

Earith Primary School

School Road, Earith, Huntingdon PE28 3QB

Inspection dates	13–14 July 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Under the headteacher's outstanding leadership, staff work exceptionally well as a team to bring the best out of pupils.
- The school has improved rapidly over the past year. Parents are fulsome in their praise of the difference the headteacher has made.
- Pupils are nurtured well and flourish in the current culture of high expectations.
- Progress has accelerated and, as a result, pupils are achieving well. In particular, they have made strong progress in writing.
- Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have made particularly good progress. This is due to skilful support to meet their needs.
- Children in the early years make good progress because of the good quality of the provision. Their progress in writing is excellent.
- Pupils' attendance has risen quite considerably and is now above national averages.
- Behaviour has improved markedly. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are proud of their school and their work.
- Pupils enjoy school enormously, and feel safe and well cared for.
- The governing body has developed its role significantly since the previous inspection. It now provides good oversight of the school's work.
- Pupils benefit from a good, rounded education that is very well supplemented by after-school activities, especially sports, visits and visitors.
- The Forest Schools programme is particularly successful in broadening pupils' learning and personal development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils' written work is being held back by their spelling.
- Pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics are not as well developed as other aspects of numeracy.
- The most able pupils are not always challenged well and some have not achieved their full potential.
- Pupils do not routinely respond to teachers' written feedback when work is marked.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:
 - enabling more pupils to spell correctly
 - continuing to involve parents in supporting learning of spellings at home
 - promoting pupils' skills in reasoning in mathematics more effectively
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged in lessons
 - providing opportunities for developing the depth of their learning for the most able pupils now that they have a secure foundation in English and mathematics.

