

Ilketshall St Lawrence Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124592
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340608
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Healey
Headteacher	Jill Fryer
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one inspector for 2 days, and a safeguarding inspector for half a day. The inspector saw seven lessons or part lessons and held meetings with the headteacher, chair of governors, the special educational needs co-coordinator and pupils. He observed the school's work, and looked at policies regarding safeguarding, the school improvement plan, the school's tracking and assessment data and scrutinised 43 parental questionnaires.

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

- the factors leading to the improvement in standards and whether these have been sustained leading to ongoing improvement
- the relative performance of boys and girls
- improvements in the curriculum and their impact on pupils' personal development.

Information about the school

This is a small rural primary school. Approximately 60 per cent of pupils travel to the school from outside its immediate catchment area. Most pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little below average, as is the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The percentage of pupils who have or are awaiting a statement detailing their specific needs is broadly typical. Classes are taught in three mixed-age classes with the Nursery taught separately. Children join Reception, a joint provision with Year 1, in the term that they have their fifth birthday. A private, part time pre-school, which shares accommodation and resources with the Nursery class, is not managed by the governing body, so it is inspected separately.

The school is subject to re-organisation and pupils in Year 3 will continue their primary education at the school rather than transferring to a middle school at the end of Year 4. The school has just been awarded Healthy School status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has improved significantly since it was last inspected and is now a good school. All parents who answered the question indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they 'were happy with their child's experiences at school'. A parent summed up her feelings about the school. 'Throughout my child's time at Ilketshall, I have never been anything but delighted with the teaching and care my child has received: I couldn't have wished for a better start for him'.

Pupils enjoy school and the opportunities that it provides because, as one parent noted, 'school is a fun and stimulating place'. A key feature of the school is its warm, intimate ethos. All staff know all the children well and pupils are taught to take responsibility for themselves and for one another. A parent whose child transferred to the school has been impressed at how he has been encouraged to make friends through the 'buddy system'. Pupils' confidence and motivation are developed well because relationships between pupils and adults are good across the school and there is a strong formal and informal network of care and support for pupils.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well academically because teaching is good. This is the key factor in the school's improved standards. Teaching approaches generally foster pupils' independent learning skills well although this is not always consistent. Assessment is used well to encourage pupils to see themselves as partners in the learning process. For example, in classrooms, pupils are confident to indicate whether they still need extra help to understand a concept or approach. The school is using specialist assessment materials to assess pupils' progress and trialling approaches, whereby staff share assessment criteria with pupils so that they are very clear what they need to do in order to improve their work. These approaches need to be embedded and become part of classroom routines.

The headteacher leads the school well. There is a clear, shared focus on raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. The school sets challenging targets, and standards and progress are carefully monitored by staff and governors. The school improvement plan is detailed and the governing body regularly monitors how well it is being implemented. However, success criteria are not always as sharp as they should be to assist in this process. The headteacher is very clear about the strengths of the school and further developments that are required and, given the effectiveness of the developments that have taken place since the last inspection, there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards further by ensuring that:
 - the school development plan has sharply defined success criteria so that the impact of the various initiatives are clearly defined, particularly in relation to standards or pupils' progress
 - the various assessment initiatives are embedded within the school routines
 - teaching approaches consistently foster pupils' independent learning skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The characteristics of the pupils that go to make up the small cohorts vary considerably from year to year. Pupils make good progress from Year 1, given their starting points, and by the end of Year 2, they attain standards that are above average overall. In 2008, standards were significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 4, teacher assessments indicate that most pupils reach at least the expected levels for their age and some exceed these. Standards in other subjects are at least in line with expectations for pupils' age. Higher attaining pupils are challenged effectively. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with speech or language difficulties, make good progress because staff identify early those pupils requiring additional help and support is targeted effectively. Whilst some historic data suggests that boys performed above the national average for boys, they did not do quite as well as girls. In lessons, however, both boys and girls make good progress.

