

Earls Barton Infant School

Inspection report

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| Unique reference number | 121902 |
| Local authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 380347 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Steven Hill |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 209 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Marion Moore |
| Headteacher | Pauline Shacklady |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 March 2007 |
| School address | Broad Street Earls Barton Northampton NN6 0ND |
| Telephone number | 01604 810 308 |
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|---------------------------|------------------|
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| Inspection date(s) | 13–14 March 2012 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Steven Hill

Additional inspector

Richard Boswell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Observations were made of 16 lessons, taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. There were no responses available to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to help in planning the inspection, but inspectors examined questionnaires from 88 parents and carers, as well as from staff and from older pupils. The team observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, particularly that relating to safeguarding and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in books and on display, and heard pupils reading in Years 1 and 2.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school in a large village. The very large majority of pupils are White British, with a few coming from a range of different minority ethnic heritages. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language, and none are at the early stages of speaking English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. A new headteacher took up post in September 2011.

A junior school and a pre-school provision which share the site are each managed separately.

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

- This is a good school. Good teaching means that pupils make good progress. They enjoy learning and behave well. Good leadership and management have ensured that above-average standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The school is not outstanding because of some remaining shortfalls in the achievement of boys and the more-able pupils, and some inconsistencies in teaching.
- Attainment has been significantly above average for several years. This represents good achievement from children’s starting points at the beginning of Reception. Boys have not usually done as well as girls, although this gap is closing following action by the school. The progress of the more-able pupils, while usually good, is not consistent.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Lessons are managed well and an enjoyable curriculum ensures that pupils are interested and work hard. The teaching in a few lessons is satisfactory, usually when activities do not provide enough challenge for the more-able. Good use is often made of discussion, for pupils to clarify their ideas, but some opportunities for this are missed.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to succeed. They feel safe in school, partly because of their own sensible conduct and the care they show for each other. Their great enjoyment of school is reflected in their above-average attendance. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Good leadership of teaching results in a coherent staff team, successfully focused on raising standards. Good management of performance is enhanced by a new computer-based assessment system. However, many staff have not yet had training on its use. Regular and frequent assessments are used to track ongoing progress but, apart from at the end of each key stage, teachers have not worked together to ensure these are consistent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more outstanding lessons and eliminate those that are only satisfactory by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always challenged and engaged by the tasks they are given
 - taking more opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas together and clarify their understanding.
- Consolidate the improvements made in assessment by:
 - making sure all teachers are conversant with the new computer-based assessment system, so they can use it more effectively to improve pupils' progress
 - undertaking moderation work to ensure the validity and accuracy of teachers' interim assessments.
- Remove the remaining gaps between boys' and girls' attainment by consolidating and extending the work done to engage boys' interest and enthusiasm in lessons, particularly in literacy.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are rightly very positive about their children's achievement. For several years, pupils have consistently attained above-average overall standards by the end of Year 2, to the extent of being about five months ahead of their contemporaries nationally. Overall, children start school with attainment somewhat below that expected, so this represents good achievement. Boys' attainment is generally lower than girls' when they start, particularly in their literacy skills. After a time when this gap often widened as pupils got older, teachers have successfully started to close it by providing boys with activities that motivate them more, although there is still some way to go. Previously, pupils' attainment in mathematics tended to lag behind that in reading and writing but, for the last two years, standards have been significantly above average in mathematics. Standards in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 were already significantly above average, and remain so.

Children get off to a strong start in the Reception classes, and standards by the time they go into Year 1 have been rising. Last year, attainment was clearly above local and national averages. Current Reception children continue to make good progress in all areas of learning, both working with adults, and when choosing their own activities. This was apparent in all lessons observed during the inspection. For example, they improved their skills in blending letters together, as they listened carefully to their teacher before concentrating hard on spelling words for themselves. Pupils' good achievement continues in the older classes. For example, pupils in Year 1 made good progress in design and technology as they enthusiastically made and evaluated a healthy fruit meal, eating the results with great enjoyment. In a Year 2 lesson where teaching was good, pupils responded well to the consistent challenge

from adults to refine their writing, improving their editing skills.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make consistently good progress because tasks are carefully adapted to their needs and adults provide a well-judged mixture of support and challenge. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make the same good progress as their classmates. More-able pupils make good progress in most lessons, as teachers usually provide suitably challenging work, but this is not consistent, so sometimes their progress is only satisfactory. As a result, the proportion gaining the higher Level 3 in national tests is not much greater than the average.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have very positive relationships with pupils, who consequently work hard to meet their high expectations of work and behaviour. The curriculum is used well by teachers to enthuse pupils, often making learning more meaningful and enjoyable through links between different subjects. The current thematic work on castles in Year 2, and on the Caribbean in Year 1, exemplifies the enjoyment and good progress that result. Teachers and other adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage work extremely effectively to provide an enjoyable, balanced and exciting array of activities that ensures children make good progress in all areas of learning. Throughout the school, teachers use the curriculum to make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The results are clear in pupils' good personal development and, for example, in the high-quality art work on display. Parents and carers overwhelmingly say teaching is good, and inspection evidence supports this view.

