

Earl Sterndale CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	112821
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378568
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2012
Lead inspector	David Edwards

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Hofman
Headteacher	Daniel Holden
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2006
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Edwards

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector with two days' notice. He visited seven lessons of 20 minutes or longer, observing all the teachers at least once. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also heard children reading, scrutinised pupils' work, visited an assembly and undertook other activities in order to observe the pupils' learning. He held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, a number of staff and a member of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at school self-evaluation and planning documents, policies and procedures as well as the school's own analysis of pupils' attainment and progress. A total of 22 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were received and analysed, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Earl Sterndale is a significantly smaller than the average sized primary school, set in a rural location in Derbyshire. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes which comprise Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. The school exceeds the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6. It has gained a number of awards, including the Eco-School award, Healthy School status, Activemark, Football Association Charter Standard and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Earl Sterndale is a good and highly inclusive school which continues to place pupils’ achievement and well-being at the heart of what it does. Teachers know their pupils well as individuals. Children in Reception and pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2, both boys and girls, learn effectively and make good progress, especially in the key skills of English and mathematics. The quality of pupils’ writing is improving because it has been identified as an area for whole school development. As yet, pupils are not consistently given the opportunity to use success criteria to assess the quality of their written work.
- There is a strong community ethos. Pupils are very considerate towards each other, staff and visitors. Older pupils are mature young people who express their views and ideas articulately.
- Pupils behave sensibly and safely in lessons and around the school. They feel very safe in school and are not concerned about bullying. Safeguarding procedures, including child protection, are rigorous and secure.
- Teaching is good and pupils in the mixed-age classes learn effectively because lessons are interesting and they have good levels of engagement. However, not all lessons provide sufficiently high levels of challenge for more-able pupils so that they can achieve what they are capable of. While marking of pupils’ work is mostly helpful, teachers’ comments do not always explain how to improve or set the next steps in learning.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well organised and effective in helping them to make good progress. All pupils are able to make the best of the opportunities offered by the school.
- The school is well led by the headteacher who has secured the support of staff and parents and carers in the drive to raise standards further. The school carefully fosters productive links with parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers consistently plan work that challenges all pupils, particularly the more able, so that they achieve what they are capable of.
- Continue to raise achievement in writing by increasing pupils’ familiarity with

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and use of success criteria to check the quality of their work and that of others and to understand their own next steps in learning.

- Improve the consistency of teachers' marking so that pupils receive more detailed advice about how to improve their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children entering Reception make a strong start because good teaching and support ensure that they make good progress, especially in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. They develop a good understanding of letter sounds which helps them to read and write. As one parent said, 'I cannot believe how well my child's reading has improved since they came into the Reception class last September'. Although attainment data fluctuates as a consequence of the small size of the cohort, in general, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics is above average. In 2011 it was broadly average in writing with no pupils reaching the higher levels in the subject.

Pupils make good progress in reading, speaking and listening and mathematics. They are confident readers and develop the skills they need to tackle difficult words, comprehend what they are reading and use expression for effect. Work seen by the inspector in lessons, pupils' books and pupil assessment and tracking data show that the improved attainment at Key Stage 1 is being sustained. Pupils are well placed for their next steps in education.

School leaders identified that pupils' writing skills have not been as good as they should be and this has been an area for whole-school improvement. Pupils now successfully write more widely for a range of purposes and are rightly proud of what they achieve. Teachers make good use of opportunities to write in different curriculum areas, for example accounts of events in history or recording science investigations. While the content of pupils' writing is improving, they are not yet consistently given the opportunity to evaluate their own writing, and that of others, to promote even higher attainment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because the provision for them is well organised and managed carefully to meet their specific needs. Learning is broken down into small and manageable steps. The school has worked very effectively to help individuals overcome particular academic and sometimes emotional needs, enabling all pupils to participate in the full range of activities offered. Senior leaders pay good attention to developing the skills that the staff require to meet the needs of those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. This, coupled with good support, is helping to minimise any gaps in the progress pupils are making. All parents and carers who responded to the inspection

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questionnaire said their child was making good progress and that the school meets their child's needs.

Quality of teaching

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in Reception because teachers help them to develop self-confidence and a capacity for independent learning. The school successfully creates a secure and welcoming environment. The children benefit from a good range of indoor and outdoor learning. They develop positive attitudes to reading and enjoy developing their writing skills.

Teachers have generally high expectations of their pupils as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2. The pupils respond by taking part actively and willingly in the well-planned tasks that they are given. This means that they make good progress. Pupils say they like their teachers and appreciate the help they receive from them. Participation and learning in the best lessons are enhanced by teachers asking effective questions or providing more challenging tasks, particularly for the more able, which require pupils to give ideas and share explanations. This helps pupils to clarify their thinking. For example, in a Key Stage 2 science lesson, pupils worked cooperatively in groups to investigate the properties of materials; they formed hypotheses, carefully tested their ideas and recorded their conclusions to increase their understanding. This practical work engaged the pupils and had a good level of challenge, but this is not always evident in all lessons, particularly for more-able pupils.

