

Inspection of Ickford School

Sheldon Road, Ickford, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP18 9HY

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is rightly proud of the children at Ickford. They truly blossom into eloquent, well-rounded young people. Adults and children speak glowingly about the 'Ickford Way' and families do not want their child to leave.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Leaders achieve this gold standard because they set the highest of expectations for pupils' conduct. In all classrooms, pupils' focus is astounding. Nobody distracts each other. Pupils are adamant there is no bullying. Everyone knows the 'steps to stop' anti-bullying mantra. Pupils say they feel safe and that any adult will listen to them.

Pupils receive a good education with some inspiring opportunities. For example, pupils recall classical music concerts and role play in a French café. The enrichment offer for pupils is remarkable. All pupils in key stage 2 learn the violin, they compete in a range of sports and they meet renowned experts in the fields of science, law and the arts. On the sporting field, pupils display excellent team spirit and fairness.

Staff strive to get the best out of pupils. They are ambitious for all. Parents speak highly of the work that leaders and staff do for their children.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have crafted a curriculum with the knowledge and skills that pupils need to succeed by the time they leave Ickford. They have chosen content which ignites pupils' thinking. Specialist teachers in languages, music and physical education enable pupils to learn and do more than most for their age in these subjects.

Across many subjects, pupils' work shows that they know an impressive amount of knowledge. They can talk about genetics, the Spanish Armada and debate a case in front of one of Her Majesty's coroners. In early years, children learn to read music and are introduced to the world of art and sport. Pupils' presentation of their written work, including the quality of their handwriting, is excellent.

However, some subject leaders do not fully understand how pupils' learning develops in their subject. As a result, the order pupils should learn knowledge in is not clearly defined. This means that teachers sometimes select content which is interesting but does not necessarily link well to what pupils have learned previously.

The reading culture in the school is first rate. Books are everywhere. Pupils are avid readers and will happily spend their time immersed in a book sat on one of the 'reading' bean bags. Staff provide well-chosen book recommendations to deepen pupils' knowledge of literature. Pupils can request books they would like to read which leaders then purchase for the library.

In teaching the youngest children to read and write, phonics is taught daily in a logical and progressive way. Leaders track closely all children to ensure they are remembering the sounds. Pupils learn to spell accurately and they form letters neatly. Although pupils read books to go with the phonics programme, some of these books are not well matched. As a result, pupils' reading progress sometimes slows because they come across words in books that are too hard.

Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. Recently, older pupils were thrilled to hear from a local rabbi. They talk knowledgeably about festivals and holidays, such as Diwali and Thanksgiving. They are highly respectful of everyone.

For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), leaders expect the same outcomes as for all other children. Leaders train staff well to adapt work set for pupils with SEND without compromising on ambition. They identify as soon as possible any pupils with additional needs, so that pupils get what they need in the classroom. Teachers work directly with all pupils with SEND to ensure they get high-quality teaching. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

At the start of this academic year, the board of trustees went through significant change. It took time to establish new governance with the right skill set and commitment. Consequently, there was a delay in trustees finalising strategic plans and checking that key policies and procedures were in place, including safeguarding. The new trustees have acted quickly to ensure the school is compliant in its statutory duties and well placed to improve further. They recognise further training is needed to support them in executing their duties and holding leaders strongly to account.

Staff love working at Ickford. They feel senior leaders go the extra mile in doing all they can for them. Leaders invest much time into developing staff's skills and checking in regularly on their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults act in the best interests of children. Working in a small school, staff know each child and monitor children's well-being closely. Staff are clear on the procedures for reporting a concern if they think a child may be at risk of harm. Pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe online.

During the inspection, some weaknesses were identified in the school's record keeping. In addition, some staff had not had up-to-date training on key safeguarding issues. Trustees had not checked that all of this had been done when it should. Leaders acted fast and put this right.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not precisely identified how pupils' knowledge is to be built from the beginning of Reception to the end of Year 6. This means pupils' knowledge does not build as logically as it should and, sometimes, they do not learn things in the best order. Senior leaders need to make sure that all subject leaders are clear about what is taught to pupils when and why.
- Changes within the board of trustees caused some delay in ensuring effective governance. This hampered setting the strategic direction of the school, compliance checks and holding leaders fully to account. The newly formed board possess the right skills and qualities to steer the school firmly, but should have access to ongoing training to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	142847
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10200907
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Walker
Headteacher	John Ronane
Website	http://www.ickford.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a single-academy trust known as Ickford Learning Trust.
- A new board of trustees formed in November 2021 to oversee governance of the school. The headteacher was absent from school for the first half of the autumn term.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met several trustees with responsibility for governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions

with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also considered leaders' plans for geography and physical education.

- Pupils were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. Inspectors reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school improvement plan, self-evaluation form, policies, curriculum documents, pupil premium strategy, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of governance.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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