

Empingham CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120177
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	358712
Inspection dates	30 November 2010–1 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Markey
Headteacher	Clare Rowbotham
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2007
School address	School Lane Oakham LE15 8PQ
Telephone number	01780 460246
Fax number	01780 460246
Email address	office@empingham.rutland.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed four teachers and saw seven lessons and two intervention groups. Inspectors observed a school assembly and held discussions with staff, groups of pupils and governors. They looked at pupils' books and viewed a wide range of documentation including school policies, curriculum planning, self-evaluation information, improvement planning, safeguarding and welfare arrangements, and records of pupils' progress. Questionnaires returned by 17 parents and carers, 16 pupils and 2 members of staff were analysed. The school was inspected at the same time as its partner school in the federation of Rutland Primary Partners.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils make equally good progress across all year groups.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan learning tasks that challenge and extend pupils of all abilities.
- How well pupils are prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.
- Whether the shared school leadership have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Information about the school

This is a very small primary school. All pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils who leave or join part way through the school year is higher than in most schools. The school is part of a federation, called Rutland Primary Partners, combining with Great Casterton CofE Primary School some 3.5 miles away. The schools have the same headteacher and share a governing body. Pupils from the two schools work together for some activities. The school has received national recognition for its work in several areas and holds the Activemark award for physical education and National Healthy Schools status.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Empingham CofE Primary School provides a good and rapidly improving education for its pupils. The school is justly proud of its inclusive nature and its place at the heart of the local community. It is welcoming and pupils contribute much to the life of the school. They take responsibility readily, behave exceptionally well and are respectful of their peers, adults and visitors. Pupils feel safe and secure. Their enjoyment of school life is reflected in their excellent rates of attendance. For example, almost all pupils attended school on the two days of the inspection despite the very adverse weather conditions. A further strength is the excellent promotion of healthy lifestyles, evidenced in the school's achievement of Healthy School status and the Activemark award. Pupils participate in regular physical exercise and fully understand the importance of diet to health. They take full advantage of the additional activities, sports and clubs provided, many of which arise from the school's very strong links with partner schools and outside agencies. Because pupils of all ages get on very well, the learning atmosphere is very purposeful and harmonious. This is recognised by parents and carers. All who replied to the inspection questionnaire expressed total satisfaction with their children's experience at the school. One, capturing the views of many, said, 'The ethos is one of inclusion. The staff and children all work so well together'.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle happily and adapt quickly to the daily routines and enjoy the range of activities on offer. Their confidence grows and they make particularly good progress in their personal social and emotional development. While progress is good overall, in some areas of learning it is slower because the balance of activities favours adult-led rather than child-initiated learning. Full advantage is not taken of opportunities to extend children's language and thinking skills when they are engaged in independent activities. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average. This represents good progress and is due to mostly good and some outstanding teaching. However, teaching is not consistently good in all aspects and progress is stronger in Key Stage 2. This is because, in some Key Stage 1 lessons, assessment information is not used consistently well to set work that is suitably challenging for all ability levels. Nevertheless, the very effective use of assessment information to check pupils' progress enables well-focused support to be provided where needed. This has a positive impact on standards and is particularly beneficial to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make excellent progress as a result. One notable aspect of the school's highly effective care for individual pupils is the support provided for any who may be in vulnerable circumstances, or who join part way through a key stage, to ensure that they keep up with their classmates.

The continued improvement seen in the school since the last inspection and the success of the federation owe much to the drive and determination of the headteacher. The ambition to strive for high quality in all aspects of the school's provision is shared amongst all staff

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and governors. Effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work provide senior staff with an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result they are able to set the right priorities for improvement. This illustrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate learning and progress in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that effective use is made of assessment information to plan learning tasks that are appropriately challenging for all ability levels.
 - Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing children with a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and those chosen by the children
 - taking full advantage of opportunities to extend children's language and thinking skills during their play.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment is above average and their achievement is good, given their original starting points. Children's skills on entry to Reception are generally in line with expectations for children of their age. Virtually all achieve the age-related expectations by the time they enter Year 1, and many exceed them. Good progress across the school leads to above average standards overall by the end of Year 6, although the results of national tests can vary from year to year because of small numbers and high mobility. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and their excellent behaviour makes a significant contribution to their good achievement. They respond well to interesting and challenging activities and demonstrate the ability to work effectively both independently and collaboratively. This was exemplified in a Year 5 and 6 literacy lesson when pupils worked in pairs to construct a persuasive argument and took pleasure in presenting their viewpoint to others in the class. Vulnerable pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve especially well because close attention is paid to ensuring that support is sharply focused on their identified needs.

Pupils are confident that they can turn to an adult to sort out any concerns. As one pupil said, 'If anyone is upset someone will always help them'. They demonstrate a good awareness of how to avoid risks, for example on the internet or during their journeys to and from school. Pupils contribute well to the school community and speak enthusiastically of their responsibilities, including being on the school council, the eco-team or acting as monitors. Strong spiritual, moral and social development is a feature of pupils' personal development. Cultural development is weaker because pupils have too few opportunities to interact with people from more diverse communities, but plans are well advanced to address this. High attendance and the good progress being made in the acquisition of basic skills ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Excellent relationships characterise all teaching and form the basis of effective class management. The skills of teaching assistants are utilised well to ensure that those pupils who need extra support or guidance are fully engaged in lessons. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to stimulate interest and reinforce learning. In many lessons, assessment information is also used well to guide the planning of learning tasks. In these lessons, rapid progress is made because pupils' enthusiasm for learning is captured and activities proceed at a stimulating pace. This was particularly evident in a Key Stage 2 intervention group, for example, where excellent progress was made in changing the tense of verbs because the teacher continually assessed, probed and extended pupils' understanding. However, in some lessons learning tasks are not always well matched to pupils' different abilities. Consequently, some pupils are given work that is too easy and this slows the progress they make.

