

Ilchester Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123735
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340411
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P D'Arcy
Headteacher	Mr N Heath
Date of previous school inspection	6 September 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent about 60% of their time looking at learning. They visited 21 lessons and observed 11 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, and data on the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Inspectors also scrutinised many examples of pupils' work. They analysed the responses of 123 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- attainment in writing, especially that of the more-able pupils
- the provision and outcomes for pupils' learning about other cultures and how this contributes to their understanding of community cohesion
- the effectiveness of the newly structured management team in promoting and sustaining school improvement
- the effect of changes in the planning and provision of the curriculum.

Information about the school

Ilchester Community is a larger than average primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage and infants' department are based about a quarter of a mile from the junior department. About two thirds of the pupils are from families serving in the armed forces. A significant number of pupils leave or join the school each year, often at short notice. Most children are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the largest group being pupils with dyslexia, is about average. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The headteacher took up his post 12 months ago. The school has a number of awards including the Basic Skills Quality Award and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

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

Ilchester Community is a good school. It has many strengths and is continually striving for improvement. The shrewd and very well respected headteacher, new to the school a year ago, has developed a strong team of staff dedicated to giving the best possible education and care to the school's pupils. Leadership is complemented by an effective, well-led governing body. This has resulted in the school consistently improving attainment in mathematics and science, taking swift action to improve writing, especially that of more-able pupils, and introducing a more exciting and innovative curriculum. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. This good capacity for sustained improvement is strengthened by the exceptional accuracy of the school's self-evaluation which pinpoints in considerable detail the precise priorities for improvement, and how they will be met. The school provides high standards of care and guidance for the needs of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable. This is particularly significant in a school with a majority of pupils from service families who may have attended several schools already. Parents appreciate this and have a very positive relationship with the school, aptly expressed by one parent: 'After time abroad our child settled into school very quickly, our concerns have been dealt with quickly and sensitively, and I can't recommend the school highly enough.'

All children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have an effective start to their learning and make good progress. At present they are organised into two separate groupings, with the result that learning opportunities can occasionally vary. This applies especially to outdoor activities in an area not yet fully resourced. The school is considering ways in which these opportunities can be made more consistent for all children. Good progress continues in Years 1 to 6, and pupils' attainment is above average. However, although writing has improved, the school knows that this improvement must be continued over time. Handwriting is inconsistent, and writing across all subjects is just beginning to bolster pupils' writing skills. New assessment strategies are an improvement, but are not yet used consistently and effectively in all classes. Teaching is good and at times outstanding.

One of the school's great strengths is the friendliness and enthusiasm of the pupils who have very good attitudes to learning and behave well, both in and out of lessons. They enjoy their learning hugely, a considerable number mentioning the many clubs and their frequent school trips, and even, 'All the different interesting things we get to write about.' Their relationships with the staff are good, and they are considerably involved in their school and local community. Their good attainment in basic skills, and their involvement in decision making and teams gives them an excellent preparation for their

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future lives. This was very evident in an assembly devised and led by pupils in Year 6, which also made a fine contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain and accelerate recent improvements in attainment and achievement in writing by:
 - ensuring a consistent approach in all classes in the use of newly introduced assessment systems
 - improving handwriting
 - extending further the opportunities for writing across all areas of the curriculum.
- Review the organisation of groupings for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure:
 - consistency in the provision for all children at this stage of their learning
 - children have wider and more frequent opportunities and choices in their outdoor learning activities.

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

After an unexpected downturn in attainment in writing in Year 6 in 2009, the school has focused rapidly and successfully on raising writing standards throughout the school. As a result, pupils are on track to reach above-average standards in English once again by the time they leave. This reflects the consistent attainment in the last few years throughout the school. Pupils have reached above-average standards in mathematics, reading and science since 2006. This is still the picture in the school and represents good achievement by all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has also been effective in raising the attainment of boys and in strongly challenging more-able pupils, including the gifted and talented, who are also making good progress. Handwriting is inconsistent, with no obvious style evident, and sometimes leads to indifferent presentation of work. A sound start has been made to the encouragement of more extended and accurate writing across the curriculum, which the school accepts must be sustained for continued improvement.

Learning is best where teachers challenge pupils continually, and promote enjoyment and a strong desire by pupils to progress quickly and independently. This was seen to good effect in mathematics lessons in Year 2 and in Year 6, when pupils showed great determination to make gains in their skills and knowledge. Pupils have consistently good attitudes to learning and during the inspection this was demonstrated by high standards of behaviour and cooperative working. The behaviour of a very small number of pupils has caused concern, but the school has worked very hard and successfully to deal with the problem. Pupils enjoy their lives at school and have good relationships with their peers and all adults. Typical of their views is the comment by one, 'We have a safe

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school, the teachers and staff keep us fit and healthy, are very kind and make me laugh sometimes.' Pupils feel safe, try hard to lead healthy lives, and participate enthusiastically in the many physical activities and sports clubs they are offered. Their attendance and punctuality are consistently good. Pupils contribute greatly to the school and local community. This is especially commendable as pupils are coming and going through the school so frequently. The development of pupils' skills for their future lives is excellent. They leave school with above-average basic skills, and have also started to develop good enterprise and decision-making skills. They have many activities to encourage other skills such as touch typing, and collaborating in many team and problem-solving activities. These skills are also apparent in the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	2
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Uniformly good relationships between teachers and pupils, reflected through the many glowing comments by pupils, enable good learning to take place in all classes. Good, and on occasions, outstanding teaching is characterised by good planning, effective use

