

Earl Spencer Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique reference number | 121912 |
| Local authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 380350 |
| Inspection dates | 30–31 January 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Peter Sudworth |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 202 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jenny Rendall |
| Headteacher | Anne Partridge |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 January 2009 |
| School address | Streatfield Road Spencer Estate Northampton NN5 7DE |
| Telephone number | 01604 751130 |
| Fax number | 01604 591306 |
| Email address | head@earlspencer-pri.northants-ecl.gov.uk |

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|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection date(s) | 30–31 January 2012 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Peter Sudworth

Additional inspector

Valerie Palmer

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, had discussions with pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body, listened to pupils read and examined pupils' work. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at various documents, such as those relating to safeguarding and progress. The inspectors read the parents' and carers' comments on the 70 questionnaires returned and also read responses from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school with seven classes. Pupils begin the Reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Many pupils have previously attended the Nursery at the neighbouring children's centre. Around three-quarters of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritages. Bangladeshi pupils compose the largest group. An increasing number of pupils are arriving from Eastern Europe. A large percentage of the pupils speak English as an additional language, with more at the early stages of learning English than at the last inspection. Around three-fifths of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and a similar proportion have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These levels are well above the national average. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has gained the Inclusion Quality Mark and Healthy Schools status, and manages its own breakfast club.

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 | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key findings

- The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils achieve soundly and make satisfactory progress. Rates of progress are increasing. The percentage of girls who reached the expected level or above in 2011 was higher than the national average.
- While teaching is satisfactory, the proportion of good teaching is increasing and several lessons observed were good. Good attention is given to the teaching of letter sounds (phonics), which support progress in reading.
- Pupils behave well and have a good awareness of keeping themselves safe. They enjoy school. Pupils from different ethnic groups get along well together and support one another.
- The headteacher and newly appointed assistant headteachers are driving the school forward. The tracking of pupils' progress is now regular and thorough in Years 1 to 6. This means slower progress can now be quickly identified in order to accelerate it. However, the information is not yet used well enough to challenge able pupils consistently. Governors work closely with different classes and staff.
- High percentages of parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed favourable views. One wrote, for example, 'I am completely happy with my child being at this school and I cannot praise the school enough. My child loves coming to school and the staff treat him, as well as myself, with respect.'
- The ratio of adults to pupils is good and supports the pupils' progress, especially those who have learning difficulties or who speak English as an additional language.
- The school's curriculum is broad. It ensures pupils build up skills in the right order in English and mathematics, but planning does not ensure this in every subject. The activities that the children choose for themselves in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not always fully extend their learning and development of language.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage further by:
 - engaging with the children in their practical activities more effectively to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - planning the activities in the different areas of learning so that they develop the children’s skills to a greater depth
 - ensuring that the evidence base for the assessments of the children in the areas of learning is wider than it is currently.
- Improve teaching by:
 - using the information in the robust tracking system that the school now has to ensure that able pupils are challenged consistently in lessons
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are fully involved throughout lessons and ask pupils challenging questions
 - giving pupils feedback about their handwriting across subjects.
- Ensure pupils’ skills are developed progressively in all subjects as they move up through the school, by planning the curriculum more thoroughly.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The children’s attainment on entry is low, especially in language and numeracy, and also in their knowledge of the world. While progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, the staff’s good attention to the teaching of phonics enables the children to make good progress in their knowledge of letter sounds and reading. The children also make good progress in their physical development. However, attainment at the end of the Reception Year is low overall when compared to the national average. Sometimes children do not practise language enough when they are not involved in adult-led sessions. The activities that are put out for them do not always give them the opportunity to develop skills rapidly.

Most parents are happy with their children’s achievement. Inspectors judge it to be satisfactory but improving. Attainment is rising. While it is still below average at the end of Year 6, rates of progress are around those expected and have accelerated over the past two years. The percentage of Year 6 pupils who had made two levels progress in English and mathematics was slightly above the national average in 2011. Bangladeshi pupils make better progress than this group nationally. The school identifies pupils who have special educational needs quickly. The good level of adult support for these pupils and for pupils with disabilities, as well as for pupils who have limited familiarity with English enables all groups to make progress at a similar rate to other pupils. Specialist group teaching and good use of bilingual assistants enable early stage speakers of English as an additional language to acquire the language

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well. Pupils' befriending of new arrivals and good social interaction are also key factors in their acquisition of English, enabling them to start to narrow the gap on other pupils nationally. However, attainment in reading remains below average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.

Pupils use the helpful hints on the walls for work in English and mathematics well. They effectively consult individual charts that group together letters which make the same sound, in order to assist their writing. Staff work hard and with success to encourage good vocabulary and punctuation when the pupils write. For example, a Year 5 pupil wrote, 'Out of the corner of my eye I saw a mysterious, weird, long bearded man. He had an old, pale face that was so bright it was unmissable.' Pupils use their writing skills widely in other subjects, although use of numeracy is less evident.

