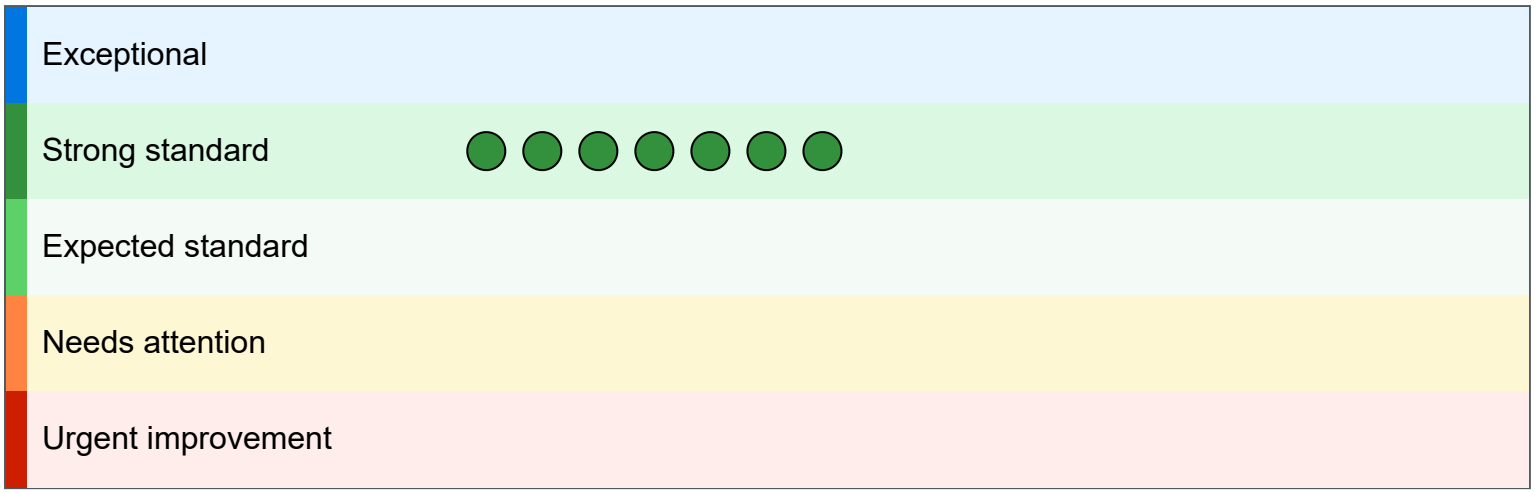
Ickleford Primary School

Address: Arlesey Road, Ickleford, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3TG

Unique reference number (URN): 117401

Inspection report: 9 September 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Leaders rightly place a high priority on all pupils learning to read, write and become proficient mathematicians. They also make sure pupils develop their vocabulary and communicate well. Pupils often make rapid progress through the curriculum, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils progress strongly through the mathematics curriculum. They have well-developed calculation skills and apply these confidently when solving increasingly complex problems. Writing has been a focus for several years. Pupils are making rapid progress through the school's newer writing curriculum. They write with increasing accuracy, stamina and confidence. Pupils also achieve highly in reading. They read fluently, understand what they read and discuss texts with confidence.

Pupils achieve highly across all the curriculum areas and show strong knowledge and skills that build systematically over time. Evidence from pupils' work and discussions with pupils shows that they remember and apply what they have learned very well. As a result, pupils achieve high standards. Pupils' writing standards have risen rapidly over the last year, although their outcomes in national assessments do not yet reflect this improvement. However, this is shown in the pupils who achieve the higher levels in writing.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders and staff have established a strong culture of positive behaviour. High expectations are apparent and understood by pupils. Staff apply these expectations consistently across the school. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well. Bullying is rare. Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning. They settle quickly, listen carefully and remain focused in lessons. Disruption to learning is rare. Relationships across the school are highly positive. Pupils are polite and considerate of others. Pupils manage their behaviour well and resolve disagreements appropriately. Leaders monitor behaviour closely and respond swiftly to any concerns. Effective support and tailored interventions help pupils who need additional guidance.

