

Ecton Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121944
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314159
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Widdowson
Headteacher	Julia Kedwards
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Ecton Brook Road Ecton Brook Northampton NN3 5DY
Telephone number	01604 409608
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ecton Brook is a large primary school serving the local housing estate. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is just below average. Pupil mobility is higher than that seen nationally. Major building work was taking place during the inspection to complete a Children's Centre, due to open in April 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ecton Brook is a good and rapidly improving school. These results are due to the exceptional leadership of the headteacher and senior staff. Together, they have created a rich, vibrant learning environment where there is a high priority on the personal development and well-being of pupils. Standards are rising year on year and pupils' good behaviour and enjoyment of school is evident in the continued improvement in attendance. Parents are very happy with the school and the comments of one were typical of many, stating, 'My son thoroughly enjoys coming to school. He is highly motivated to do well because of the school environment and resources.'

When children enter the Reception class, their skills are well below those expected for their age. The outstanding provision in this class ensures that children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make good progress and achieve well, attaining standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The leadership is very focused on identifying pockets of underachievement and, to this end, strategies to ensure that boys do as well as they should in writing and that the more able pupils are challenged in all subjects have been effective. Although the school has rightly recognised that a small number of less confident girls are underperforming, particularly in mathematics, the additional support planned for these pupils is not currently in place.

The leadership has had a good impact on improving the quality of teaching and there is an increasing amount that is good. Teachers are skilled at planning work that is well matched to pupils' different abilities. They use assessment information well, pitching work at the correct level, thus ensuring pupils make good progress. Whilst marking is generally good, it is not used consistently well to ensure all pupils know exactly what they have to do next to improve. The superb curriculum is significant in enabling pupils to make the progress they do. For example, stunning artwork and above average standards in history and geography are the result of the very effective topic approach that runs through the school.

Parents are rightly pleased with the good quality care, guidance and support their children receive. One parent summed up the views of the majority by commenting, 'It is caring and open to the needs of my child and myself as a parent'. Staff have been effective in creating a very strong caring atmosphere that is reflected in the school's commitment to providing a secure and happy haven for all pupils. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, are respectful and caring, and quickly become enthusiastic and happy learners. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, especially the extensive range of clubs, visits and visitors.

On gaining primary status three years ago, the school moved premises and, over the last 12 months, considerable building work has taken place to ensure the premises are suitable and to create a new Children's Centre. It is to the great credit of the leadership team that this has taken place against a backdrop of considerably improving provision. The incisive leadership, consistent improvement in standards and curriculum provision since the last inspection demonstrate excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class because of the excellent all- round provision. The skilled staff and favourable staffing ratio provide children with very good support in all areas. Excellent planning ensures that the many and varied activities take place in a clear

framework, ensuring children understand and respond well to the school routines. Activities that children choose for themselves are planned very carefully by staff so that measurable progress is seen. Planning is informed by excellent assessment procedures. These include regular and systematic recording of achievement that confirms both the low levels of skills when they enter the Reception class and the children's very good progress. There is a very good focus on enhancing the provision. For example, the work on improving the children's phonic skills is having a good impact. Parents are encouraged, and many take the opportunity, to stay for the early morning phonic sessions with their children, providing them with the skills to support their children at home. The management of the Foundation Stage is very strong, with excellent links with the on site pre-school provision and very good plans in place for work with the Children's Centre.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put appropriate support in place to ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics at Key Stage 2, particularly those girls who are less confident.
- Develop the consistency of marking so that it encourages pupils to respond to teachers' comments and further accelerate their progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Since becoming a primary school three years ago, standards have improved rapidly year on year and are now in line with those seen nationally at the end of both key stages. The skills of children entering the Reception class are much less well developed than might normally be expected across all the areas of early learning. There are particular weaknesses in communication, language and literacy. Excellent provision ensures that children's skills on entry to Year 1 are close to those expected for their age. Consistently good teaching throughout the rest of the school results in pupils achieving well. The good progress they make in developing their literacy and numeracy skills prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Effective targeting of specific groups of pupils has resulted in them progressing well. The excellent opportunities for pupils to practise skills across the curriculum have really helped to make pupils into confident writers. A careful analysis of pupils' work has highlighted that those girls who are less confident do not fulfil their potential. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress both in lessons and when withdrawn for additional support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good healthy eating habits, display a good awareness of the importance of physical activities and participate enthusiastically in daily 'activate' sessions. Pupils say that school is 'really fun' and include reasons such as 'I like having lots of time for writing'. Pupils are well informed about staying safe and show a good understanding of the risks associated with smoking, alcohol and drugs. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Pupils express confidence that teachers deal well with the rare incidence of bullying.