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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of technology and the provision of many exciting learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers are using new assessment systems well, although their application is not yet consistent throughout the school. Better expectations and challenge in lessons are helping to improve the achievement of more-able pupils. Marking is good with teachers making many helpful learning points to guide improvement in pupils' work. Teachers work effectively with their competent learning support assistants, who make a good contribution particularly to the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The recent changes to the curriculum have increased its breadth and enjoyment for pupils. It offers stimulating opportunities to study 'real world' problems, ecology and poverty, and is adapted well to the needs of all pupils. It is also beginning to provide a greater steer to the development of writing skills. Numeracy, and information and communication technology skills are already being promoted well across the curriculum. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, and the school provides a number of first-hand experiences and visits. Most memorable of these was the recent train ride taken by pupils when acting as evacuees in World War 2, described by a parent as, 'A wonderful experience, which my child never stops talking about.' Pupils also enjoy especially their opportunities to learn musical instruments, and a foreign language.

The school provides a caring environment for all pupils. Many links with outside agencies are effective, and the school works closely with the most vulnerable pupils and their families. Attendance procedures are applied robustly. The school makes good provision for the considerable number of pupils who enter the school other than at the normal times. Arrangements for transition from Year 2 to Year 3 have been reviewed and improved, and are good on transfer to secondary education.

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 has given a thoughtful and increasingly innovative lead to staff since his appointment. As a result, there is strongly shared ambition among the whole staff to continue to develop and improve an already thriving school. He is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, together with other senior and curriculum leaders in closely monitoring teaching and learning, which is leading to increasingly consistent good-quality outcomes for pupils. Leaders manage the difficulties of a two-site school on

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a busy road particularly well. The school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and develop without discrimination. All staff work effectively together, are well motivated and constantly work to secure improvement. Governors are led efficiently by the chair and are challenging and supportive of the school. They constantly review policies relating to safeguarding and health and safety, all of which are of good quality. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good, being particularly strong locally. National and global links are developing promisingly. The school consults regularly with parents and carers about the health and well-being of their children, and they are encouraged to play a full part in supporting their children's learning. The flourishing parents' association has made significant contributions to the resources in the school. The school has good partnerships with several organisations, the most notable being Yeovilton airbase which provides excellent facilities for pupils.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels below those expected for their age, especially in writing, aspects of number and creative skills. They make good progress in both classes in all areas of learning and most are reaching the expected levels when they enter Year 1. This is because the uniqueness and individuality of each child is recognised and understood by teachers and learning support assistants, who form a strong team. Relationships are very secure and the excellent use of language and questioning by teachers ensures that even the youngest child makes sense of their world, and develops independence and self-confidence. The

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assessment of children's progress is thorough, regular and accurate. Children are happy, enjoy learning and get on well with each other. There is, however, insufficient consistency in the provision between the two classes. The school rightly realises that there is not enough regular access to play activities for both groups, and that the outdoor learning area is not offering sufficient quality learning opportunities for children. Resources and facilities inside school are first-rate, especially the excellent hall. Good provision is made for the safeguarding and welfare of children. The quality of leadership and management is good, and the leader has an excellent understanding of the learning and social needs of the children. Parents value strongly the good start their children are getting.

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

Over half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Nearly all showed strong approval of the school. They feel that their children are safe, are well taught, and they are especially positive about the leadership of the school. Parents and carers believe they are well informed about their child's progress and are happy with their child's experience in school. One parent echoed the views of many when commenting, 'I am overwhelmed by the energy, enthusiasm and imagination offered to pupils by the staff team.' A small number are concerned about some instances of challenging behaviour. The inspection team feel that school leaders deal with these problems as well as they are able.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ilchester Community 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 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 291 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	79	20	16	5	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	72	29	23	5	4	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	66	54	50	41	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	51	54	44	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	79	64	38	31	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	59	43	35	5	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	54	52	41	4	4	1	1
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)	55	45	48	39	8	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	67	55	51	41	4	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	39	58	47	8	7	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	45	58	47	7	6	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	65	53	45	44	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	66	35	29	4	3	3	2

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.



6 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ilchester Community School, Ilchester, BA22 8JL

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed listening to you telling us how much you enjoy your clubs, your learning and your trips, especially on the 'evacuees' train. Your school gives you a good education, looks after you well and keeps you safe. Your parents and carers tell us they feel the same.

It was good to hear from you that you like the staff so much and that they give you so many different opportunities to learn. We think you are being prepared very well for your future lives. You enjoy taking responsibilities. You showed us that with the super assembly led by Year 6. We think that you have good teachers, and thought you behaved well while we were in school. You do well in your learning, especially in reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Your writing is improving, but we think it can improve even more. You must be very pleased that your headteacher and the staff are always trying to make your learning and education even more exciting and enjoyable. In order to help the school do even better, we are asking the leaders to:

- help you improve your handwriting, to write as often as possible in all your subjects, and to make sure that all your teachers know how well you are doing
- improve the outdoor area for the youngest of you in the Reception classes, and give you all more opportunities for learning out of doors.

We are sure that you can help your teachers to do this. Thanks again for being so helpful. We hope you keep enjoying learning to play the drums!

Yours sincerely

Rod Braithwaite

Lead Inspector

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