- Develop the quality of marking, feedback and response by:
 - ensuring that, in line with the school's expectations, teachers make sure that pupils respond routinely to their comments for improvement
 - ensuring that teachers provide more time for pupils to peer review ongoing work and to reflect on their own learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has made a significant difference to the speed and drive for change. She has brought stability and a systematic approach to developing all areas of the school. Her excellent leadership is evident in the rapidity with which improvements have been achieved and new developments and initiatives securely embedded.
- There is a culture of high expectations and excellent teamwork. Pupils are clearly at the heart of everything the school does.
- Good systems are now in place to support the school's work. As a result, teaching staff are well informed about the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils they work with. In addition, they have a wide range of support to draw from to help any pupils who are finding work more difficult or those at risk of underachieving.
- Everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities, and regular staff development and training help all to carry out their roles effectively. Feedback from lesson observations, for example, is used well to identify development needs. Coaching, as well as training, is used very effectively to support staff development.
- Subject leaders are developing their roles well, especially in English and mathematics, and the headteacher is poised to develop subject leadership further, especially of foundation subjects.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school since the previous inspection. A variety of subject consultants, for example, have worked with subject leaders to help assess and improve provision.
- The curriculum in place now is broad and balanced and provides a rich range of activities to support learning both in school, during after-school activities and at home. Well-developed activities in art and in design and technology provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and imagination, and contribute effectively to their spiritual and cultural development. Visits and visitors enrich the curriculum well and are welcomed by the pupils.
- The Forest Schools programme is used exceptionally well to promote the personal development and wider skills of pupils across the school, including children in the early years.
- The pupil premium funding is used very effectively and in a wide range of ways to help disadvantaged pupils to achieve as well as they can, for example, play therapy and support to improve pupils' skills in manipulating tools such as pens. The impact of the spending is well evaluated and, if activities are not making a difference, they are no longer funded.
- The sports funding is also used very effectively to provide a wide range of sporting activities to encourage pupils to keep fit and healthy. It is having a positive impact and pupils and parents are pleased with the range of activities that they can try, especially pupils who are not keen on conventional sports such as football.
- Links with parents and the local community have improved immeasurably. Parents cannot praise the headteacher enough for her leadership and how she has turned the school around. Pupils and staff are equally positive about the headteacher's leadership.
- The school's website provides a good range of information for parents. It has nearly all the information that schools are required to publish and the headteacher is adding the small amount of information that is missing.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are actively involved in the school's work. They bring a wide range of expertise and experience to their roles. As a result of their visits to the school and the comprehensive information they receive about its work in the headteacher's reports, governors are very well informed. This adds to governors' ability to ask searching questions about the progress being made with planned improvements, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They make helpful suggestions to guide the school's work and provide a good strategic steer for its future development.
 - Governors have good systems for managing the performance of the headteacher and maintain an overview of the effectiveness of performance management of teachers.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The culture of the school is geared up well to ensuring the safety of pupils. Safeguarding is discussed often by staff and governors. Staff are vigilant and pursue any issues or concerns that arise with rigour with social services. Parents are encouraged to come and talk if they have concerns or need extra help, and the school seeks out and provides additional support as required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Lessons are planned well. As a result, teachers and pupils are clear about what is to be learned during the lesson and the depth of learning required. Planning across the school is well coordinated so that pupils in mixed-age classes do not repeat work and the learning needs of different age groups in the school are well met.
- Teachers and support staff establish good relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils cooperate well with adults and readily respond to instructions. Lessons are calm and orderly, with adults and pupils working with a clear purpose.
- During lessons, teachers question pupils well to probe their understanding and to help identify any misunderstanding. They also target different questions to different groups so that, for example, the most able pupils are asked questions that are more difficult. When pupils' work is marked, teachers often pose useful questions to individuals. However, pupils do not routinely respond to these.
- Teaching makes good use of pair work and teachers encourage pupils to talk through key points in pairs to clarify their understanding. This gives pupils confidence in discussing their work and in putting forward their own ideas.
- Resources are generally well used and often additional resources, such as practical equipment for mathematics, are used to provide extra help for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good use is made of computers and other technology, such as tablets.
- Work is challenging and activities are well thought out so that they allow pupils to develop and practise new skills and help lay a good foundation on which to build further learning. For example, pupils in the Year 5 and 6 class were given a good range of practical activities that built systematically on one another to help them to understand scientific enquiry. This included devising a series of questions in groups to sort the sweets from a bag of assorted ones in the same way that biologists develop and use classification systems. In effect, pupils built a classification key of their own, which they then tested for one another.
- The level of challenge is effectively managed most of the time. This is often done by setting work at three or four different levels. While pupils have some choice as to which of these levels they work at, teachers are very vigilant in making sure that they do not choose ones that are too easy or too hard. The most able pupils are stretched and extended well by the most challenging activities because these make them think hard. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend the most able pupils enough or enable them to think in greater depth.
- Pupils take pride in their work and their work is consistently well presented. There is a strong focus on handwriting skills because these have been neglected in the past and a number of pupils, especially boys, have difficulty with forming clear, legible letters. The school is providing very effective additional support for those who need it to strengthen hand muscles and to develop better control of the small movements (fine motor skills) needed for handwriting.
- Reading is taught well. A systematic approach to teaching pupils how to break words down and how different combinations of letters sound, as well as the sounds that letters make (phonics) means that pupils are reading well. Regular reading sessions, guided by adults, are well organised and enthuse pupils about books and reading. For those who were more reluctant in the past, the current system of rewards for reading provides very good motivation.
- Books show that pupils are given regular time to practise their skills in writing and mathematics, and to apply their growing knowledge and understanding. This helps pupils to consolidate and become secure in their learning.
- Teachers mark work regularly and correct errors, paying particular attention to spellings. They usually provide useful feedback for improvement but this is not as consistent or as in-depth as expected by the school's marking policy. Furthermore, teachers do not ensure that pupils respond to their comments. Oral feedback is regular and precise.
- While some good examples exist in the school, pupils are not given regular enough opportunities to learn by reflecting on how they could make their own work better or by reviewing each other's work, in line with the school's marking and feedback policy.
- Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers. They are clear about their roles and well briefed about their work and who they need to support or observe. Between them, teachers and teaching assistants have a very good understanding of where pupils are in their learning and what they need to work on next.
- The school has established a well-developed and straightforward approach to homework. Spelling has

been a key focus this year for both work in school and at home. This has helped pupils to improve their knowledge of the key words they need to know how to spell. However, the school is aware that there is more to do to improve spelling further, including involving more parents actively.