The majority of lessons, particularly in mathematics and English, are planned so that different groups of pupils get work that is tightly matched to their needs, so it is challenging but manageable. This is a strong factor in the good progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, although in many lessons higher-attaining pupils are given more difficult tasks, at times these do not provide sufficient challenge to move them on quickly. Teachers make some good use of strategies to involve all pupils actively in lessons, such as working on small whiteboards, or having them discuss their work together to sort out their ideas and rehearse answers. At other times, however, opportunities to use discussion to enhance learning are missed. Good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance learning, and pupils develop good skills in this subject. Skilled teaching assistants are used well to provide a high level of individual help and challenge to groups, which enhances the pace of learning. A strong feature of many lessons is how well all adults monitor ongoing progress and intervene effectively to correct mistakes and to challenge pupils to refine their work. This is a particular strength in the Reception classes.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They are keen to succeed and work hard. Their positive attitudes to learning and good concentration contribute to their good progress. They have good relationships with each other and with adults, and are polite and friendly. Pupils work together well in class, sharing ideas and

equipment amicably, and listening sensibly to others. They can be very independent when needed, right from the Reception classes, and show patience and persistence in the face of difficulties. This was observed when pupils in Year 2 made good progress in using a computer simulation, despite initial difficulties in logging on by entering a complex web address.

Pupils undertake responsibilities conscientiously and cheerfully, and are proud of their contribution to making the school a harmonious community. Older pupils, in particular, are very kind and caring to younger ones, and are quick to act as 'playground friends' if they spot anyone who seems upset or worried. Boys and girls from different backgrounds work and play together well. They have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying and say that incidents are rare. They are very confident that any issues that do arise are dealt with firmly and effectively by staff. They consequently feel very safe and secure in school, and know how to contribute to their own and each other's safety by their own actions. Their positive views on behaviour and safety are matched by those of their parents and carers. Inspection evidence shows they are right.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher is leading colleagues well to build on previous strengths and raise achievement. There is a strong, shared vision for the school, and staff and governing body are clear about current priorities. Joint planning in each year group and cross-year-group meetings ensures consistency of approach and the sharing of good practice. There are good systems to inform the governing body about the school's strengths and weaknesses so that it is effectively able to hold the school to account for its performance. It has ensured that arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements, and is fully involved in reviewing provision.

Regular work by staff in each other's classrooms has been effective in helping colleagues improve through constructive feedback, and by providing appropriate professional development where needed. The school has already identified the issues raised in this inspection, and is acting to address them. For example, boys are being helped to catch up with girls through a redesigned curriculum that is generating interest and engagement from both boys and girls. Teachers regularly assess pupils' attainment, and action is taken to address any shortcomings for both individuals and groups. This contributes well to the school's good provision for equal opportunities and combating discrimination, and has underpinned the successful work which is raising boys' attainment. It has led to modifications to the curriculum to ensure good breadth and balance. In Reception, the curriculum makes very good use of the accommodation to provide a good mix of adult-led and child-chosen activities in all areas of learning, both indoors and out. The curriculum strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, resulting in pupils' very good social skills, their strong sense of responsibility, and their respect for other people whatever their background.

Teachers' assessments at the end of each key stage are reliable and accurate, and have been moderated both within the school and by consulting externally. The interim assessments from term to term have not been checked in this way, although plans are underway to do this. The school has recently introduced a computer-based

system that has the potential to increase the speed and efficiency with which issues can be identified. However, most staff have not yet had training on how to use this. The school's good capacity for improvement is shown by accurate self-evaluation, and the maintenance of good achievement and teaching since the last inspection.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earls Barton Infant School, Northampton, NN6 0ND

Thank you for all your help and your friendly welcome when we visited your school. You told us that you enjoy school and that you all get on well together, and we could see that this was true. We were pleased to see that your behaviour is good and that you work hard in lessons. We were particularly impressed by how well the older pupils help to look after Reception children.

Your school is giving you a good education. You are making good progress because your teachers are good at helping you to learn, and you get lots of interesting things to do. Your attendance is good, and this also helps your learning. The boys have not done quite as well as the girls in past years, and the adults are working hard to help them catch up. We have agreed that this is a good thing to focus on. We have also agreed that the teachers will make sure that those of you who find work quite easy always get challenging things to do. We thought that you were very sensible when you discussed your ideas together in class, and we have asked your teachers to give you more chances to do this.

The teachers keep a careful eye on how everyone is getting on, and they make sure that if anyone needs extra help then they get it. They are trying to improve the way they keep track of your progress to help them do this, and we have agreed that this is a good thing to concentrate on.

The adults are good at organising the school and are keen to make it even better. We know you will want to help them, and you can do this by keeping up your good behaviour and hard work, and making sure you tell your teacher if you think some work is too easy.

We hope you continue to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill
Lead inspector

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