A topic-based curriculum, effectively planned in collaboration with the partner school, has been successfully introduced to make more meaningful links between subjects, while providing continuity and progression in learning across the key stages. Intervention groups have recently been introduced to strengthen the development of letters and sounds, support for spelling and guided reading. The effectiveness of this innovation is about to be evaluated. The curriculum is enriched through the school's excellent partnerships with external providers, such as the School Sports Partnership, and the sharing of expertise in

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the partnership. These contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment, as do trips out of school, including residential visits.

Parents and carers rightly say that the school is exceptionally caring. Pupils are very well looked after in this nurturing family community. All adults are very well informed about the needs of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. They monitor their well-being and progress carefully, and intervene sensitively and effectively with very well-judged support when needed. Staff involve parents and carers very successfully in their children's learning. The results of this are seen, for example, in pupils' high attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is led and managed well as shown in the pupils' and parents' very positive responses to the questionnaires. The very clear direction provided for the school, and the Rutland Primary Federation, is strongly driven by the headteacher's ambitious vision for the future which is shared by all staff. At the heart of all initiatives is a determination to further improve teaching and learning. Targets are constantly reviewed to ensure that they are both realistic and challenging and consequently pupils make good progress. Staff benefit from well-planned professional development. Excellent links with external agencies support the individual needs of pupils from a range of backgrounds. This is an essential element of the school's effectiveness in combating discrimination. It also ensures the promotion of equality of opportunity so there are no significant gaps in attainment between any groups of pupils. All are fully included in everything the school has to offer.

Members of the governing body have worked well with other leaders and managers to ensure that safeguarding procedures are of good quality and all staff are well trained in these matters. As a result the school has the full confidence of parents and carers. While governors provide the school with considerable support, their understanding of the school's main strengths and of where improvement is needed, arises from headteacher's reports rather than their own monitoring and evaluation. Staff work exceptionally well with outside agencies, families and carers to help pupils achieve well. The school's promotion of community cohesion within a local context is strong. Through links with a school in Kenya and the school's ecological activities, pupils gain increased understanding of the interdependent nature of the global community. Pupils' understanding of what life is like for others in different social contexts in the United Kingdom is less well-developed and plans are well-advanced to enable pupils to collaborate with those from different backgrounds to strengthen this aspect of pupils' personal development.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Carefully planned induction arrangements, built on excellent links with home, help children to settle quickly. They are happy and secure because of the emphasis placed by all staff on their welfare and safety. By the time they leave Reception, the vast majority of children reach the goals expected nationally and many exceed this level in all areas of their learning. While children enjoy working on a wide range of tasks, both indoors and out, too many of the activities are directed by adults and too few require children to make their own choices. The teaching of letters and sounds receives good attention and children are making good progress in acquiring early writing skills. However, opportunities that arise to further extend children's linguistic skills across all areas of their learning are not always taken. Leadership and management are good and benefit from the close working relationship and the sharing of expertise with staff at the partner school in the Federation. Adults work well as a team and are clearly focused on meeting each child's differing needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

All of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire indicated they are very happy with their children's experience at the school. Typically, one wrote, 'I find the headteacher and all her teaching staff extremely approachable. I cannot praise them enough for what they have done for my child'. They also expressed total satisfaction with safety, the sense of enjoyment, the information they receive on their children's progress and the progress their children are making, the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the leadership of the school. A few respondents felt that the school does not do enough to help them support their children's learning, prepare children well for the future or take account of their suggestions or concerns. Inspection evidence overall, including the responses of the large majority of parents and carers, indicates that these elements of the school's provision are good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Empingham CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 51 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	47	9	53	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	59	7	41	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	65	5	29	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	41	7	41	3	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	35	7	41	3	18	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	59	6	35	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	59	7	41	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	47	6	35	1	6	2	12
The school is led and managed effectively	9	53	7	41	1	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



2 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Empingham CofE Primary School, Oakham, LE15 8PQ

Thank you for the help you gave us with the recent inspection of your school and for the friendly way you received us. We spoke to many of you and you were really helpful. We also want to say how much we enjoyed listening to your excellent singing in assembly.

You receive a good education and reach above average standards at the end of Year 6. You enjoy school, listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and are willing to work hard in your lessons. Your excellent behaviour is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on making your work interesting and helping you to learn. In most of your lessons, you make really good progress and we have asked your teachers to make sure that you are really stretched in all of your lessons, so that you make the best progress you possibly can. Your teachers spend a lot of time marking your work and you can help yourselves to make even more progress by trying hard to follow the advice you are given. Children in Reception are given a good start to their school lives and, to make this even better, we have asked if they can be given more time to work independently.

You understand the importance of being healthy, eating sensibly and taking part in physical activities regularly. Your teachers plan a good range of visits and after-school activities that broaden your experiences. You told us how much you enjoy your topic work and we were impressed by the good quality of the displays of your work around the school. We were also impressed with how you all do so much to help the school, especially those involved in making decisions through the school council and the Eco-team. Adults at school look after you exceptionally well, so that you are safe and happy. Your headteacher, all the other staff and the governing body are determined to make things even better. We think that everyone at Empingham can work together to do this and that you will want to play your part by continuing to working hard.

Yours sincerely

Dr Kenneth Thomas

Lead Inspector

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