment is maintained at above average levels by the end of the Reception Year, reflecting satisfactory progress over time. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons, and children work together very happily. Adults are particularly successful at supporting children's personal, social and emotional development. Children are given good opportunities to select where they are going to work and this helps them to develop confidence and independence. Adults plan carefully for lessons, but the pace of learning slows when work lacks challenge or is not pitched at the right level for all children. Occasionally, there is insufficient guidance about how to improve when children are writing and, when this happens, their errors are not corrected. Children especially enjoy lessons when subjects are linked together; for example, there was a buzz of excitement as children prepared for a treasure hunt that included counting, writing and map reading.

Leaders are strongly committed to developing the provision and there is a good understanding of current priorities. The use of data to check progress is improving now that the new headteacher has introduced more rigorous assessment systems.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

There was a high return of questionnaires. The vast majority of parents and carers are happy with the work of the school. Positive comments included, 'The children have a happy caring environment for learning' and 'There is a supportive and positive atmosphere.' Some parents and carers are concerned about how the school tackles unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team saw none and found that the new headteacher has introduced thorough systems for tackling it, on the rare occasions when it occurs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ickford Combined School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	49	35	47	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	64	25	33	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	25	49	65	5	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	33	35	47	10	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	29	39	39	52	2	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	29	42	56	9	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	44	36	48	5	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	31	33	44	11	15	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	35	40	53	6	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	32	38	51	10	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	24	41	55	10	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	27	42	56	5	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	36	44	59	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ickford Combined School, Ickford HP18 9HY

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently. At the moment, your school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving.

Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

- You are happy in the Reception Year and get on well together.
- Satisfactory teaching means that you make steady progress as you move through the school
- You behave well and are really happy at school. You are very friendly and you are helping the school to improve through the school council.
- The teachers look after you well and you know who to turn to if you have a worry
- You are very clear about how to stay healthy. Sports day looked great fun, especially the tug-of-war!
- Your headteacher and governors know what they need to do to help the school to improve quickly and have already made a start to this.

This is what we have asked your school to do now.

- Check that your teachers always plan work that is not too hard or too easy for you.
- Ensure that all adults are working together well and are involved in checking your learning so that you know what to do next to improve your work. □
- Make sure that the curriculum meets your needs and gives you more opportunity to do work in science, history and geography.

We wish you all well for the future. You can help your teachers by making sure that you always pay attention in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector

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