

Inspection of an outstanding school: Icknield School

River Way, Andover, Hampshire SP11 6LT

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Outcome

Icknield School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' journey of learning and discovery starts from the moment they join the school. They thoroughly enjoy school, arriving in the morning with lots of enthusiasm for the day ahead. The youngest children are quickly and happily absorbed into the busyness of school life. They grow in confidence, become increasingly independent, and relish all that school has to offer.

The school is aspirational for its pupils. It has a profound impact on pupils' lives, who thrive. Their behaviour is excellent, and they achieve exceptionally well. The oldest pupils secure nationally accredited qualifications and all move on to positive destinations, including a range of further education colleges. They are understandably excited about the future and a credit to their school. The care and attention given to them as they prepare to move on from Icknield School is impressive.

Staff care deeply for their pupils, showing them kindness, good humour and respect. Everyone looks after each other and pupils feel safe and comfortable as a result. Pupils learn new ways of communicating choices, expressing opinions, or telling someone that something is wrong. Visitors are warmly welcomed with interest. There is much to smile about in this happy school and pupils and staff laugh together often.

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

This school is aspirational for its pupils, with an infectious 'can do' approach which underpins everything it does. Barriers to pupils' learning are regarded as challenges to be overcome, rather than as problems. Pupils are given the support they need to participate in a wide range of challenging and stimulating activities, such as ice skating, dancing, horse riding, skateboarding and Shakespeare performances, to name but a few. Experiences such as these make a notable contribution to pupils' confidence and sense of

self-worth. Parents are very positive about the school. One said: 'This is such a fantastic school. My daughter absolutely loves it, and the staff are amazing.'

Pupils want to do well and work hard. They are attentive and focused during lessons. Those pupils who struggle to engage are supported calmly and sensitively. Lunchtimes and break-times are happy, harmonious and relaxed occasions. Staff establish strong relationships with pupils, who respect adults and speak nicely to each other. The older pupils enjoy introducing themselves to visitors.

Strong staff teamwork is central to the school's success. Adults work well together to ensure that pupils have the help that they need. Effective liaison between therapists and staff ensures skilful delivery of therapeutic support, such as physiotherapy. The school encourages pupils to be as independent as possible. This approach is combined with meticulous attention to safeguarding arrangements and with highly vigilant staff. Pupils flourish in the school's care and are rightly proud of their achievements.

The school expects every pupil to attend regularly and does all it can to make sure that this is the case. For example, paediatric appointments are arranged to take place in school to make it easier for pupils to attend appointments without missing learning. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance closely. Sometimes, pupils with significant medical needs have unavoidable periods of absence, such as when they are receiving hospital treatment. Leaders work constructively with parents and agencies where this is the case, so that pupils continue to access learning. Pupils are keen to be in school and most attend regularly.

Leaders introduced a new phonics programme last year. This process has been planned and managed with the same carefully considered, thorough and methodical approach that is taken in every aspect of school development. As a result, the phonics programme is well established and taught effectively. The impact on pupils' ability to communicate verbally, as well as on their ability to read, is striking.

The school has developed effective procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' learning. Regular discussions about pupils' learning are used consistently well to review what is working well and where further adjustments can be made to help to overcome barriers to learning.

The school's personal development programme equips pupils with important knowledge and life skills. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy relationships and the older pupils learn about issues such as consent. Activities such as cooking and shopping help to prepare pupils for life in the future. Staff work closely with pupils, parents and with other settings to help each pupil to make well-informed choices about what they would like to do next. Leaders provide ongoing destinations with valuable information designed to support pupils when they leave school. Work placements for the older pupils are identified to support each pupil's needs, interests and aspirations.

Staff are proud to work in the school. They feel that leaders are approachable and responsive to their views. One said: 'I'm really happy to be part of Icknield. It's my happy place.' Leaders are alert to staff welfare. They regularly seek staff views and do all they can to support the staff team in managing workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in February 2015.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 116609 |
| Local authority | Hampshire |
| Inspection number | 10321838 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 94 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 19 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Louise Silke |
| Headteacher | Sean Cannon |
| Website | www.icknield.hants.gov.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Icknield School caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple difficulties.
- The school operates from two sites. The school has a post-16 provision, which operates from separate premises located at 219 Vigo Road, Andover SP10 1HP.
- The school buildings on both sites have been extended since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, assistant heads, and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with six governors. She also had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection. They also considered the views of staff expressed in Ofsted's survey.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, physical education and movement, and personal, social and health education, including relationships and sex education. Deep dives included visits to lessons, a review of pupils' work, and discussions with leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also visited some mathematics lessons and discussed the teaching of mathematics with school leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at other times of the school day. They gathered parents' views through Ofsted's survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Regan

Ofsted Inspector

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