Leaders and staff promote the importance of attendance very effectively. Pupils from all groups, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend well. Leaders maintain a detailed understanding of attendance patterns. They analyse information carefully, identify concerns quickly and act promptly to address them. Support is tailored to individual circumstances. For example, some pupils can come in to the school before others. This means they can have more time to be ready for the school day, which improves their enjoyment of school and their attendance. Leaders work closely with families and provide both challenge and support when attendance needs to improve. Practical help, tailored pastoral support and positive relationships encourage pupils to attend regularly. Staff help pupils feel valued and successful, which strengthens their engagement with school. As a result, attendance remains high and continues to improve over time.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. They check it regularly to make sure it continues to meet pupils' needs. If it does not, they change it swiftly. For example, they have recently updated the computing curriculum to reflect changes in the digital world. As a result, pupils learn an up-to-date curriculum that prepares them well for future learning.

Across subjects and year groups, teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain new ideas clearly to pupils. Additionally, they make sure pupils remember new ideas. Teachers consistently make highly effective decisions about how and when to teach new ideas. They regularly check what pupils know and understand. They use these checks to change teaching skilfully to address misconceptions, provide precise guidance and extend pupils' thinking. This means pupils achieve well across subjects. Highly effective teaching is embedded across the school.

Staff make well-considered changes to teaching approaches when teaching reading, writing and mathematics. All pupils benefit from this, but particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Expectations are consistently high for all pupils. Teachers and leaders focus very well on the key knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics that pupils need to succeed in the future. Leaders ensure pupils achieve highly from their starting points.

Early years

Strong standard

Leaders ensure that children in the early years experience a consistently high-quality education. This starts with a detailed curriculum that sets out the knowledge and skills that children need. Skilled staff make the most of every part of the school day to help children learn and succeed. For example, during snack time, children learn how to make healthy choices, share resources and use good manners. Staff use activities very effectively to extend children's language and reinforce key learning. As a result, children develop their knowledge and skills quickly. They move confidently into Year 1 with very secure knowledge and the attributes needed to learn successfully.

From the start, staff make sure children learn school routines. They establish these quickly and consistently. Alongside positive relationships, this helps children feel safe and included. Staff respond swiftly to children's individual needs and provide targeted support when needed. As a result, children at risk of falling behind keep up with their peers.

Staff provide precise teaching that focuses on what children need to learn next. For example, staff identify children with less well-developed communication skills quickly. They give these children regular opportunities to develop their vocabulary and use language with confidence in their learning and play. As a result, children learn successfully across a wide range of subjects and develop strong foundations for reading and writing.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately. They also identify pupils who may be vulnerable or face other barriers, such as those who were previously known to social care. Teachers and parents and carers work together to get to know pupils well. Leaders understand precisely what pupils need to be successful learners. For example, some pupils need extra targeted teaching. Others benefit from counselling or specialist support, such as speech and language therapy. The school provides this support when pupils need it, for as long as they need it.

Leaders and staff regularly check how well provision meets pupils' needs. They use observations and discussions with pupils, families and external professionals to identify any factors that may affect pupils' wellbeing, participation or experiences. They respond quickly to ensure that pupils receive the right provision at the right time. Staff review the difference that their actions make and refine their approaches when needed. As a result, pupils benefit consistently well from actions and strategies that are carefully tailored to their needs and enrich their experiences.

Leaders use extra funding, such as the pupil premium grant, effectively to ensure disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and pupils with other barriers to learning and/or wellbeing can access the same opportunities and be successful in school.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

There has been a change in the leadership team since the previous inspection. Leaders at all levels make a strong contribution to school improvement. They understand the school's strengths and priorities well and use regular monitoring and evaluation to identify where further improvement is needed. They carry this out rapidly. This ensures that leaders focus their actions on the areas that make the greatest difference to pupils.

Leaders have established a shared understanding of effective teaching. They invest in developing staff expertise and create regular opportunities for staff to work together, share successful approaches and learn from one another. As a result, teaching remains consistently strong and pupils achieve highly.

Professional learning is a significant strength. Leaders align training carefully to school priorities and individuals' development needs. Staff value the opportunities they receive to develop their expertise and take on additional responsibilities. This strengthens leadership across the school. As a result, pupils benefit from consistently effective teaching and a curriculum that continues to improve. Leaders place importance on staff wellbeing. They listen to staff, consider workload carefully and take practical steps to ensure that expectations remain manageable. Staff speak positively about the support they receive and value leaders being approachable and responsive. This contributes to positive and high morale.

