

Exton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120178
Local Authority	RUTLAND LA
Inspection number	313546
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Annie Lea
Headteacher	Mrs Kathy Whitehead
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2006
School address	Garden Road Exton Oakham Rutland LE15 8AY
Telephone number	01572 812380
Fax number	01572 812380

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is similar to the picture nationally. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and of the small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, none is at an early stage of acquiring English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving and has some good aspects which help it to provide satisfactory value for money. In accordance with Section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI), is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Parents expressed positive views and a comment echoed by others was, 'There is a real determination to turn the school around.' Parents are right, as weaknesses are tackled with rigour and strengths are either sustained or built on, enabling the school to become more successful. The very good leadership of the headteacher has been an instrumental factor in moving the school forward at a pace and there is a vision shared by staff and governors to provide a good and exciting quality of education for all pupils. There is still work to be done to translate this vision into reality but the school's track record of improvement bodes well for the continued development of the school.

Pupils across the school are making good, and at times, very good progress with standards rising to a little above average by the time they leave the school. This is a good improvement on the test and assessment data over time which shows that although there has been a strong picture of standards and progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4, standards have been significantly below the national average at the end of Year 6. There is still work to be done in making up lost ground, particularly in writing. However, the key factor is that standards are on an upward trend because of improvements to teaching, assessment, tracking and target setting. Much of the teaching in school is now challenging, well matched to pupils' individual needs and is fun. Assessment is used well to carefully check on pupils' progress and to set ambitious targets.

Pupils' personal development is good because they are well behaved and enjoy school. Most are keen and enthusiastic learners, but the older pupils sometimes lack the confidence and skills to flourish as independent learners. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed to live safe and healthy lives and are well grounded in their awareness of Britain as a culturally diverse society. Pupils currently leave school with suitable skills that prepare them adequately for their future lives. The curriculum is satisfactory with good feature and includes good enrichment, through many after school clubs, visits and visitors. The school has accurately identified the need for a more innovative curriculum so that pupils' skills can be developed and reinforced across different subjects and creative projects. The care and guidance for pupils is good. Pastoral care is a strength and staff go out of their way to identify and meet the social and emotional needs of pupils. Academic guidance is good because pupils know the targets and levels they are working towards.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with that of the headteacher being very good. She has set a clear and accurate agenda for school improvement, which is robustly geared towards ensuring good achievement for all pupils. Staff and governors share this commitment to 'setting the bar higher' and moving the school on to the next level with plans in hand to make their roles clearer in making this happen.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provision is very good. Pupils start at the school with attainment levels that are close to national expectations. The good, and at times better, teaching and varied

learning activities help all pupils to make good progress because it strikes a balance between the teaching of key skills and opportunities to learn through practical and child initiated tasks. By the end of Reception, standards are above the levels expected nationally. From the outset, there is a big commitment to developing pupils' independent skills. Effective ongoing assessment provides practitioners with a clear picture of how well pupils are doing. Pupils enjoy their learning and the good induction procedures enable them to quickly settle into school routines. Partnership with parents is very good and the good management of Foundation Stage provision contributes much to its effectiveness. For example, plans are already in hand to further improve the outside accommodation to make it an even better learning resource.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing, by the time that pupils leave school by ensuring good progress is the norm.
- Provide well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop literacy, numeracy and other key skills across different subjects and curriculum projects.
- Ensure many opportunities are provided and expectations are high, to enable older pupils to become good independent learners.

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

Attainment levels when children start at the school are broadly in line with national expectations. The small size of the school means that Reception aged children are taught alongside Year 1 and 2 pupils. Children get off to a flying start in this class and reach standards that are well above the national average by the end of Year 2. Much of this is down to the very good quality of teaching, which continues for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and ensures that the good start is built on. Standards and achievement have improved recently from being significantly below the national average at the end of Year 6 to a more positive picture because pupils are benefiting from good quality teaching that ensures that they all, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making good progress. Standards are currently a little above the national average overall, but weaker in writing. Sharper assessment, target setting and well planned initiatives such as 'The Big Write' are all impacting well but there is still ground to be made up to ensure that the school's challenging targets are met and the legacy of underachievement eradicated.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are reflective, show concern for each other, demonstrate a mature awareness of what is right and wrong and have a good knowledge of cultural diversity. Many pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners and enjoyment levels are reflected in the above average attendance rates. However, older pupils do not readily take initiative and responsibility for their own learning and are not confident. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They have a good awareness of what is needed to keep fit and healthy and manage risks in their lives. They feel safe in school and discussions with pupils indicate that bullying is not an issue. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, and the school council enables them to

