

Inspection of a good school: Ivy Bank Primary School

Valley Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 8PB

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 April 2023

Outcome

Ivy Bank Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy learning at this school. They try hard in their lessons. Pupils, and children in the early years, are learning more and achieving more highly than in the past. One parent, typifying the views of many, described how nurture and support from staff had helped their child to 'excel' since starting school.

Pupils know that staff treat them fairly and expect them to be kind to each other. If a pupil's behaviour slips below the high standard expected of them, staff help them to get back on track. Pupils feel safe at school. They know that if they are worried about anything they can tell an adult and it will be taken seriously. Leaders quickly deal with any incidents of bullying so that they do not continue.

Pupils benefit from a wealth of sporting, creative and cultural opportunities that are accessible to all. For example, pupils told the inspector how inspiring it was to meet the author of a book they had enjoyed in class.

Pupils are excited to contribute to school life. They enjoy raising money for charities and taking on responsibilities as junior librarians and 'healthy explorers'. They congratulate each other for their successes and nominate their classmates for the 'Heart of Gold' award.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to know and be able to do by the time they leave Ivy Bank. In recent years, they have raised their expectations for what pupils can achieve, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In most subjects, leaders have precisely mapped out the smaller steps of knowledge that pupils need to learn. These are carefully organised to help pupils to build their learning from the Nursery Year up to Year 6. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders are

less clear about these small steps and the order in which pupils should encounter them. On occasions, this hinders teachers in designing learning and makes it harder for pupils to link new knowledge with earlier learning.

In the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), leaders have ensured that the curriculum teaches pupils social awareness and how to manage their emotions alongside their subject learning. This helps them to achieve well from their starting points. Most pupils improve their communication and social interaction over time.

Leaders have ensured that teachers have expert subject knowledge. Teachers use this to deliver the curriculum well. They often revisit previous learning before teaching new concepts. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned. In most subjects, when teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, these are addressed quickly.

Leaders have recently improved the teaching of early reading. They have trained staff to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Staff in the nursery use their expertise well to develop children's language and communication skills. Children learn phonics as soon as they begin the Reception Year. They quickly learn the sounds that letters represent. The books that pupils read are closely matched to these sounds. Staff put extra support in place swiftly for pupils who need it, including pupils in the specially resourced provision. This helps these pupils to catch up with their peers. Most pupils become fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1.

Leaders have given reading an equally high priority in key stage 2. This is helping older pupils continue to develop their reading skills. They enjoy reading often, both in school and at home. Pupils in Year 6 told the inspector proudly about the books and poems that they enjoy. In the specially resourced provision, pupils are delighted to perform their favourite stories for their parents and carers in assemblies.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. From the early years, they quickly identify pupils with SEND. Teachers adapt lessons so that these pupils learn well alongside their peers. A small number of pupils who need extra help, including those in the specially resourced provision, benefit from expert individual support. This helps them to achieve well.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They play together well, take turns and encourage each other to make good choices. Older pupils interact with the youngest children in a caring way. Disruption to learning is rare.

Leaders have carefully chosen opportunities to enhance pupils' wider development. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions, how to respect others, and how to stay physically and mentally healthy. They elect their peers to the school council and take responsibility by helping out at community events. This prepares pupils well for life in modern society.

Trustees and governors support leaders well. Most staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding where everything is checked and nothing is taken for granted. They have ensured that staff are well trained. Staff are vigilant for any signs that a pupil is potentially at risk of harm. They report concerns quickly so that leaders can take action.

If pupils need additional help, leaders involve external agencies swiftly. Leaders follow up any concerns until they are sure that pupils have received appropriate help.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about ways to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about online safety and the dangers of social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have yet to finalise their curriculum thinking. This means that teachers are not sufficiently clear about the building blocks of knowledge in these subjects, or how best to teach them in a logical order. This makes it difficult for pupils to build their knowledge cumulatively. Leaders should ensure that they are clear about what they want pupils to know and in what order this learning should be delivered.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2018.

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](#)' 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	141792
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10283617
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	431
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Bowen
Headteacher	Sarah Gill
Website	www.ivybank.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became part of the Aspire Educational Trust in September 2022.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision for up to 14 pupils on behalf of the local authority. These pupils all have education, health and care plans and a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. At the time of the inspection, 14 pupils were attending the provision.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. He met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils. He also listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents. He spoke to the headteacher and senior leaders throughout the inspection. He also met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The inspector met with members of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. The inspector considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. He observed pupils during social times and discussed safeguarding with them.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He also considered the responses to the Ofsted survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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