Quality of teaching

Most parents are positive about the teaching in the school, as are pupils. Inspectors found that while some teaching is good, it is satisfactory overall. Staff generally plan learning well and there is a good balance of activity and instruction in lessons. However, the work planned for able pupils is at times too easy and they are not challenged enough. Also, staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage occasionally miss opportunities to intervene to accelerate learning when children are carrying out activities they have chosen themselves. Teachers share their learning intentions consistently and the children know what they have to do to be successful in their learning. Marking of the pupils' work is up to date, accurate and with precise statements about the positive aspects of the work and an aspect for improvement. Pupils are aware of their next steps in learning through these comments and also more broadly through their personal target statements. Teachers do not often comment about handwriting, which at times is untidy and not well formed.

Phonics are well taught. In a briskly executed lesson, Year 1 pupils made good progress learning the 'ph' sound. By the end of the lessons, different groups were able to suggest words that contained the sound and they immediately wrote down the words which reinforced their learning. Teaching assistants are always engaged well during the phonics activities and clear about what they have to do. However, they are not always fully involved during the introductions to lessons, and occasionally they tell the pupils the answers instead of appealing to the pupils' reasoning skills through focused questioning.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for instance through encouraging them to work together and through well-chosen content. Year 6 pupils, for example, wrote diary excerpts as gladiators in their Roman studies with real feeling. 'This may be the last time you hear from me...' Pupils state that they learn from the visits that take place locally and further afield. They learned much from their visit to Warwick Castle and Northampton museum which linked well to their study of castles. Teachers have a good knowledge of the content that they teach so that they can answer pupils' questions. They ensure that

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all pupils are involved in the introduction to lessons by getting them to record their own thoughts or answers on individual whiteboards. Demonstrations of new methods are often good. The Year 2 teacher demonstrated clearly for pupils how to add two digit numbers together. She checked their understanding by getting individual pupils to come to the board to demonstrate their calculations, which also supported their speaking skills. Meanwhile the less able pupils were withdrawn to carry out more simple work with coins adding to 10p, which was the next thing they needed to learn.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are respectful to one another and to staff. Their descriptions of school as 'great', 'excellent', 'brilliant' and 'fun' clearly indicate their enjoyment of it and of their learning. They report that, 'It is a good place to be.' They feel a part of what the school is trying to do. For example, the school council gets involved in school affairs and has helped with ideas for playtimes, including the choice of playground equipment. They respond well to the school's high expectations of behaviour and in lessons demonstrate a good attitude to work. There have been no exclusions. Pupils also behave well at the breakfast club. The pupils say that bullying of any type is very rare but are confident that if any incidents were to occur they would be resolved quickly. Attendance is average but improving year by year, and has been above average for the past term. The school has worked hard to impress on parents and carers the problems for their children's learning associated with long absences to their homelands.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and parents and carers agree. Pupils have a good awareness of safety. They know that computers at school provide limited access to sites for safety reasons and they report that they do not use potentially harmful sites at home. The lessons that they have in school about 'bikeability' support their understanding of road safety. They are aware of the potential dangers of water and matches. They express strong views about smoking and drugs and the potential dangers for health. Pupils know the group of five 'people' to turn to if they have worries and they list these readily, including parents, friends and teachers.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection the school has improved rates of progress in key areas and developed a better assessment system, though this has yet to be fully effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It has also successfully strengthened phonics teaching and improved science. It has been effective in these areas despite a changing intake, because of its regular monitoring and clear planning for improvement. There is regular scrutiny of pupils' work, half termly tracking of progress and effective professional development for teachers. Staff are held accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes and share the drive to improve progress. Governors are committed to this and their links with subjects and classes and their visits to school enable them to challenge and question effectively. The headteacher and newly appointed assistant headteachers are leading the

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school's clear sense of urgency and determination and the school has the capacity to improve further.

The school provides equal opportunities for its pupils and there is no evidence of discrimination. For example, all pupils can take part in the good range of extra-curricular activities. Staff are aware which pupils need special help for either their lack of English or their learning difficulties; the school makes good adult support available so that none feels left out and their needs are met. The curriculum is broad with a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy and opportunities for pupils to develop their spoken language. It promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and as a result the school is a cohesive community. The school makes good arrangement for safeguarding and child protection arrangements are secure.

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.



1 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earl Spencer Primary School, Northampton NN5 7DE

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school, for talking to us about your work and sharing what you do with us. Your school provides a satisfactory education for you and encouragingly your progress is accelerating. The staff work hard and look after you well. We were impressed with your behaviour and the way that you all get along so well together. Your parents are pleased that you attend Earl Spencer School.

These are some of the other good things about your school.

- You know how to look after yourselves and keep yourselves safe.
- You enjoy school a great deal and support children new to the school so they settle quickly.
- The school's leaders are improving your school further.
- There are lots of staff to help you.

These are the things that we would like the school to improve.

- We have asked staff in the Reception class to make sure the children there learn well when they are doing the activities they have chosen themselves.
- We want teachers to make sure that the work and the questions adults ask you are hard enough. We have also asked them to look at your handwriting in all the subjects and tell you how to improve it.
- We want the staff to organise the curriculum better so that it builds up skills in different subjects better as you move up through the school. They already do this well in English and mathematics.

Thank you again for your help. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth
Lead inspector

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