- Homework includes practical tasks which pupils find fun, for example, making a model of the Parthenon using materials they could find at home. Excellent examples of these models were on display around the school, including one made from pasta and another coated with sand.
- Displays around the school are of high quality and reflect the wide range of work that pupils have completed across the curriculum. Displays in classrooms are well designed to provide useful references or information with ongoing work in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop a wide range of social skills that prepare them well for their next stage in education. They become mature and well-rounded individuals by the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on well with one another and show high levels of respect and tolerance for those who are different. They enjoy learning about different cultures and religious traditions.
- Those from a Gypsy/Roma heritage mix well with others and the school reports that parents of these pupils are becoming increasingly involved in the school and are supportive of their children's education.
- Pupils understand the importance of rules and know how they are expected to behave. They are developing good understanding of democratic processes through elections for school council and the eco-council.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Although pupils have opportunities to reflect and discuss a range of topical issues, they do not always get enough opportunities to reflect on their own work.
- Pupils enjoy school and they enjoy learning. In lessons, they work hard and focus very well on what they have to do. They are also good at working with one another. However, if they are stuck, they do not always ask for help or know what to try that might help them.
- The school has worked hard this year, and successfully, to raise levels of attendance so that these are broadly average. Gaps in absence rates between different groups are now much narrower, but the school is aware that it needs to continue to work with a small minority of pupils and their parents in order to close these gaps.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It has improved considerably since the start of the year, and since the previous inspection. Fixed-term exclusions, which were high, are now rare and only given when behaviour warrants it.
- Pupils play and work together well, showing respect and tolerance of others. Older ones do a good job of looking after those who are younger.
- At lunchtime and break, adults ensure that pupils play safely.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and parents agree. They indicate that bullying is not a problem at the school and that teachers deal with issues when these are brought to their notice. Older pupils recognise that some pupils need extra support to manage their behaviour. This demonstrates very mature understanding of difference and diversity.
- Discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated and pupils know it is wrong to be racist or sexist. Racist or other discriminatory incidents are rare. The curriculum covers the issues of prejudice and discrimination well.
- Safeguarding work is managed effectively to ensure that pupils are safe and that any concerns are properly followed through appropriately.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- The school's care for pupils extends to families and support is readily available to help pupils and parents deal with any difficulties or barriers that they encounter.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- From starting points that are often low, especially in literacy, pupils make good progress. Over the last couple of years, boys joining Year 1 from Reception have started at a much lower level of development than girls in the school and boys nationally.
- This year, progress has been accelerated so that most, if not all, pupils have made up for gaps in their learning resulting from weaknesses in educational provision in the past. Consequently, most pupils have made significant progress. However, pupils' attainment remains a little uneven.
- Pupils in Year 1 improved their scores in the 2016 phonics test compared to last year and more of them met the expected standard than in the previous couple of years. Overall, their performance was good and this is reflected in the understanding of phonics seen in lessons, and their written work as they apply their phonics knowledge to spellings.
- The large majority of pupils at the end of key stage 1 have achieved the expected standard for their ages in reading and mathematics. While the majority have achieved this standard in writing, attainment is a little lower in this area. Nonetheless, from their low starting points at the end of Reception, pupils have made good progress.
- Results of recent tests at the end of Year 6 match national averages overall in mathematics and reading. Results are a little lower in writing due to the weaker spelling of some pupils.
- Year 6 pupils have made significant progress this year to achieve these results. There is a similar picture of good progress across the school, and pupils and teachers have risen well to the greater demands of the new national curriculum to ensure that pupils have good foundations to build on next year. The gaps between boys and girls have been narrowing well too. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including the Gypsy/Roma heritage pupils, have made good strides in their learning as well this year.
- Pupils have made most progress in writing, because this was particularly weak at the start of the year, though spelling remains an issue for some. Much work has been done to help pupils to learn how to spell correctly, and this has enabled pupils to improve. However, the school recognises that there is more to do and strategies put in place this year are set to continue, including keeping it as a focus for homework.
- The content of written work is good, with pupils developing their ideas and improving the way they put sentences together and use paragraphs.
- In mathematics, pupils are getting quicker at solving problems, and the regular practise they have helps them to apply the four rules of number quickly. Older pupils are getting better at deciding what operation to use when solving word problems, for example. However, pupils' reasoning skills are not as well developed as their fluency and problem-solving.
- Targeted adult support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in class, in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, enables them to make secure steps forward. Pupils achieve good results and make good progress. Sharp assessment of needs and early diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia is enabling the right support to be provided quickly by skilled staff.
- The wide range of activities and support for disadvantaged pupils is helping them to catch up with others. Gaps are narrowing between their achievement and the achievement of others in the school and nationally. A number of pupils who are disadvantaged also have other, often complex, needs. The school is very good at addressing the needs of each child and using a wide range of support, including for social and emotional development, to promote progress.
- The most able pupils have made rapid strides this year in closing gaps in learning from the past to reach at least age-related expectations. They have built strong foundations in literacy and numeracy. A number are exceeding age-expected standards already and most are developing deeper thinking and ideas.
- Overall, however, not enough of the most able pupils are yet comfortably exceeding age-related expectations because of the issues in provision in previous years. Because of the need to make up for lost ground in the past and close prior gaps in learning, some have not had enough time to develop their learning in the depth required to fully meet all the requirements to exceed age-related expectations.
- Work in books, especially in 'theme folders' and on display, demonstrates good development and learning across a wide range of subjects. Pupils are learning to code in computing and make good progress in writing short programs by key stage 2. In science, pupils develop good knowledge and understanding as well as effective skills of enquiry.
- Creative work in art and design and technology is underpinned with good development of key skills such as shading and using line and tone effectively.
- Older pupils enjoy learning Spanish and their folders contain interesting work on different time periods, such as the Greeks, as well as different religious traditions in religious education. The work on themes

provides good opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum, which they do regularly. This contributes to the strong progress they are making in their writing.