Pupils' work is regularly marked and in the best examples clear next steps are identified, but this practice is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils say that their teachers help them when they need it and that they learn a lot in lessons. Teachers have detailed assessment information about pupils' work. This information is used effectively not only to check progress but also to identify any gaps in learning and next steps. The overall analysis of assessment information provides senior leaders with an indication of the progress pupils are making over time. The information helpfully informs the meetings senior leaders have with teachers to discuss pupils' progress.

Teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers to give additional support to those pupils who need it. This is particularly true for pupils who find school challenging and whose attitudes and behaviour improve as a result.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

From an early age children develop good social skills and positive attitudes to learning. These qualities are maintained throughout the school. Pupils are well behaved and this contributes very positively to their learning and progress and to the strong social and moral ethos of the school. Pupils like their school and their teachers and are polite and respectful at all times. Attendance overall is satisfactory and

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improving. Pupils willingly participate in the tasks that they are given and are very supportive of each other when working in small groups. Often pupils are seen helping each other to understand an instruction or share ideas. A few parents, carers and pupils raised concerns about behaviour in their questionnaires, though when inspectors discussed this with pupils and a small group of parents and carers both groups believed behaviour to be good, and this was confirmed during the inspection. When senior leaders have had any concerns about behaviour they have successfully taken action through the school's personal and social education programme, by altering teaching styles to address any issues, or providing additional support to effect an improvement.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. There have been very few incidents of bullying recorded in recent years. Pupils know who to turn to if they are concerned about behaviour and said that they try to resolve disagreements between themselves when possible.

Pupils have a sound knowledge of how to keep themselves safe in all aspects of their daily life. They understand the dangers that the internet and mobile phones present and how to deal with them. The school is meticulous in pursuing the interests of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable through its good partnership with parents and outside agencies.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is strongly focused on raising pupils' attainment, has established a clear vision for improvement and gained the respect and support of the staff. He and the Key Stage 1 leader effectively monitor the quality of lessons and learning and ensure that there is appropriate mentoring and professional development to help improve teachers' skills. Good leadership of Reception is seen in the fostering of effective teamwork, with adults closely focused on raising children's attainment.

The governing body is increasingly knowledgeable about the school and its performance, not only through sub-committee written reports to the governing body but also through visiting and observing the school's work first-hand. This has enabled governors to work in partnership with the school in setting ambitious targets. All requirements for safeguarding and risk assessments are met and all the parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe the school cares very well for their children. Pupils are very well supervised at all times.

The school is a harmonious community in which pupils gain a good understanding of different ways of life in this country and elsewhere which they respect and value. Their good cultural and moral development is demonstrated by the high proportion who are learning to play a musical instrument, and the school's success in gaining the Eco-School award. Pupils showed their good spiritual development in the way that they reflect on their learning and their appreciation of art and music and

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literature. The introduction of 'philosophy for children' encourages pupils to think deeply about important aspects of life. School leaders' success in narrowing the gaps in performance between different groups, including pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's promotion of equality of opportunity.

The broad and balanced curriculum provides a very interesting range of experiences for pupils. It promotes not only the good development of academic key skills but also ensures that pupils' personal development is supported very effectively and all enjoy equal opportunities to succeed. In this way pupils learn to appreciate others' views, understand the importance of getting on with others and successfully develop their self-esteem. Pupils are proud of what they achieve. They learn about different faiths and cultures through religious education and from their links with schools whose pupil population is very different from their own White British heritage. Themed topic weeks and a range of visitors, such as the African drummer, further increase their appreciation of life and culture in the rest of the world.

The school has consolidated the good practice identified in its last inspection report. This, together with leaders' strong focus on improving pupils' achievement and promoting their well-being, demonstrates its strong capacity for further sustained improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



18 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earl Sterndale CofE Primary School, Buxton SK17 0BS

Thank you for helping me when I recently inspected your school. I enjoyed talking with you and observing your interesting lessons. I judged your school to be good. It is a friendly school where everyone gets on well. You behave very well and the staff care for you and keep you safe. I found that you make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics. Teaching is good. I could see that you enjoy your lessons and that you work hard. Your writing is improving because you are using descriptive words and are making your sentences more interesting. Your parents are very supportive of the school and help you with learning at home.

The headteacher, staff and governing body are all working hard to make the school even better. To help them to do this, I have asked them to do the following things.

- Help you to make even better progress by making learning more challenging, so that you achieve what you are capable of.
- Make sure that teachers all give you enough detailed advice to help you to improve your work.
- Help more of you to reach the higher levels in writing by giving you the skills to assess the quality of your own work and that of your classmates, so you can then make your own improvements.

I wish you all future success. Keep working hard and enjoy your time in school. Never be afraid to ask for harder work if you feel you need it.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Lead Inspector

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