



Eckington CofE First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116806
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279906
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 8 March 2006
Reporting inspector Lois Furness AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	School Lane
School category	Community		Pershore
Age range of pupils	4 to 10		Worcestershire WR10 3AU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01386 750666
Number on roll	88	Fax number	01386 750666
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Chris Millward

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Eckington Church of England First School is much smaller than most schools. Fewer pupils than usual are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are of White British origin and none speaks English as an additional language. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception is broadly average, but with such small cohorts this can vary considerably year upon year. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be good and inspectors agree. Standards are above average and achievement is good. However, although more able pupils are challenged well in reading, too few of them reach the higher level in writing. Good emphasis is given to developing pupils' narrative skills but the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in other kinds of writing have not, in the past, been as strong. This is now improving. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is good, resulting in these children making good progress. Pupils' personal development is good. Behaviour is exemplary and, as a consequence of good teaching, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. The curriculum is outstanding. It is exciting and innovative, effectively meeting the needs and interests of pupils. All staff cater very well for pupils' pastoral needs so they feel safe in school, but pupils are not always clear about how to make their learning better. Marking does not consistently inform them why their work is good and how it might improve. The school is led and managed well. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is supported effectively by staff and governors. Every child matters and that philosophy is at the heart of the school's work. The school development plan, although satisfactory, does not clearly focus on raising standards. Actions identified are not precise enough to ensure that priorities will be achieved and resource implications are not fully considered. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve standards in writing, particularly of the more able pupils, by ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to write for a range of purposes.
- Ensure the school development plan is focused on how to raise standards, identifying precisely the action needed to achieve priorities whilst taking full account of the resources required.
- Improve the quality of marking so that pupils know clearly what the good features of their work are, and how to make it even better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Good teaching ensures that Reception-age children make good progress. By the time that they enter Year 1, most have reached and some have exceeded the goals expected. By the end of Year 5, when pupils leave, standards are above average. This shows a significant improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Particularly good progress is made in reading, and many pupils reach above-average levels in this subject. However, in writing, throughout the school too few pupils attain the higher levels in comparison with reading. Even though by the end of Year 2, in 2005, writing performance was exceptional, the number of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 3) was lower than that attaining the higher level in

reading and mathematics. The school has recognised that in the past there has been an emphasis on narrative writing and not as much time has been spent on teaching other types of writing. This is now improving but there is still some way to go. There is evidence of girls attaining higher standards than boys in some cohorts but this is related to the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties within the cohort rather than a gender issue. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are vulnerable receive good support, and this helps them to make good progress. The school sets challenging targets, securely based on the assessments made. The targets are usually met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are proud of their school, valuing friends and teachers. They say 'learning is fun' and have excellent attitudes towards their work. Behaviour is exemplary. The strong emphasis given to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to understand the impact their actions have on others, and to know the difference between right and wrong. They show good respect for different beliefs and customs, and appreciate the achievement of others. Attendance is only satisfactory. Too many parents take their children on holiday during term time and the school is working hard to rectify this.

Pupils know the importance of healthy lifestyles. The fact the school has gained the 'Healthy School Award' reflects the significance given to this aspect of provision. Pupils have a secure understanding of keeping safe. Through the school council, pupils are effective in contributing to the day-to-day life of the school. Fund raising for charities and good causes helps pupils to gain a good understanding of wider social issues and an appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the Foundation Stage, the staff work together well and have effective systems in place to observe and assess children. In the rest of the school, teachers' good subject knowledge is used well to plan activities that match the learning needs of pupils. Explanations are clear and, as a result, pupils understand what they are learning and the purpose of the activities. This motivates them very effectively and helps them to achieve well. Teachers have high expectations, both of the standards of pupils' work and of their behaviour. Well-briefed teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or those who are vulnerable. The quality of marking is variable. It is better in some subjects than others, notably in English. Written comments are usually

supportive but they do not consistently make clear to pupils why their work is good and how they might make their work better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning through the exceptional range of experiences and activities provided. They do not think of their learning as work. Very strong links between subjects increase pupils' depth of understanding. For example, termly 'theme weeks', such as multicultural week and days which focus specifically on countries such as those in Africa and India, enliven the curriculum and make pupils better informed. A comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education helps pupils to make healthy choices and develop life skills. Residential visits give good support to these aspects of the curriculum. Enrichment activities such as French, for pupils in Years 4 and 5, prepare them well for when they attend the middle school. There is good provision for basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Opportunities for improving writing skills are now good but it is something that the school should continue to persevere with and monitor carefully to ensure that standards continue to rise. In addition, over three-quarters of pupils take part in an impressive range of out-of-class clubs and sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good level of care and support given to pupils makes a significant contribution to their enjoyment of school and eagerness to learn. Very good relationships mean that pupils throughout the school are confident to approach adults with any problem. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are very effective. Pupils work in a safe environment and rigorous risk assessments are made before pupils go on visits. The school's focus on promoting healthy lifestyles effectively shapes pupils' attitudes to health, including the importance of healthy diets and physical activities. As there is no school meals service, the school has introduced a healthy lunchbox initiative discouraging fizzy drinks, chocolate and some snacks.

In class, pupils receive much encouragement and ongoing support. Good systems are in place for checking pupils' progress and information from on-going assessment is used well to set targets for pupils. However, pupils are not sufficiently well informed about how they might improve their work. The support for pupils with learning difficulties is effective, as is that for those identified as gifted and talented. Good personal support is given to pupils considered to be vulnerable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is fully committed to ensuring pupils' progress and well-being. There is a clear

sense of purpose amongst all staff, who share the headteacher's vision for the school. Governors are an important part of the team. They have a good appreciation of the school's strengths and potential for development. They are effective in their role as 'critical friend'.

Although self-evaluation is thorough, the school development plan does not reflect the work the school is doing, for example, raising standards in writing. Furthermore, how the school is going to achieve its priorities is not clearly identified and the implications for resources, including financial resources, are not fully considered. Whilst inspectors agree with the school's overall judgement of its effectiveness as good, the leadership and guidance offered by the school are judged to be good rather than outstanding.

The school actively seeks and values the views of pupils and parents and acts on them to improve its provision, for example, by changing the way homework is organised. There are good links with other organisations. These include working closely with partner schools on particular aspects of learning such as assessment issues. Good use is made of all the school's resources to promote effective learning. The capacity to improve is clearly demonstrated in the good improvement made since the last inspection in the improved standards in English and mathematics and the role of the subject leader.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us into your school, being so friendly and polite to us, and talking to us about your learning and the things that you do. We understand why you are so proud of your school.

These are some of the things we especially liked

- Your behaviour is excellent. You work very hard for your teachers and they do their best to help you to learn.
- There are clearly lots of interesting things to do at your school, which means you find learning fun. We were very pleased to see how many opportunities you have to take part in clubs and activities after school. You all say how much you enjoy them.
- You are well looked after in school. Many of you told us how much you liked your friends and the adults in it.
- Your headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and governors are all working hard to make your school a good place to be.

We think these things should be worked on next

- We have asked your teachers to help you to become better at writing by giving you lots of opportunities to learn about all the different kinds of writing.
- We have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure they plan very carefully what they need to do to help you to reach even higher standards in your work.
- When teachers mark your work we have suggested they show you more clearly why your work is good and how you might make it better.

Thank you again for the warm welcome you gave us and for helping us with our work.