

Earls Barton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121817
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314111
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Bassett

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rick Byrne
Headteacher	Steve Watkins
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Broad Street Earls Barton Northampton NN6 0ND
Telephone number	01604 810371
Fax number	01604 812764

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized junior school draws most of its pupils from its immediate neighbourhood. The classrooms are based in two separate buildings and a temporary classroom. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Over recent years, the school has experienced significant problems in staffing with a high turnover of staff; this has been successfully stabilised. The school has been awarded the Healthy Schools Award, the Sports Active Mark and has gained the Eco Schools Bronze status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, where the headteacher demonstrates excellent leadership and management skills. He has established overall good leadership and management of the school by developing the roles of the senior staff, subject leaders and the governing body very effectively. Previous disruptions to pupils' education, caused by severe staffing problems are now successfully resolved. He has high expectations to which staff and pupils respond enthusiastically. As a result of his high expectations and very clear direction, the work of the school is rapidly improving and the school has good capacity for future improvement. Parents fully support the school, saying for example that, 'this is a superb school' and their children 'are enthusiastic and well prepared for their next school'.

Standards on entry to the school vary from year to year but pupils this year started school above average standards. Improvements and initiatives instigated to raise standards and achievement are now having a good impact. Close examination of pupils' work and teachers' records shows that standards, throughout the school, are now above average and that pupils make good progress. Pupils currently in Year 6 entered school with broadly average standards, but because of good and often excellent teaching, their standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and achievement is good. The planning of lessons is outstanding and teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards to aid learning and to maintain pupils' interests. Teachers assess each pupil's progress very well on a day-to-day basis and pupils take an active role in judging when they have fully met their personal targets. Because of their good basic skills in literacy and numeracy, their well-being for the future and preparation for their next school are good. The curriculum is good, and themed activity days and visits play a vital part in enriching pupils' learning. Links are being established steadily across subjects, especially between literacy, history and geography. However, although information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection, not all pupils are reaching the standards of which they are capable and it is not yet used enough to support learning in other subjects.

The care, guidance and support given to all pupils are good and have a marked influence upon their personal development and well-being. Because of the dedication of all staff, every pupil is valued and pastoral care and support are often outstanding. The needs of each pupil are central to all new developments and everyone is included in all that the school does. Academic records passed from year to year show that pupils' assessment information in mathematics is much easier to maintain and analyse than assessment information in English and other subjects.

As a result of the emphasis placed on pupils' care and support, their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are very happy and enjoy coming to school. They are very polite and their behaviour is good, helping to create good attitudes to their work. All pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They are aware of how to stay safe and how to avoid taking unnecessary risks. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work together well and make an exceptional contribution to the school and wider community. Opportunities in music, art and drama enhance pupils' all-round development well, but their awareness of the different beliefs, customs and traditions of people living in our multicultural society is not as well developed as other aspects of their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Devise a common format for recording pupils' assessment information, particularly in English, so that it is easy to maintain and analyse pupils' progress.
- Improve standards in information and communication technology and make more effective use of pupils' skills to support their learning in other subjects.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the beliefs, customs and traditions of other people living in our multicultural society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Over the past two years, standards in Year 6 have improved steadily but nevertheless, until this year, they still remained broadly average with pupils' progress being satisfactory. Recent leadership and management developments have eliminated disruptions to pupils' learning and now improvement in pupils' work is most noticeable. Progress throughout the school has accelerated rapidly because of the good and sometimes excellent teaching. For example, pupils currently in Year 6 entered school with broadly average attainment but now their achievement is good and standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Standards in ICT are broadly average throughout the school. While pupils' progress is satisfactory, not all pupils are reaching the standards of which they are capable. Music, however, is a strength of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes to school and each other are very good. They talk with great affection about their school and their attendance is good. They are enthusiastic about their lessons and know who to turn to if they have a problem, saying teachers readily listen to them. Their spiritual development is good and supported well by visits, especially the residential visits. Pupils' growing awareness of music, as part of the arts, is a strength of their cultural development. However, insufficient opportunities are provided to raise pupils' cultural awareness of the different beliefs, customs and traditions of other people. Exceptional contributions to the community by the school council show that pupils have an effective voice within the school and improvements to the playground and development of the 'house system' stem from their initiatives. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities around school and 'Young Leaders' and the 'The Eco Group' are rightly proud of their successes. Strong links are established with the village, and the school values its place in the local community. Pupils take a very active role in events such as the village show, church services and the 'village litter pick'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall with examples of outstanding features that contribute to some excellent lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they vary their teaching styles well to ensure very purposeful and stimulating learning conditions that capture pupils' interests. The planning of lessons is outstanding, as work set is suitably challenging but not over bearing,

