

Ecton Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121944
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359127
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting 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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	504
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Usher
Headteacher	Julia Kedwards
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors, who observed 20 lessons taught by 14 different teachers. Inspectors scrutinised policies, analysed pupils' work, checked information on their progress and talked to them about it. The team also analysed school improvement plans and minutes of meetings held by the governing body, and held meetings with parents and carers and with members of the governing body. Questionnaire returns were analysed from 118 parents and carers. Pupil and staff questionnaires were also taken into consideration.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How effective are the initiatives to improve writing standards across the school?
- How effectively does the curriculum meet the needs of all groups of pupils, but particularly the more-able pupils?
- How effectively is the pupil tracking system used to set clear targets for learning, so that it accelerates the progress of all pupils?
- How effectively are leaders and managers at all levels contributing to the drive for sustained improvement, especially in teaching?

Information about the school

Ecton Brook is much larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly above average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly below average, but a slightly above average proportion speak English as an additional language. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A high number of pupils either leave or join the school part way through their primary school education. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in a Reception class. There is a pre-school nursery on site, which is managed by a private provider. The children's centre is managed by the school leadership team and the governing body. These provisions are inspected and reported upon separately.

The school merged with Bellinge Primary School, which was in special measures and closed in December 2010. Since January 2010 pupils have continued to be taught separately on both sites, under one executive headteacher who spends half of the week at each school. She has restructured the leadership team so that there are two deputy headteachers on the Ecton Brook site and one deputy on the Bellinge site.

Since the merger there has been a high turnover of teaching staff, a number of whom were appointed in January and September 2010. The school holds national Healthy Schools status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Inclusion Quality Mark, Arts mark, International Schools Bronze Award, ICT Mark and Eco Schools Award.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Ecton Brook is a satisfactory and improving school. Good leadership, under the direction of the executive headteacher, has eradicated previously unsatisfactory teaching. Staff on both sites are committed to raising standards. Parents and carers are generally happy with the education their children receive and have noted the improvements since the merger of the two schools. As one parent commented, 'I have seen a significant change in the school since the merger. The children have more opportunities to increase their learning. The management team has a passion for its staff, governors and pupils.' These improvements have been managed well against a background of significant changes in staffing and the significant number of pupils who join or leave the school part way through the year.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, as a result of teaching that is satisfactory but variable. Attainment is broadly average. Children make good progress from low starting points in the Reception class, where a clear focus on communication, language and literacy is having a positive impact on key skills from an early age. Progress is satisfactory for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Some good teaching for older pupils and those in Year 2 is helping to overcome the legacy of underachievement on the Bellinge site, where attainment has risen significantly in a short space of time. However, the pace of learning slows when teachers do not use assessment information well enough to ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' different abilities. This has led to a lack of sufficient challenge, particularly for higher ability pupils. Teachers acknowledge pupils' achievements through oral feedback, but do not always use questioning effectively enough to challenge pupils' thinking and provide them with clear guidance about how to improve their work and achieve their learning targets.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school on both sites. Their positive attitudes and good social skills ensure a productive, safe learning environment in lessons. Improved attendance and rapidly improving key skills mean that they are adequately prepared for the future. Caring and supportive staff ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed. Strong links with parents and carers and effective use of a range of support agencies mean that pupils with specific needs, including the most vulnerable, make progress in line with their classmates.

Good leadership and management are evident in the rapid improvements in teaching, the significant rise in standards on the Bellinge site, and the school's rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. This is giving the school a good capacity to improve further. The initiative to improve writing across the school is having a positive impact on standards and achievement, but pupils, at both sites do not yet have sufficient opportunities to undertake extended writing tasks or to refine their writing.

School leaders and the effective governing body have helped to create a cohesive school community in a short space of time, with a strong sense of its place in the local

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community. However, pupils do not yet have sufficient understanding of faiths and cultures further afield in Britain and the wider world.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of writing across the school, particularly for the more-able pupils, by:
 - giving pupils regular, planned opportunities to undertake longer writing tasks
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to refine their writing.
 - Raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that by July 2011 the majority of lessons are good or better, by:
 - matching activities accurately to pupils' abilities, particularly to challenge the more-able pupils
 - ensuring that marking consistently shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work and achieve their learning targets
 - increasing the pace of lessons to accelerate pupils' progress
 - using questioning more effectively to challenge pupils' thinking to help them to accelerate their progress.
 - Increase pupils' awareness and appreciation of the life and culture of Britain beyond their own community and in the wider world.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In the lessons observed, pupils of all backgrounds and abilities were typically making satisfactory progress. The school's own data and the work seen during the inspection show that standards in reading and writing are currently higher than they were in 2009. Writing has improved strongly following the good impact of intervention strategies and effective teaching, particularly in Year 2 and upper Key Stage 2. Current standards in mathematics have also improved after a dip last year, and more pupils are on track to meet the challenging targets set for them. Pupils' progress in the final year of school has been good overall, with more pupils reaching the challenging targets set for them. In one effective example seen, the Year 5 teacher created a dramatic role play situation and asked pupils a good range of questions to assess their understanding and extend their learning. This ensured that all pupils were sufficiently challenged and engaged throughout the lesson. As yet, not enough lessons are so stimulating or feature such good use of assessment to stretch pupils in their learning.