In a literacy lesson, for example, pupils concentrated well and, because of the positive ethos, were motivated to write, do their best and share their ideas with confidence. In this lesson, very young children were supported effectively by the teaching assistant and the teacher was able to work with individuals and groups in depth because there were no behavioural concerns. In a mathematics lesson, pupils worked at a good rate because they enjoyed the subject. The strategies that they were using allowed them to 'see' the problem and gave them a fall back strategy to work out a solution. In both these examples, the very favourable adult-to-pupil ratio meant that there was extensive dialogue, questioning, encouragement and support for the pupils. Staff are reflective about their work so that they are responsive to the needs of pupils. For example, the school has initiated a short-term phonics programme to improve pupils' spelling.

Behaviour is good and most pupils behave extremely well for almost all of the time. The school has a small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour, but effective systems, clarity of approach and teamwork across the school are helping these pupils improve. Pupils have a good understanding of what goes to make a healthy lifestyle and, in a food technology lesson, they showed good awareness of hygiene. Because the school is friendly, most pupils feel safe and they are taught to look after themselves, for example in their use of the internet. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community. They take their roles and responsibilities very seriously, for example with the school and class councils, which give them an opportunity to express their views. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school fosters the uniqueness of every pupil well within a clear moral framework so that they

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develop a distinct understanding of right and wrong. The school also provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and they work together well. Attendance, at 95 per cent for the last academic year, is just above the national average. Overall, given pupils' enjoyment of school, the good progress they make in basic skills and their positive attitudes to learning, the school prepares them well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?

Teachers manage the mixed age classes well because they plan effectively for the range of pupils' needs and are effectively supported by the strong partnership with teaching assistants who are clear about their role in a particular lesson. Enthusiastic teaching helps motivate pupils, who concentrate well on their work because they are effectively engaged. Because teachers create a very positive ethos, pupils share their ideas with confidence. Assessment is used well in lessons to check pupils' learning and teachers make good use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress. Marking is encouraging and generally points out how pupils can improve. Level criteria are now

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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included within pupils' 'learning logs' so that they can accurately assess where they are and what they need to do in order to improve. With younger children, this self-awareness is built through the teacher working with the child. In addition, the school is using specialist assessment materials to assess pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, with plans to extend their use. The school has begun to involve pupils as partners in their learning but these approaches require embedding to become fully effective.

The curriculum provides a two-year programme to match to the mixed age classes. It is broad, rich and the topics provide effective creative links between subjects, which are re-evaluated annually. It has improved since the last inspection and pupils now practise their skills, such as extended writing, in a variety of contexts. The school makes extensive use of its grounds to support pupils' learning, for example, using the woods and pond area for science. This commitment to using the outdoors is reflected in the neat rows of gumboots on pegs outside the front door. This emphasis on using the outdoors, together with the extensive enrichment opportunities, make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment. A parent stressed that both her children really 'enjoy and are excited by the outdoor, creative learning at the school' and another noted that his son now attends the local Kwik cricket club because of the 'taster' sessions run at the school. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Since the last inspection, the school has developed its teaching about healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in the recent Healthy Schools award. The work on 'learning to learn' is helping pupils understand the strategies they need to employ in order to learn effectively. 'Mathematics is all a question of perseverance,' was one eight-year-old pupil's view.

The school makes effective use of specialist agencies where appropriate to help support individual pupils. The quality of care, stemming from staff's detailed knowledge of the pupils, is a clear strength of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's leadership has created the school's positive family ethos, a sustained focus on learning and the creation of strong teamwork amongst staff. As a result, they are committed to school improvement and are held to account for the progress pupils make. The demands placed on a teaching headteacher, acting as lead professional as well as school leader and manager, require a constant juggle of priorities. A member of

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staff noted that the headteacher always manages to do what she says she will, although the staff member marvelled how she found the time, saying 'she must lead two lives'. Almost all parents who answered the question thought the school was led and managed effectively and the school is committed to and effective in developing the partnership with parents.

