



Ivy Lane Primary School

Georgette McCready visits an historic Chippenham primary school which combines a love of reading with generous outdoor space to play and learn

On arrival at Ivy Lane, Chippenham's oldest surviving primary school, the rectangular playground, the railings and the Victorian red brick schoolhouse all look traditional, just as they have for generations of children.

But venture beyond the playground and you'll discover a school community that's bang up to date and which offers today's youngsters a stimulating and exciting environment in which to learn and develop. I bet many former pupils would envy playtime with Bertie the school dog, the chance to climb into the school treehouse for story time or to clamber on specially built outdoor equipment.

It's no wonder that head of school Helen Lammins is proud to show us around Ivy Lane. It may be on a town centre site, just a stroll from the high street, but the campus is airy and light, with loads of green, outdoor spaces for its pupils to explore.

Helen says, "There is very much a family feel to the school. Our children are amazing. And we're

proud that we often see generations of the same families journey through their school life with us."

Ivy Lane has around 400 pupils, with two classes for each year group. There is also the newly opened cosy Sunflowers Nursery for pre-school children aged from three. The little ones play in their own garden, but the children can see over the low fence to where the

older children are playing. Children in Reception classes have their own garden and beyond that is a surprisingly large expanse of green playing field and a wild area.

It is in the wild area that we find a Forest School session. Today's class has learned how to make their own fire this morning and are sitting round it on logs whittling sticks and toasting marshmallows over the fire. It's good, old-fashioned stuff that gives children skills for life, boosts their confidence and it's clear from the excited chatter that they really enjoy these supervised adventures, along with pond dipping and tending vegetables in the school garden.

Back inside the main school building Helen shows us the





library. "Reading is at the heart of our school. You'll see that all our classes are named after authors and we were delighted when local author Neil Griffiths came to officially open the library. Sessions in the library are timetabled in, but the children also get free time to browse and borrow books."



Head of school
Helen Lammins

The library has the Wow! factor. It's housed in a high ceilinged Victorian classroom, the walls painted a rich peacock shade. At one end stands a magnificent stage set of a castle, with a reading throne in front of it. Sofas and small displays of books are set out to tempt young readers to pick up a book and get stuck in.

The main school hall displays a wall of beautiful butterflies created in a whole school art project and off the hall classes are in full swing. By a classroom door is posted the name of the book the class is reading as well as the book their teacher is reading, a nice touch.

"The children's wellbeing is central to our Learning for Life belief, so we can support our children to become more emotionally resilient and better able to deal with life's ups and downs," says Helen. Ivy Lane has a pastoral manager who is also a Thrive practitioner and the school is working towards becoming a Thrive school. Thrive is a nationwide programme which promotes

positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in children and young people.

There are four school houses and pupils earn house points, with rewards for good work and behaviour. Incentives include the chance to join the head of school's breakfast and win a certificate. Bertie the school dog is usually in school three days a week and it's easy to see, from the way the children pet and play with him in the garden, that he brings them a lot of joy.

Ivy Lane has its own kitchen, with menus prepared to suit its children's tastes and cooked fresh on the premises. Who wouldn't love Wednesdays' weekly roast lunches with a choice of cake for pudding! They're certainly burning up some energy with PE, walks to the Olympiad in town for swimming lessons and running around the big playing field.

Helen wants to pay tribute to the parent teacher association, FOILS, for its fundraising which has paid for treats including a trip for children to London to see The Lion King.

Walking around the school it's plain to see that the children are engaged, relaxed and feel at home. Happy children mean happy mums and dads, and the latest Ofsted report (Good) confirms this: 'Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.' ■



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To book an appointment at the school, email admin@ivylane.wilts.sch.uk or tel: 01249 652556. To book an appointment at Sunflowers Nursery email nursery@ivylane.wilts.sch.uk tel: 01249 471209 in the mornings.

All of our superb photos in this feature were taken by Anna Barclay – 07825 233400 / annakbarclay@gmail.com