Early years provision

is good

- When they begin in Reception, children come with a wide range of skills and knowledge, and often a notable number have skills and knowledge that are below age-related expectations, especially in literacy and numeracy, sometimes also in aspects of personal and social development. Some boys in particular have underdeveloped fine motor skills when they join, and find writing especially difficult.
- The current group of children in Reception started at a better level of development than over the previous couple of years. However, their early literacy skills were at a slightly lower level of development.
- The end-of-year assessments for early years this year show that children have exceeded the national averages for last year across all areas of development. Boys and girls, for the first time in the last three years, have achieved equally well.
- The good achievement is a result of good teaching. Children make good progress overall and excellent progress in writing. Most children are producing short sentences on their own and the most able are beginning to write in short paragraphs. This year the school has focused well on developing fine motor skills and this has helped boys to do as well in writing as girls.
- Children's mathematical skills are well developed. Children are adding numbers between 1 and 20 confidently and most are able to subtract correctly. This shows their good level of development in this area of learning.
- The early years area is very well organised. A good range of well-developed activities provides plenty of opportunities for development across all areas of learning. Children are enjoying the current theme of 'The Farm' and this threads through most of the work they do, helping children to link their learning across different areas.
- Because of good questioning and modelling by staff, and well-developed and open-ended activities, children use their initiative and imagination to engage well. Consequently, they gain a lot from the activities provided. For example, in one session, a group of girls used large construction equipment to build a tractor; they thought about seatbelts and how to use the tractor to give rides to others. They made labels and decided how much they would charge for each ride. The activity, therefore, enabled children to develop their social, physical, communication, literacy and mathematical skills all at the same time.
- Adults interact well with children and help to guide them through their learning when they are working on practical activities. Whole-class sessions are planned and managed well so that learning is effective.
- Phonics is well taught and the work is tailored exceptionally well to individuals. The most able children thrive and move very quickly through the phonics programme.
- Children's work is assessed well and their next steps identified and recorded carefully so that adults act on these to move children on quickly through their learning but also to address any gaps that may arise.
- Partnerships with parents are good. The school is developing such partnerships further to involve them more in their children's work and to put in place home visits, starting with the new intake for next year. Work to get these children ready for the move to school has already begun and children at the on-site pre-school have been invited to visit and have lunch at Earith.
- Leadership of early years is strong and has improved significantly this year. The focus on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement has been very effective.

School details

Unique reference number	110737
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10011770

This inspection 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	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Wardell
Headteacher	Sian Pritchard
Telephone number	01487 841868
Website	www.earith.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@earith.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- Earith Primary School is a much smaller school than most. As a result, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There are four classes: a Reception class, a key stage 1 class for pupils in Years 1 and 2, a Year 3 and 4 class, and a Year 5 and 6 class.
- The school has far more boys than girls compared to schools nationally. This is more evident in some year groups than others.
- While the majority of pupils are White British, a notable minority, about 18%, are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is higher than in most schools, and includes a higher than usual proportion of pupils from Gypsy/Roma heritage.
- Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who require special educational needs support is above the national average. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the proportion nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding (additional government funds to support those who are eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has had two interim headteachers. The current headteacher is a permanent appointment and took up post at the start of this academic year.
- Aside from one or two small omissions, which are being addressed, the school meets requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes, sampling teaching and learning in each classroom at least once. Most of these visits were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a local authority representative, subject leaders and a group of governors.
- The inspector spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school, as well as holding discussions that were more formal with a group of pupils.
- The inspector listened to a group of pupils reading to check how well they were developing their reading skills.
- In carrying out the inspection, account was taken of 27 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also spoke with parents as they dropped off their children at school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to an Ofsted questionnaire completed by 14 staff and 17 pupils.
- The inspector observed the work of the school. She looked at the school's improvement plan, a range of policies and procedures, documents relating to the work of the governing body and the arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safeguarded. Documentation reviewed included records of assessment information relating to pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance. The school's website was also examined.

Inspection team

Gulshan Kayembe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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