

# Earls Barton Junior School

Broad Street, Earls Barton, Northampton, NN6 0ND

## Inspection dates

15–16 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Some pupils' rates of progress are too slow, particularly in writing. The school's attempts to speed up progress have yet to result in good achievement.
- There is not enough consistently good teaching. Teachers do not always plan work matched to the needs of all the pupils in each class.
- Sometimes teachers concentrate too much on the activities to be taught rather than what pupils are to learn.
- Some pupils lack skills in planning work and thinking for themselves.
- Teachers do not always ask pupils sufficiently searching questions.
- Systems used for tracking pupils' progress do not provide clear information.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning is not fully checked by leaders, managers and governors.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is driving change, and teaching and achievement are steadily improving.
- Pupils make consistently good progress in reading in all year groups. Weaknesses in pupils' writing are being addressed.
- Teaching in mathematics is good because pupils are given demanding problems to solve.
- Pupils are keen to learn and behave well. They feel safe and are well cared for.
- Attendance rates are above average.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed teaching in 20 lessons. They were accompanied by the headteacher during three of these.
- They looked at the work in pupils' books, listened to a sample of pupils read in Year 6, and held discussions with pupils about their learning and experience of school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior members of staff, teaching assistants and two members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of 17 members of staff who completed questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, local authority evaluation reports, the school development plan, safeguarding checks and data about pupils' progress.
- They took account of 17 responses to the online Parent View survey. They supplemented information from this sample through scrutiny of a recent survey of parents' opinion organised by the school.

## Inspection team

Mike Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Edgar Hastings

Additional Inspector

Kathryn Skan

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Earls Barton Junior is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British and all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has been in post since 2011.
- There is on-site childcare provided by Nene Lakes Children's Centre. This is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, make teaching and achievement consistently good or better, especially in writing, by making sure that teachers:
  - set work at the right levels for pupils of different abilities so that they are made to think hard throughout each lesson
  - focus sharply on what pupils should be learning, rather than just the activities to be completed
  - routinely encourage pupils to think more for themselves and develop skills in planning how they are to tackle and set out their own work
  - question pupils carefully in order to extend their learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - systems for tracking pupils' progress are fine-tuned so that the information produced gives a clear and accurate picture of achievement within each year group
  - records of lessons observations and key documents, such as the school's self evaluation, are sharply focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not all pupils have made the progress of which they are capable during the last two years. The school is successfully turning this situation around and, overall, most pupils are now making progress at expected rates. Within this improving picture, there remain a few pockets of underachievement. These are in the current Year 4 and Year 5 classes in writing, and in Year 5 in mathematics.
- Following a sharp drop in 2011, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics rose in 2012. However, this improvement was matched by a similar increase nationally so standards remain broadly in line with the national average.
- The work in pupils' books shows that previous gaps in pupils' skills are closing. In writing, for example, the work produced by pupils in Year 3 shows good development of handwriting and improved punctuation. Activities such as the 'five minute write', introduced by the deputy headteacher, are effective in helping pupils regularly to practise and develop their skills.
- In mathematics, regular use of problem solving and investigations helps pupils extend their thinking and develop adequate skills in reasoning. In Year 6, for example, pupils used their skills in reading and measuring effectively as they followed instructions to draw and cut out a variety of shapes.
- Pupils' skills in reading are mostly developed well. In all classes, pupils use their skills effectively to help unlock learning in other subjects. By Year 6, the more able read with expression and understanding. However, some of the weaker readers sampled had fragile knowledge of phonics (the sounds made by letters) and struggled to read fluently. In some instances this situation was worsened when the books that they chose to read are too difficult.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of their classmates. In many instances the good quality, sensitive support provided by the skilled assistants enables these pupils to stay focused on their work throughout lessons.
- The school is making effective use of the pupil premium to pay for additional support and to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all activities provided. The pupils eligible for this funding develop their skills, knowledge and understanding at similar rates to their classmates.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good in all classes over time and does not have a constantly positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are not always given work that is demanding enough to extend their learning and, at times, teaching is too directed and does not allow them enough freedom to think for themselves, such as how to set out their work.
- In some lessons, and particularly in writing, teachers focus more on ensuring that pupils complete a task rather than developing their learning. This means that pupils do not have a clear understanding of the skills that they need to use to complete their work successfully.
- Teaching in mathematics is good. It is better than in writing because tasks are most often pitched at suitably challenging levels for all pupils and require different degrees of skills for the successful completion of work.
- Teachers make good use of technology to improve learning. For example, in a Year 4 design and technology lesson, the teacher's use of the electronic whiteboard helped illustrate how levers work. In a Year 5 French lesson, pupils were able to improve their pronunciation by listening to, and copying recordings of the accents of French speakers.
- Teachers generally use questioning well to determine how much pupils are learning. However, teachers are too often happy to accept answers provided by pupils and miss opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding and get them thinking through follow-up questions.
- Consistent strengths in teaching include the good relationships between teachers and their

pupils, and teachers' management of pupils. In all classes, teachers ensure that there are clear routines, such as the way in which pupils are expected to respond when teachers call them to attention. These help ensure that lesson time is not wasted.