make a difference, such as organising many fundraising activities and being instrumental in providing the Trim Trail and the climbing wall. Pupils' development of workplace skills is satisfactory because of their suitable progress in literacy, numeracy and other key skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching in the school is currently good with some outstanding features, leading to progress being consistent. However, the school rightly recognises that there is still lost ground to make up. Across the school, work is challenging and well matched to pupils' abilities. The very good use of interactive whiteboards helps bring learning to life. In most lessons, relationships are excellent and the best teaching sees lessons packed full of pace and humour with pupils making big strides in their learning. The school has accurately identified the need to ensure that expectations for older pupils to develop as confident independent learners are high and made clear to the pupils. Assessment is good because it is rigorous and the information is used well to guide and inform teaching. Marking of pupils' work is generally good because it gives clear pointers for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good aspects. However, the school is rightly moving towards a more creative curriculum. This enables pupils' skills to be tested out in a more relevant and meaningful way across different subjects and through other curriculum initiatives. Appropriate systems are in place for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Adequate systems are also in place for those pupils with particular skills and talents. Good use is made of computers and other technological aids to enhance the quality of learning. This includes opportunities for pupils to learn a foreign language and play musical instruments, bringing a further dimension to the curriculum. A good programme of personal, social and health education and physical education makes a telling contribution to helping pupils follow safe and healthy lives. A strength lies in the wide array of visits, visitors and after school clubs, which do much to enrich the curriculum and add to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff go the extra-mile to ensure all pupils benefit from high levels of pastoral care. The rigorous systems that are in place for safeguarding pupils, child protection and risk assessment are good examples of the school's fervent commitment to the safety and well-being of its pupils. Pupils feel safe in school and importantly they say that, 'We have a voice that is listened to.' Good links with outside agencies and the school's internal support mechanisms means that help can be called on quickly for pupils experiencing learning or emotional difficulties. Academic guidance is good. Pupils have a very good awareness of their individual targets in literacy and numeracy and the curriculum levels they are working at. They are actively involved in setting their own targets. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress in the foundation subjects are not yet embedded in school practice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher leads and manages the school very well and has played a pivotal role in improving it. She has a good and accurate grasp of precisely what is needed to make the school a better place. There is a strong sense of team spirit amongst all and a shared determination to make this a good school. Initiatives in writing are seeing standards improve, but the headteacher and staff are realistic and recognise there is still work to be done to ensure good and better progress are the norm. Good procedures are in place for analysing test and assessment data and identifying areas for improvement. However, while in this small school subject leaders carry out lots of informal evaluations of teaching, learning and performance, the more formal and recorded evaluations are too dependent on the headteacher. Governors are supportive of, and committed to, the school and are rightly drawing up plans to clarify their roles in how they can monitor the work of the school and help the headteacher more effectively.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2

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?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Exton CE Primary School, Garden Road, Exton, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 8AY.

You will probably remember that I visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. Before I do, I would first like to say a big thank you for making me feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how you were all so polite and helpful and that you said many positive things about your school. I managed to talk to lots of you, and it was good to hear how much you enjoy school, and that bullying is not an issue.

I found that staff go out of their way to care for you and help to make learning fun through the after-school clubs and the visits and visitors. The school does a good job in helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. Mrs Whitehead is a very good headteacher and with the staff and governors is determined to make the school an even more exciting and fun place to learn. Teaching is getting better and this means that the standards you reach by the time you leave school will equip you well for your future lives. Another strength of the school is you! Your good behaviour, attendance, enthusiasm and knowledge of your individual targets are just some examples. Well done!

I have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school even better. They are going to raise standards even more, particularly in writing, and ensure that all pupils make good progress. They are also going to make the curriculum more exciting and creative and help the older pupils gain more skills in working on their own and finding things out for themselves.

Your headteacher, the staff and governors want the school to improve. I know you will want to play your part by continuing to work as hard and behave well. I wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Martin Newell Lead Inspector