ensuring that the needs of different ability groups are met very competently. Laptop computers are used beneficially to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but teachers do not provide enough opportunities for all pupils to use ICT when they are learning in different subjects. Teachers assess each pupil's progress very well. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and they respond willingly to their teacher's comments. Pupils are involved productively in assessing their own work and make a valued contribution to their own assessment records. As a result, pupils are very aware of what they are learning and most know what they need to learn next to improve. As pupils complete their work, teachers regroup them very effectively and sensitively according to their prior learning, especially for literacy and numeracy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a good influence on raising standards and achievement, particularly when pupils are engaged in tasks such as 'big writing' and investigational work in mathematics and science. Opportunities to link work across different subjects are developing steadily but are not managed sufficiently well to include ICT. A wide range of after-school clubs and themed activities such as the history days and visits enrich the curriculum well. Throughout the school, pupils' musical development is fostered very successfully. It is enhanced effectively through individual tuition for pupils who learn an instrument and through whole school singing. The modern foreign language lessons enhance the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has a very positive and caring atmosphere. Pastoral care and guidance are good and often better and this is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm and behaviour. All reasonable measures are taken to ensure pupils' safety and protection and all pupils are included in all that the school does. Links with other professionals such as educational psychologists and learning support services are good and provide valuable support for pupils when required. The school collects and makes effective use of data about pupil progress to plan provision to meet individual pupils' needs on a day-to-day basis. There is, however, the lack of a common format for tracking pupils' progress from year to year, particularly in English. The current processes are often too time-consuming to maintain. This slows down the analysis of each pupil's progress when regrouping is necessary. Nevertheless, the records kept for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and these pupils are well supported by capable teaching assistants.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has set a strong agenda for improvement and is establishing a well planned programme to develop the professional skills of all staff. Since his appointment, he has instigated many initiatives that continue to build a very enthusiastic and cohesive team. The senior members of staff, governing body and parents support the school very ably in pursuit of this work. Parents are fully involved in their children's education and weekly newsletters keep them well informed of school news. Governors are very knowledgeable and monitor the work of the school well, setting school priorities whilst working well alongside the headteacher and staff. Consequently, the school's self-evaluation is very accurate and forms the basis of a comprehensive and powerful school improvement plan. Because of the solid drive from the

leadership and management team to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum planning, standards have improved and achievements are now accelerating rapidly. Nevertheless, the school is aware of the need to improve the assessment records that plot each pupil's achievements in English. The subject leaders for English, mathematics and science respond well to the delegation of their responsibilities. They have good subject knowledge and provide good leadership for the development of their subjects. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	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	2
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**

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earls Barton Community Junior School, Northamptonshire, NN5 0ND

- Thank you for helping us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We found that your school provides you with a good education and that you do some very exciting things. These are the things that are particularly strong in your school.
- Your headteacher provides excellent leadership and management.
- All the staff and especially those who lead and manage your school have very clear ideas of how to bring about improvements and as a result, it is a good school with outstanding features.
- There is a good team spirit in your school and it is a happy place.
- You carry out your responsibilities within the school exceptionally well and have excellent links with the village.
- You all work hard and enjoy your lessons so that you make good progress and you reach above average standards in your work by the end of Year 6.
- You are all developing good attitudes towards your work and towards each other; you have a good understanding about how to keep safe and how to remain healthy.
- You are very polite and your behaviour is good.
- Staff care for you and look after you very well.
- The teaching is good overall and often excellent in some classes.
- The teachers are improving how they link subjects together to make your learning more interesting and meaningful.
- There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to:
 - develop better records about your progress, in order that your teachers can find out more easily how well you are doing, especially in English
 - raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and ensure that you use your skills more to help your learning in other subjects
 - help you to grow as better citizens by improving your knowledge of how people from different countries, cultures and religions lead their lives.

Once again, thank you for your cooperation. You can help by asking your teachers how you can make your work better.

Yours sincerely Graeme Bassett Lead inspector

Annex B

31 January 2008



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Yours sincerely
Graeme Bassett
Lead inspector