

Eckington Junior School

School Street, Eckington, Sheffield, S21 4FL

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils achieve well. Too few pupils make good progress from their above average starting points. There are gaps in attainment in favour of girls, although boys and girls make broadly similar rates of progress.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills consistently well across the school. Opportunities are sometimes not taken to reinforce pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Teaching requires improvement. In lower Key Stage 2, teachers do not always have high expectations for pupils' progress, including that of the most able.
- Not all teachers plan activities which enable pupils to learn systematically and quickly. Teachers do not always work closely with teaching assistants to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Not all teachers question pupils well to check their understanding and to move learning on.
- Leaders have not ensured that the checks they make on pupils' attainment at the start of Year 3 are rigorous enough to direct teaching for this year group.
- Leaders have not checked robustly the impact of some recent programmes they are using to accelerate the progress of vulnerable groups.
- The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders await clear definition pending the completion of the current restructuring process.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and governors, building on the foundations laid by the third executive headteacher, have worked successfully to strengthen the school's capacity to drive improvement. The outcomes are evident in rising attainment in Year 6. Rates of progress are improving.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from good teaching in Years 5 and 6.
- The school fosters pupils' understanding of British values successfully.
- Pupils behave well in all areas of the school.
- Effective safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching through visits to classrooms to check on pupils’ learning. On two of these visits they were accompanied by the headteacher.
- Some pupils were heard reading. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, a group of pupils, two members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 questionnaires completed by staff, the 21 responses made by parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), and parents’ responses to the school’s own recent questionnaire. An inspector spoke informally to some parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence including: monitoring records; consultants’ reports; the school improvement plan; the school’s own data on pupils’ attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Charles Hart

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher who led the school at the time of the previous inspection left the school in August 2012. Between September 2012 and October 2014 the school was led by an acting headteacher. Three executive headteachers, in turn, supported leadership for part of this time.
- A new headteacher took up post in November 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4, and thereby improve progress and attainment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - adopt a consistent approach to teaching reading skills
 - give pupils activities that consistently challenge them so that they build systematically and quickly on what they have already learned and can do
 - have high expectations for the progress of all pupils, including the most able
 - use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and extend their learning
 - work closely with teaching assistants to plan pupils' learning.
- Raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that all teachers provide pupils with:
 - good models for handwriting and neat presentation, and step in quickly to rectify spelling errors
 - more practice to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics
 - purposeful activities to reinforce their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that senior leaders:
 - complete the restructuring of senior leadership quickly and monitor the impact of the new arrangements on the school's performance
 - work closely with the feeder infant school to ensure that the checks the school carries out to determine pupils' starting points in Year 3 are robust and accurate
 - check closely on the impact of new support programmes and use their findings effectively to close all gaps in pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since September 2012, leadership has not ensured that pupils achieve well. The school has faced considerable difficulties in recruiting the highly able headteacher the governors wanted to match their ambitions for the school. Before the appointment of the new headteacher, the school explored various options to strengthen leadership. Until the arrival of the third executive headteacher in September 2014, the school largely 'ticked over' rather than moved forward purposefully.
- The new headteacher is restructuring senior and middle leadership to provide the school with stronger long-term direction. Some of the well-considered actions he has taken, for example to adjust support programmes to enable vulnerable groups to make good progress, have yet to demonstrate impact on pupils' achievement. However, the school has worked successfully to review its assessment systems. It has developed its preferred approach to assessment following withdrawal of National Curriculum levels and is on its way to implementing this fully.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders has been too variable. They have not ensured that the school's curriculum is planned well enough in Years 3 and 4 to ensure that all activities promote pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are too few good opportunities in all year groups for pupils to reinforce their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The school ensures that there is no discrimination, for example by making sure that pupils who need extra help to develop their social skills are identified quickly. They are effectively supported by strategies, such as positive play therapy. However, the school recognises that it must do more to ensure equal opportunities through raising the attainment of boys and enabling more pupils to achieve the higher levels.
- The new headteacher has strengthened the school's capacity for sustained improvement. He has a clear, accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has taken swift action to improve the impact of teaching on standards. He has, for example, increased the rigour of arrangements for managing staff's performance, adjusted the timetable and re-allocated staff. The headteacher has strengthened safeguarding arrangements and laid the groundwork for effective transition procedures with the feeder infant school for September 2015. He has quickly gained the respect and confidence of pupils, parents and staff.
- Leaders know where support is needed to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve consistently well in all year groups. They have recently adjusted provision, following an external review, to improve rates of progress. However, the school has not reviewed the impact of new interventions, aimed at accelerating the progress of all vulnerable groups.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The new Eckington Explorers scheme has been well received by pupils and, increasingly, they are identifying with its values which include aspiration, initiative, collaboration and effort. Pupils benefit from wide-ranging opportunities to become acquainted with old and modern painters.
- Pupils are taught well about British values, for example the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect. During the school's British Values week in November 2014, pupils held mock investigations and trials, involving court procedures; wrote manifestos for parliamentary elections; and conducted a radio broadcast, based on the Declaration of Human Rights. In these and similar ways, pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school has spent the additional sports funding appropriately, for example to increase the range of sporting activities available for pupils and to upskill staff. However, leaders have not analysed the impact of this expenditure on improved performance in physical education activities and the participation of vulnerable groups.
- Leaders carry out all required safeguarding procedures when recruiting staff. The school's very recent

