

Eckington Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112542
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number	302497
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Cook HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	197
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms Linda Coulson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Street Eckington Derbyshire S21 4FL
Telephone number	01246 432549
Fax number	01246 436442

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

In September 2005 the school was inspected and was judged to need special measures because it was failing to give children an acceptable standard of education. Since then the school has received regular monitoring inspection visits. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2006. An acting headteacher, who was in post from November 2006 to March 2007, has since been appointed as the new headteacher to take up post in September.

Children start school in Year 3 having attained broadly average standards. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties, disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs are all broadly average. Most children are White British and a much lower than average percentage are from minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school has improved and, because it has good capacity to do even better, continues to do so. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Since the last inspection the school has faced some tough challenges. Good leadership and management have ensured that teaching is now helping children effectively to make satisfactory progress. Already there are many good features throughout the school, including lessons where teaching is good and children make good progress because they enjoy their learning and are encouraged to do well. Children confidently talk about the progress they are making and the targets they have to reach. This is just one indication of the children's good personal development and well-being. In an assembly that took place during the inspection the children enthusiastically sang 'What have you done today to make you feel proud. It's never too late to try'. These words sum up the optimism that has been breathed into the school through the exceptional work of an acting headteacher, who joined the school for a short while and who will be taking up the full time post of headteacher in September. Having said this, the improvements that have taken place have come about because of the sustained effective leadership deployed by the current acting headteacher and because all other staff have ably risen to the challenge of higher expectations.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching that takes place but not enough to ensure all children make good progress. Work given to children often matches their differing abilities although this is not always the case for the more able. The focus on raising standards to at least average has meant that less work has been done on increasing the proportion of children reaching above average standards. The curriculum is satisfactory and is improving because the school recognises that it needs to make learning interesting and exciting. The school has satisfactory systems and procedures in place to ensure children are safe.

The deputy headteacher is currently acting headteacher and has led the school well, making sure that the school continues to improve. The significant improvements made to the way the school monitors and evaluates teaching and learning has led to an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Leadership and management of some subject areas has improved because of the very good guidance subject leaders have been given. However, although the guidance details how to do some evaluative tasks there is not yet a detailed job description that outlines the range of responsibilities and expectations for the subject leader role.

The chair of governors has been outstanding in the way she has supported the school and has also been willing to challenge and take difficult decisions. Governors are very well informed about the effectiveness of the school and have played a key role in bringing about improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of children who achieve above average standards.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching in all subjects in order to accelerate children's progress.
- Further develop the role of the subject co-ordinator by setting out clear expectations for the range of responsibilities undertaken.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From an average starting point children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress. In the past the amount of progress children made by the time they reached Year 6 was inadequate and standards were below average. Now progress is satisfactory, and at times good in some year groups, standards are improving. Based on good assessments the school predicts that the proportion of Year 6 children achieving average standards will rise and those reaching above average standards fall this year. This would confirm a general picture that there are not enough children reaching above average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children enjoy school. They are keen to talk about what they are doing and recent changes that have happened in school which they are very positive about. Children's behaviour is generally good. Children are encouraged to show responsibility, and in many lessons they demonstrate very good collaborative skills. Their moral and social development is good, whereas their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Children know all about keeping healthy and healthy eating initiatives have been supported by the school council. Good health is promoted through regular physical education lessons, swimming and through the effective use of playground space, where skipping and a range of other activities have attracted large and enthusiastic followings. Lunchtime supervisors encourage positive play to good effect.

Children are pleased that they have been encouraged to support fund raising activities, such as Red Nose Day, but there is room to expand their involvement with the local community. The improvements in teaching children computer skills have contributed to them having a satisfactory chance to do well when they move on to their next school. The school is working hard to promote better attendance, which is broadly satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features. At the time of the last inspection in September 2005 the quality of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers now typically plan their lessons well with activities generally matched to the different ability groups. These activities motivate and challenge the vast majority of children.

The focus of many lessons is increasingly based on the interests and needs of the children. A direct result of this approach is that children's attitudes and behaviour in lessons are often good and they participate enthusiastically which has a positive impact on their development. They particularly enjoy practical lessons which allow them to develop their creativity and learn new skills, in subjects where they feel they are learning new things and making good progress.