Leaders have established positive relationships with parents and carers and the wider community. They communicate openly, seek feedback and work closely with families when

pupils need additional help. Parents value this approach. Partnerships with other schools and external organisations help leaders evaluate their work effectively.

Governors make a highly effective contribution to the strategic leadership of the school. They know the school well. Governors provide effective support and challenge and hold leaders to account for the quality of education, pupils' wellbeing and the use of resources. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively and maintain a relentless focus on securing the best possible outcomes for pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The personal development programme is carefully planned to make sure pupils learn to be responsible members of their community. Leaders review and refine this programme regularly. They adapt provision swiftly when pupils' needs change. For example, leaders identified that some pupils needed additional support to manage friendships appropriately. Staff provided this through a structured, well-considered programme of activities. As a result, pupils developed the knowledge and skills they needed and strengthened their social skills. Where any pupils need additional guidance, staff provide this for as long as necessary. This work has a positive impact. Pupils contribute positively to their school and community. They are confident, thoughtful and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff teach pupils about diversity, equality and respect very effectively. Through learning about different faiths and cultures, pupils develop a strong understanding of the world around them. Visits to places of worship and discussions about different communities help pupils understand and value difference. This develops empathy. Pupils speak confidently about why everyone should be treated fairly. They also show this through their very positive behaviour around the school and how they show respect to each other and adults.

The relationships and health education programme is carefully planned to develop pupils' understanding of healthy friendships and staying safe in the community. As a result, pupils make informed decisions. Leaders give a high priority to pupils' wellbeing. They help pupils develop the knowledge and strategies they need to manage their feelings and respond positively to challenges. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who may be vulnerable.

Computing lessons and theme weeks mean that pupils can explain online risks confidently, including the dangers of unsafe content. Digital leaders help reinforce these messages through assemblies. Consequently, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. Staff teach pupils about fundamental British values. Opportunities to vote for representatives and influence school decisions develop pupils' understanding of democracy.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils love to learn. They enjoy lessons because staff make learning engaging and enjoyable. Pupils show highly positive attitudes to learning. Staff show enthusiasm, and pupils respond with the same enthusiasm. Pupils achieve highly across the curriculum. As a

result, they develop confidence in their abilities and embrace new challenges. Pupils also attend very well. They move confidently from one stage of education to the next.

Pupils behave extremely well. They rarely need to be reminded about positive behaviour. They show patience and kindness when listening to each other. They move quickly and calmly between activities, which allows learning to begin without delay. For instance, pupils return from playtimes promptly and ready to learn. They play well together and create a harmonious environment. The youngest children in the school learn routines quickly. They are happy, safe and settled. Bullying of any kind is extremely rare.

Pupils and staff build highly positive relationships. Pupils trust staff and confidently seek help when they need it. Staff place a high priority on pupils' wellbeing and positive attitudes. They help pupils build friendships and get along well with others. Pupils can access social and academic support when they need it. As a result, they develop into well-rounded young people and move confidently to the next stage of their education.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of additional opportunities, including experiences that are developed as part of the faith aspects of the school. They value these experiences and develop a strong sense of community through them. For example, some pupils sing and spend time with local older people. Additionally, pupils learn important values that teach them to contribute to society without expecting a reward in return. Additionally, older pupils willingly support the youngest children in the school. They are wonderful role models. They help younger pupils feel welcome and settled from the moment they join the school.

Next steps

- Leaders and staff should continue their work to continue to raise pupils' attainment in writing further so that pupils achieve as highly in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Dr Miles Maxwell.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, teachers, pupils and some parents and carers. They also spoke to representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use alternative provision.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of St Albans. Its last section 48 inspection was in March 2026.

Headteacher: Sarah Wright

Lead inspector:
Jessie Linsley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Karen Stanton, Ofsted Inspector
Carley Holliman, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 9 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

213
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 268

School capacity

210
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

11.74%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.88%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.86%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	72%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	90%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	90%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	90%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	90%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	70%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	72%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	92%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	90%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	94%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	93%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	60%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	57%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	90%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	86%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	60%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	85%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	90%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	68%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	60%	69%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	67%	-10 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	80%	80%	0 pp
2024/25 (final)	90%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	86%	80%	6 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	78%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	60%	78%	-18 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	78%	-20 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	85%	80%	5 pp
2024/25 (final)	90%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	100%	79%	21 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	3.1%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.3%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	2.7%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	12.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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