safeguarding audit, conducted in accordance with local authority guidelines, indicates that all statutory requirements are met. The designated safeguarding lead and his assistant have appropriate knowledge of all aspects of safeguarding and ensure staff undertake the required training updates. Leaders ensure that current government guidelines for safeguarding are fully met.

- The local authority has provided the school with useful help and guidance in brokering the effective support of the third executive headteacher, the recent review of provision for pupils eligible for the pupil premium and advice from a mathematics consultant.

■ The governance of the school:

- Much of governors' time in the last three years has been spent exploring different models of school organisation and leadership. Sometimes, the solutions they have pursued have not resulted in the outcomes they desired for the school. Due to vacancies on the governing body, much of its workload has fallen on the shoulders of the able and experienced Chair.
- The governing body has recently reconstituted itself and added expertise to its ranks. Governors have completed an audit of their skills and reorganised their committee structures. They have reviewed their effectiveness and are working closely with the new headteacher to improve the school.
- Governors know where weaknesses in pupils' attainment exist and have allocated resources purposefully to tackle them. Their understanding of how well vulnerable groups are achieving, compared to similar groups nationally, is well informed. Governors can identify some areas where their use of extra government funding has reduced aspects of disadvantage.
- Governors have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching. They are appropriately involved in managing staff's performance, including that of the headteacher. Governors know the actions that are being taken to improve teaching and to raise pupils' achievement. They take suitable steps to ensure any salary increases are merited.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons, the playground, on the field and during assemblies. Recent improvements in teaching in upper Key Stage 2 and the new behaviour policy are raising pupils' aspirations and engagement in their learning.
- Pupils relate well to each other during play and conversations. In lessons, they mostly work hard and low-level disruption is rare. In Year 3, however, pupils are occasionally less productive when their learning is not well guided. In Years 4 to 6 pupils respond well to the teachers' questions, discuss with each other how to improve their work and demonstrate that they can work unaided, with little intervention needed from adults. Pupils form positive relationships with non-teaching staff who lead their sporting activities.
- Assemblies are used well to reinforce key messages and values. Pupils listen respectfully to each other during presentations of work. They are tolerant, and appreciate and welcome individual differences.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school and value the improvements to the site security, including the electric gates and electronic signing-in system for visitors.
- Staff, parents and pupils are equally positive about pupils' well-being in school. There have been no racist incidents and few exclusions in the last two years.
- Pupils are aware of different types of discrimination and are adamant that homophobic bullying or attitudes would not be accepted by their peers or tolerated by staff. They report that name-calling occasionally occurs but that staff deal with this firmly. Pupils in all year groups are regularly taught about e-safety and have a secure understanding of the dangers of cyber-bullying.
- Case studies demonstrate that the school has developed useful links with the local authority's anti-bullying coordinator to help them explore and deal with the causes of the infrequent incidences of bullying.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not ensured that pupils achieve well. The checks staff make on pupils' attainment on entry to Year 3 have not been sufficiently robust to provide sharp direction to teaching for this year group. This has hampered teachers' capacity to enable pupils to build quickly on their above average starting points.
- Teaching in Year 3 is not good enough to surmount this weakness. Teachers do not have high expectations for pupils and sometimes give them work which is too easy. They do not choose tasks or activities carefully enough to ensure pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically. Questions are not used well enough to check pupils' understanding and to move their learning on quickly.
- Class teachers do not always work closely enough with teaching assistants to plan teaching for pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, so that the progress of these pupils is over-reliant on the individual inputs of teaching assistants.