- There is generally a high degree of consistency in teachers' marking of pupils' work. Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and provide detailed comments explaining how work could be improved. However, there is limited evidence that pupils have taken on board teachers' comments, such as by responding to them in writing.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

**are good**

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their views about the ways in which the school cares for their children and keeps them safe. The school warmly welcomes all pupils and values them equally. Pupils agree.
- The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe, such as through the 'Kick smoking into touch' focus that took place in Year 6 during the inspection. Pupils know how to behave safely as, for example, when using scissors in lessons. They also have a good understanding of how to use the internet safely.
- Staff and parents believe that the school manages behaviour well. Typically, pupils get on well with each other. They behave consistently well in lessons and around the school. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are infrequent. Last year there was one fixed-term exclusion resulting from poor behaviour. Pupils confirm that instances of bullying of any type are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.
- Pupils' social development is a strength of the school. Pupils take on positions of responsibility, such as house captains and vice captains. Meal times and play times are well supervised and provide a safe environment in which pupils develop their social skills. The school council is active in many ways. For example, it chooses the charities that the school will support and helps organise fundraising activities.
- Pupils' achievements both in and out of school are regularly celebrated. Class assemblies give pupils the confidence to perform for an audience.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and concentrate well on the tasks set for them. They treat books and equipment with respect.
- Attendance rates are consistently above the national average and pupils arrive on time.

### **The leadership and management**

**requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching, although improving, is not yet consistently good and pupils' progress is uneven.
- The enthusiasm, drive and determination of the headteacher have brought about recent school improvement. The weekly informative newsletters are just one example of the way in which she effectively communicates the school's vision to parents.
- Staff work well as a team and ensure equality of opportunity by providing similar experiences for pupils in parallel classes within year groups. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Steps taken to raise attainment in writing are beginning to take effect as pupils apply their writing skills in tasks that have real relevance, such as applications for responsible jobs within the school.
- Teachers receive the training they need to improve, based on what leaders have observed them doing in classrooms. Teachers spoke positively to inspectors about the way in which their performance is managed.
- The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching and records her observations in great detail. However, these records provide too little evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- The school's written evaluation of its own effectiveness requires improvement. It is largely descriptive and makes no clear overall judgements about the impact of the school's actions on

achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety or leadership and management.

- The data provided by teachers' insecure checks on pupils' attainment in previous years are unreliable. The school has placed a clear focus on improving the accuracy of these checks, and for the past nine months has achieved a good deal of consistency. This initiative has included working in partnership with the adjacent infant school to agree and moderate the pupils writing standards.
- Although staff know the pupils well, the data provided for inspectors about pupils' progress lacked clarity. The summaries of attainment and progress produced by the headteacher do not provide sufficient detail to enable progress to be tracked with precision.
- The school provides pupils with regular, exciting first-hand learning opportunities, such as the cooking and art experiences for Year 3 pupils during a recent visit to Piddington Roman Villa. Good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and develop their social skills are regularly provided, such as through a whole-school problem-solving event.
- The school fosters good relations with parents and outside agencies. It makes good use of the support and advice provided by the educational psychology service for pupils with severe learning difficulties and regularly consults with parents and listens to their views. For example, the school responded to feedback from parents about the timing of class assemblies by altering the starting times so that working parents would find it easier to attend.
- The local authority has provided only 'light-touch' support for the school since the previous inspection. Its most recent impact has been seen in the good advice and support provided during a review of staffing. It regularly monitors the effectiveness of the school through termly visits and, as a result of its most recent monitoring judged that the overall effectiveness of the school required improvement. This reflects the inspection outcomes.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Particularly noteworthy is its effectiveness in broadening pupils' awareness of other cultures.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well informed about activities taking place in school. It is aware of the national data about the performance of the school, but does not have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. It is effective in ensuring that the school fulfils its legal responsibilities, including those for safeguarding. Members of the governing body are appropriately trained to keep pupils safe and free from harm. The governing body is well informed about the procedures for managing staff performance and ensures that the highest paid teachers are among the most effective. It ensures that finances are managed effectively and makes good use of pupil premium funding to help close gaps in pupils' achievement and support families through the employment of a parent-link worker.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121817
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	403479

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	275
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Dabrowski
<b>Headteacher</b>	Allyson Watkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 810371
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