The school is very inclusive, evidenced in the support it provides to meet the needs of all pupils. The school knows its local community very well and effectively creates a strong school community. The school and the governors are very aware of their responsibilities to extend pupils' cultural experience and a number of curriculum initiatives, such as the links with a school in Tanzania and a member of the armed forces in Afghanistan, have helped improve this aspect. The school has yet to draw up its various initiatives into a coherent plan.

Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are appropriately robust. Overall, governance is good because the new committee structure introduced by the relatively recently appointed chair of governors has established the framework for providing effective challenge and support. A separate committee has been created to oversee the strategic developments involved in the school's reorganisation. This ensures that governors are able to maintain their objective focus on pupils' and parents' experience of school and the progress pupils make. Whilst the governing body is actively recruiting new parent governors, there is evident commitment to training and induction and significant professional expertise on the governing body, including that relating to safeguarding and financial planning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so most are working beyond the early learning goals by the end of Reception. At the time of the inspection, there were only a small number of Reception children within the mixed age Year 1 class. These children were integrated well and sensitively supported so that they participated fully in the classroom routines and thrived being in the class with older children, demonstrating for example their confidence in their writing ability. Across the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of child- and adult-initiated activities, reflecting children's stage of development. Children have good relationships with adults and learn to play and work effectively together. Planning is very detailed in the Nursery and promotes children's enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning. Careful observation is used to guide and plan future activities, and extensive use is made of photographs and observations to record significant steps in a child's learning to which parents are encouraged to contribute. Effective use is made of the outdoor area to extend the learning opportunities. Staff are very reflective and think carefully how to enhance the provision for children and this has led to improved standards. Language skills are fostered well because relationships with adults are good and there is constant talk and discussion between adults and children. There are close, effective links with parents and one parent spoke very warmly about the work of the Nursery. The Nursery classroom is small but resourced well and under the proposed re-organisation, there are plans to create an Early Years Foundation Stage base. There are good links between the Nursery and the pre-school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are very supportive of the school and this is evident in the high return rate of the questionnaires and their positive responses to the questions. Comments were largely favourable about the school. The school had already taken action or is dealing with individual points made by parents. It is evident from the questionnaire responses that a significant minority feel that the school does not deal appropriately with unacceptable behaviour. Comments by one or two parents suggested that the school had an individualised approach, which they felt confused other children. The school is improving the behaviour of the small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their

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behaviour and it is helped in this because of other pupils' support and understanding of these pupils' specific needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ilkeshall St Lawrence Primary 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 inspector received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 67 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	65	15	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	56	16	37	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	35	23	53	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	33	26	60	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	37	26	60	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	33	24	56	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	58	17	40	0	0	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)	21	49	15	35	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	44	20	47	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	35	15	35	5	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	21	26	60	3	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	51	16	37	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	49	21	49	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



9 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ilkeshall St Lawrence Primary School, Beccles, NR34 8ND

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed my two days with you very much and was impressed by the way you concentrated in lessons and how you assessed your own work. You clearly enjoy school and what it provides for you. I wish I had the same energy and enthusiasm for tackling my garden that some of you showed.

This is a good school. Under Mrs Fryer's leadership, it has improved since it was last inspected and you have played an important part in that. You make good progress in your work across the classes and standards in the tests that you take in Year 2 are above those generally seen. This is because your teachers are skilled and all staff work together well to provide you with the support that you need. They set you challenging targets. You are on track to meet them because staff keep a careful eye on the progress you are making. Most of you behave well although some of you find this difficult at times. You take your responsibilities around the school very seriously. You help create a friendly school and I was impressed how older pupils take care of the younger ones. Teachers generally give you good opportunities to learn how to work without the close support of adults, but this is not always the case and I have asked Mrs Fryer to try to ensure that this happens more. Teachers have also recently started to share with you information in your learning log so that you know how to improve your work but this needs a bit more time to become part of the school routines.

Mrs Fryer, the staff and governors draw up their ideas for improving the school into a plan of action. It would help them if they had a very clear idea of what difference their ideas will make before they start because they will then be able to recognise more easily when they have been successful.

I am sure that the school will continue to improve. With your help, it will manage to do this all the quicker.

All good wishes for your future school careers.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead Inspector

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