- Across the school, some aspects of writing are taught well. Teachers plan imaginative contexts for pupils' writing. They link topics and events, such as the Aztecs, the history of chocolate and a visit to a chocolate maker carefully together to provide pupils with a wealth of experiences. This stimulates pupils' ideas and encourages them to write lengthy, interesting accounts. Other aspects, such as handwriting, presentation and spelling, are not developed systematically. Mistakes are sometimes not rectified quickly enough.
- Teachers do not follow a consistent approach to teaching reading in Years 3 and 4, so that any shortfalls in pupils' skills, such as reasoning, are not identified and tackled quickly. Opportunities are sometimes missed to discuss texts in depth to promote deeper learning and pupils are not always clear about the purpose of their reading.
- Overall, the teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Pupils are taught effectively how to carry out straightforward calculations. However, opportunities to interpret information and to develop pupils' reasoning skills are sometimes not taken. This restricts pupils' capacity to deal confidently with more challenging operations, such as equivalent fractions or to estimate accurately whether their answers to more complex questions are correct.
- Existing good teaching in Years 5 and 6 has been strengthened by the reassignment of staff, which includes additional adult support. Teachers guide lessons well so that pupils demonstrate to themselves and to each other clear gains in their learning. This helps them to edit their work effectively. Teachers' marking identifies next steps for pupils, although technical errors, such as misspellings are sometimes overlooked. Pupils are expected to respond to teachers' comments and they do so consistently well. Staff plan collaboratively to extend pupils' learning and this has had a considerable impact on raising pupils' attainment in upper Key Stage 2.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the start of Year 3 is above average. In 2012 and 2013, Year 6 pupils' attainment was average. In 2014, Year 6 pupils' attainment rose and nearly all pupils achieved the nationally expected Level 4. However, only an average percentage of pupils achieved the higher Level 5. Too few pupils made good progress from their starting-points.
- Pupils in lower Key Stage 2, and especially in Year 3, do not make fast enough progress. This means that they are not able to work at the more challenging levels which reflect higher standards. Gaps in attainment between girls and boys are evident in all year groups, although rates of progress are broadly similar.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were working two terms ahead of their classmates in mathematics

and one term behind in writing. There was no difference between these groups in reading. Compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were half a term ahead in mathematics and in writing, but there was no difference in reading. Gaps in attainment between these groups vary from year to year across the school and, in common with their classmates, the progress of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement. Overall, gaps in attainment are reducing as a result of the actions taken by senior leaders and governors.

- The most-able pupils are not given consistently good opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding over a sustained period of time. Overall, across the school, their progress requires improvement. In Years 3 and 4, they often work below their capabilities, partly because expectations for their progress are not high enough. However, in Years 5 and 6 pupils mostly respond well to the extra challenges they are given by staff.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in Year 6 achieving Level 4 improved in 2014. Across the school, most of these pupils make the progress expected of them, but few make good progress.
- Standards in Year 6 in mathematics and reading have continued to rise this year. Current Year 6 pupils are already working about half a term above their counterparts last year in these subjects, although fewer gains have been made in writing. Across the school, most pupils are working at, or above, the levels expected for their age. Rates of progress across the school have improved this year.

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

Unique reference number	112542
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	455981

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joy Vickers
Select	Robin Bone
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2011
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