

Ibstone CofE Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110464
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310318
Inspection dates	6 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr Keith Williams

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H France
Headteacher	Mrs V Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Ibstone High Wycombe HP14 3XZ
Telephone number	01491 638281
Fax number	01491 638198

Age group	4-7
Inspection Date(s)	6 November 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, particularly the school's work to raise standards in writing; teaching and learning; personal development and well-being; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management, particularly the effectiveness of the interim arrangements to lead the school.

Evidence was gathered from: lesson observations, discussion with staff and pupils, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Although this very small rural school is situated in a relatively advantaged area, many pupils come from outside of the school's catchment and are from a variety of backgrounds. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage and none is learning English as an additional language. Below average proportions are identified with learning difficulties. The part-time, acting headteacher took up the post a month prior to the inspection and an experienced member of staff was appointed senior teacher at the beginning of term. The school has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ibstone is a good school and has many outstanding features. The excellent governing body, well supported by staff, the local authority and the Diocese, has ensured that the school continues to improve during the temporary arrangements instigated while a permanent headteacher is recruited. Governors are fully involved in monitoring and supporting the work of the school, and are very well informed to enable them to make important strategic decisions about its development. The new acting headteacher has 'hit the ground running' and has already forged a very effective partnership with the senior teacher. They are firmly focused on building on the school's strengths and tackling areas for development. Exceptional care is taken of pupils, who enjoy school immensely, achieve well academically and make excellent progress in their personal development.

Small numbers mean that the make-up of each year group can vary considerably. Each cohort often contains a range that includes pupils identified as gifted and talented, as well as those with some significant learning difficulties. When taken overall, their attainment when they first join the school is about average. Pupils make good progress so that, by the end of Year 2, standards are above average. Reading is a particular strength and standards are exceptionally high. This is because early reading skills are taught very well, and are built upon successfully as pupils move through the school. Parents play a considerable part, too, by providing support at home and helping with reading in school. Pupils make good progress in mathematics, and standards are above average. Standards in writing are average. While the school successfully helps pupils to reach the expected level before they leave, they have rightly identified that too few reach the higher Level 3. Staff are working well to raise the profile of writing and are examining ways of enthusing and inspiring pupils to write. Plans are well in hand to provide more opportunities for older pupils to write at length. Whilst it is too early to see the full benefit of this work, early indications are that it is beginning to bear fruit and more of the current pupils in Year 2 are on track to reach the higher level. Staff are not complacent, however, and recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that more able writers are stretched more consistently.

Staff meet the challenge of planning for mixed-age and ability classes well. They provide a broad curriculum that adds to pupils' enjoyment, many citing practical subjects, such as design and technology, and the use of the outdoor learning areas amongst their favourites. A very good range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils thoroughly and track their progress carefully, so that extra help or harder work is provided to those who need it. Pupils endorse this, one reflecting that Red Group '...get very hard work!' Teachers provide good quality written and verbal feedback and pupils have a very good understanding of the challenging targets they are set. However, pupils' involvement in assessing their own work is limited, and plans are in hand to extend this. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to provide for pupils' wide ranging needs. Pupils with learning difficulties, for example, receive very good support so that they make similar progress to their classmates.

The school's focus on helping pupils to improve academically is not at the expense of their all-round development. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are able to learn in a safe, supportive environment. Pupils appreciate this and report that they feel safe and well cared for. Excellent links with outside agencies contribute to the high levels of care. The school is exceptionally successful at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Despite their young age, they have remarkably mature attitudes to school and this has a significant impact on their progress. Many speak confidently about their learning and the contribution they make to the school and the wider community, one commenting on how the school council '...helps to make the school better.' Pupils' attendance rates have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now well above average. This reflects pupils' high levels of enjoyment and the strong support that most parents give to the school. Behaviour in and out of lessons is exemplary, which ensures that lessons invariably run smoothly and playtimes are very enjoyable. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of other pupils and appreciate the help they get from their teachers when they are stuck or have a problem. The school's strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles means that most pupils eat healthily and play energetically.

The school's track record of improvement, the high quality governing body, the commitment of staff and the senior team's robust and accurate self-evaluation show that they are very well placed to secure further improvement. As one parent commented, 'I couldn't ask for more.'

Effectiveness of the foundation stage

Grade: 2

Children in Reception are taught in a class with a group of Year 1 pupils. Very good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching and planning mean that they achieve well and most reach, and some exceed, the goals expected of them by the end of the year. The children have regular access to all of the areas of learning and the emphasis on practical activities has improved considerably since the last inspection. The teacher skilfully determines when the two year-groups should be taught together, and when they would benefit from working separately. The teaching assistant makes a strong contribution to this process and ensures that both year-groups learn well. The outdoor area is well resourced and is used very well to enhance children's learning, although its position means it is not easy for children to make decisions about when they might use it. Children enjoy their time in Reception very much and are very well prepared for moving into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more able writers are challenged consistently.
- Increase pupils' involvement in assessing their own work.

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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?	1
The effectiveness in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	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 interest of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	1
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

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

14 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ibstone CoFE Infant School, High Wycombe, HP14 3XZ

Thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school recently and a special thank you to those who came to talk to me about your work and your school. You gave me lots of helpful information. I am writing to tell you what I found out.

You are right to be proud of your school. Most of your parents, your teachers and governors think that you go to a good school and I agree with them. Your teachers take excellent care of you and I am pleased that you feel safe in school. I was especially pleased to see how hard everyone works in lessons. This means that your work is improving all the time. Your reading is fantastic and lots of you told me how proud you are of this. Your teachers want your writing to be just as good and I know you will want to help them by trying your best every time you write. Your teachers keep a close check on how you are doing and give you lots of ideas for how you can get better. Well done for knowing your targets, and for trying to improve them. Your teachers are going to help you to check your own work, too, so that you can see for yourselves just how well you are doing.

I enjoyed seeing you outside at playtime. You play very well together and your behaviour is excellent. Keep it up! You know a lot about healthy eating too and I could see lots of you eating fruit. Your school council do a good job to help your school get better. They want everyone to remember to wash their hands to keep everyone healthy.

Even though yours is a good school, your teachers and governors want it to be even better and I know you will want to help them. I wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Williams
Lead inspector