They respond well to challenge and want to do well, rising to meet teachers' increasingly high expectations.

Teachers are supported well in their work by the classroom assistants who are playing a significant role in contributing to the overall effectiveness of the lesson and the children's learning, particularly those requiring extra support. There are a number of reasons why not all lessons are as effective as they might be. These include not always allowing sufficient time in lessons for children to complete all the work set; not always being explicit enough about what the children will learn; a lack of challenge for some children and some inaccurate assessment of the standard of children's work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its curriculum and focused on introducing increased opportunities for creativity to enrich children's learning. This approach is bringing success which can be seen in the children's enthusiasm for school. However, the school recognises that this approach still needs time to develop fully and become an integral part of the children's daily life.

Since the last inspection the school has increased the frequency and variety of trips and residential visits made by children, which is making learning more interesting. The number, range and availability of clubs are fairly limited which is restricting the opportunities to further extend the experiences available to children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Child protection guidelines are in place. All staff have gone through the necessary legal checks before being employed. Vulnerable children are well cared for, where appropriate in conjunction with other professional agencies. All appropriate risk assessments and health and safety checks are undertaken. The school has positive relationships with the range of external professionals and agencies who contribute to child support. As a result those in need of additional help and the most vulnerable are given good support.

Children with a statement of special educational need and those with learning difficulties or disabilities receive satisfactory support. Where appropriate, teaching assistants work alongside teachers to ensure that specified provision can be implemented. All children have individual goals for English, mathematics and science which are based on realistic expectations of what they should achieve. The quality of teachers' marking is satisfactory. In the best examples children receive clear guidance about how they can improve but often this information is missing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The turning point for this school was when an acting headteacher took up post back in November 2006. His enthusiasm and belief in the school, both during the time he was acting headteacher

and now in an advisory capacity, have inspired the staff to feel optimistic and rise to the challenge of making the school a better place. It is totally understandable that the school eagerly awaits September when he takes up his permanent post as headteacher of Eckington Junior School.

In the meantime the deputy headteacher has successfully dealt with the challenges of the day to day running of the school. Her effective leadership has ensured the momentum of improvement has been maintained and that the school's positive outlook has not been lost. A good example of her impact on school improvement has been the very effective contribution she has made in developing and maintaining the school's systems for tracking the progress children make.

Good guidance has been established to support staff responsible for leading and managing curriculum areas. These include templates for action plans, criteria for observing teaching and opportunities to work alongside the headteacher or local authority advisory staff. This good guidance has led to significant improvements in leadership and management. This is especially the case for the leadership of English which is good and has been very influential in improving standards. However, the quality of subject leadership varies and there is not yet a job description that covers all aspects of the role.

The chair of governors has been exceptional in the way she has provided the direction and challenge that has meant the school has been held to account. Her leadership skills have been put to good use and continue to do so as key roles are increasingly being delegated to other governors. This school has improved and has good capacity to improve further.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 June 2007

Inspection of Eckington Junior School, School Street, Eckington, Derbyshire S21 4FL

Dear Children,

I am writing to tell you some good news. Your school no longer requires special measures because it has improved so much that it is now providing you with a satisfactory education. This has happened because of the hard work of teachers, governors (especially Ms Coulson and Mrs Vickers the Chair) and Mr Stringer who will be returning as your headteacher in September.

For me this inspection was the fifth visit to your school and I could tell the difference from when I first visited. Your behaviour is good and you are enthusiastic about your work and how much progress you are making. From exciting lessons to skipping on the playground improvements now mean you are getting a better deal.

I am sure you would want your school to improve even more and so I have left your school three tasks to do which you can help with:

- More of you need to reach above average standards. Your teachers will help you understand what that means and should give you work to make sure some of you can achieve these standards.
- There needs to be more good lessons in all subjects and you can all help by always listening and joining in.
- Some of your teachers are responsible for improving subject areas. Their work has improved but they all need to have a checklist to help them complete all the jobs they need to do. Perhaps you could help them with some of those jobs?

I wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Cook HMI