Pupils from a variety of backgrounds get on well with each other in the classroom and at play. This produces a harmonious community and the good behaviour in lessons is contributing to pupils' improvements in their learning. A strong social and moral ethos pervades the school and is a key strength which helps to make social, moral, spiritual and cultural development good overall. Pupils respond sensitively to art and music and

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appreciate the wonder of the world. They have a strong sense of fair play and readily abide by school rules. Pupils' cultural development is sound, but their awareness of the cultural diversity in Britain and on the wider global stage is a relative weakness.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and know how to lead healthy lifestyles, as reflected in the school's various awards. They know who to turn to if they have concerns and enjoy participating in sporting activities and exercise in lessons and after school. Pupils contribute well to the school community, for example as school councillors, and they readily raise money for the range of charities that they and the school select.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

Common strengths in lessons include teachers setting activities which capture pupils' interests and the positive relationships between staff and pupils. Teaching assistants provide good support for groups and individuals, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. There is a strong emphasis on teaching the basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy. This has led to the school gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark. However, the use of assessment information to plan work is not always as effective as it should be in ensuring the right level of challenge for different ability groups, particularly the most able pupils.

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A key strength of the good curriculum is the large number of visits that pupils make and the way that the school uses outside expertise to enrich the pupils' experiences. Good examples of this are the Northampton Music Service wider opportunity scheme to provide samba lessons and the quality of the school's art and drama, which have led to it receiving the Artsmark award. In the curriculum there are links across different subjects. This helps teachers to engage pupils, establish links in their learning and enhance their progress. The school has gained the information and communication technology (ICT) Mark because of pupils' proficiency in the subject.

The good care, guidance and support that pupils receive effectively promote their personal development and well-being and ensure that the school is inclusive. Pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable receive special help through the caring and sensitive support of teachers and teaching assistants and effective links with outside agencies. The work of the school in these areas has resulted in the award of the Inclusion Mark.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher the senior leaders and members of the governing body have made a significant impact in all aspects of provision and outcomes in a short space of time, and have secured the confidence and trust of the staff on both campuses in the drive to improve standards of attainment and progress for all pupils, regardless of their ability or background. Regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, which have been shared with staff. This has raised teachers' expectations for all pupils and is leading to a raising of standards and accelerating progress, but there is not yet consistency of practice across the school and therefore equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The school knows itself well and accurate self-evaluation pinpoints clear priorities, leading to effective action for improvement.

The governing body is fully involved and very well informed about the workings of the school. It is supportive but not afraid to challenge, and helps to set the strategic direction of the school. It has been instrumental in raising pupils' attendance, and has ensured that good safeguarding policies, procedures and practice keep pupils safe at all times in school.

The school is a cohesive community with a strong sense of its place in the local community. Pupils' understanding of a culturally diverse Britain and the wider world is less well developed. The school has developed good links with parents and carers and outside agencies to effectively support children in their learning and to provide the care and

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guidance they need. A good example is the introduction of learning conferences, which involve parents and carers, staff and pupils and help parents and carers to be well informed about their child's progress. The school is rigorous in linking with a variety of agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage the communication skills of many pupils are limited, but they make good progress in their language development. This is because induction procedures are good, teaching is matched well to children's ability levels, and the staff have an astute understanding of their individual needs. Children's personal development is fostered particularly well and as a result they quickly learn school routines, cooperate well with adults and other children, and behave well.

The teaching is lively and captures children's imagination. Children find learning fun. In one example, they sang songs that they had learned from their teacher merrily, while carrying out their self-chosen tasks. Adults provide well-judged support for children's learning, knowing when to intervene to accelerate learning and when to stand back and allow children to sort things out for themselves. Very occasionally, adults keep children sitting for too long during introductory sessions, and this causes them to become restless. A rich curriculum covers all the areas of learning effectively for children of this age. They have ample opportunity to use the outside environment to foster their learning. Highly supportive relationships between adults and children help to raise children's confidence and self-esteem. The quality of care, guidance and support is exemplary. The staff pursue the interests of all children rigorously, particularly the most vulnerable. The good links with the children's centre on site smooth entry into the Reception class. The leadership

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and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Teamwork is promoted strongly and staff have consistently high expectations of the children in their care.

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

Views of parents and carers

The views of parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive. They feel that their children enjoy coming to school and that it is a safe place. A very few parents and carers feel that the school does not keep them well enough informed about their child's progress and that pupils' behaviour is not good in school. Inspectors judged that the school does regularly inform parents about their child/children's progress and that behaviour is generally good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ecton Brook 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 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 504 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	60	46	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	59	47	40	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	58	49	54	46	6	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	53	54	46	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	54	53	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	55	52	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	46	62	53	1	1	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)	53	45	59	50	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	50	55	47	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	41	59	50	6	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	36	64	54	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	57	51	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	62	43	36	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



8 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ecton Brook Primary School, Northampton, NN3 5DY

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for your friendly welcome. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you, looking at your work and visiting your lessons. We would also like to say thank you to the groups of pupils who had discussions with us and the pupils in Years 3 to 6 who completed the inspection questionnaire.

You told us that your lessons have become more interesting and this is helping you to learn. We agree. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

Most of you are making satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but some of you are making good progress, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6.

The headteacher, staff and governing body work hard to make sure you are safe and well looked after.

You know how to stay safe and keep yourselves healthy. Some of you told us how much you enjoy the different clubs, especially the choir, art and football.

In lessons and around school, you behave well. You are polite and kind to each other.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and the governors to do the following to improve the school further:

- make better use of assessment information so that lessons help all of you to make more progress in reading, writing, mathematics, and teachers always show you clearly how to improve your work
- ensure that those of you who can learn quickly are challenged in lessons to really aim high
- help you to improve the quality of your writing skills by giving you more opportunities to complete longer writing tasks and to refine your work
- ensure that you have a thorough understanding of life in Britain beyond your immediate community, and in the wider world.

You can help by continuing to do your best at all times. Thank you once again for making us feel so welcome. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards

Lead inspector

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