Pupils display a good knowledge of other cultures and are able to recall their studies, for example of African music. Pupils know about multicultural Britain. Pupils are strongly committed to the school community. They participate enthusiastically in assembly activities and in drama and musical productions. The school council is effective in promoting the personal development of their peers. For example, they have encouraged healthy eating and taken the initiative to

promote the 'friendship stops' in the playground. Whilst attendance is slightly below average, the school does all it can to encourage regular attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships between adults and pupils underpin all lessons. Adults manage the small number of pupils with challenging behaviour extremely well in order that others can concentrate on their learning. Teachers plan work well, mostly ensuring it is well matched to pupils' ability. They make good use of resources, for example the interactive whiteboards, stimulating the pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are provided with a clear understanding of what it is they are to learn and this adds considerably to their enjoyment. Mostly, teachers ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress. Occasionally, however, a small number of more able pupils are required to undertake less challenging work before getting to the work that really moves them on. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, for example in developing pupils' information and communication technology skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

From the time they enter the Reception class, the children's enthusiasm for learning is promoted through the thoroughly stimulating curriculum. The creative and innovative approach captures the pupils' imagination. The themed curriculum ensures all subjects are covered in depth. For example, work in Years 1 and 2, stimulated by the book 'Pumpkin Soup', has enabled pupils to make good progress in their writing, science, geography and mathematics. Importantly, the pupils have really enjoyed the topic. In addition, some well-planned interventions, such as those to develop pupils' knowledge of sounds and letters and their skills in calculation, make a good impact on the pupils' progress. The whole school is emblazoned with the pupils' excellent artwork and photographic evidence of the many practical activities in which they take part.

Enrichment of the curriculum is excellent and provides pupils with a wide range of experiences outside lessons. Creativity is fostered very imaginatively through art, musical and sporting activities. After-school clubs are popular and successful. There is a very good number of visits and visitors that help to bring subjects to life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good pastoral care ensures that pupils feel safe and secure and are able to develop good personal skills. The school works closely with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being. Mentoring support helps pupils who are finding life difficult and in improving their attendance and behaviour. There are good procedures for helping pupils who join the school later in the academic year so that they settle quickly.

Academic guidance is good overall. There are thorough systems for assessing pupils' progress, not just in the key areas of English and mathematics, but in other subjects too. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often give the pupils clues as to how to improve their work. Only rarely do teachers follow these up, however, to ensure pupils take note of the comments. Pupils

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and are given suitable support towards meeting their individual targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The progress made by the school is the result of a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses by the school's leadership. The determination and enthusiasm to improve the school's provision is shared by all staff. Considerable attention has been devoted to improving the school's tracking procedures and all staff are fully in the picture as to how pupils are progressing. The data from assessment is used very well to set class and school targets and this has helped to drive up standards. The school ensures that staff skills are regularly updated and teachers are continually seeking ways in which the curriculum can be made more interesting for pupils.

Governors provide good challenge and take their responsibilities seriously. They are rightly looking at how they can improve their monitoring of how the school progresses towards its targets. Resources are managed very well; spending is carefully planned and is well focused on how facilities can be improved further. Accommodation is used very well, providing the pupils with an excellent working environment that is spacious and stimulating.

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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	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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed seeing you work hard in lessons and looking at the many photographs of all the interesting things you do. Those who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your school. You think it is a good school, and we agree!

This is what we found:

- children in the Reception class make really good progress; the rest of you work hard and make good progress so that your work is of a similar standard to that found in most schools
- your behaviour is good, both in class and out in the playground
- you have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives, eat the right foods and take regular exercise
- your headteacher and other leaders run the school very well and know how to improve things
- your teachers work very hard to make your lessons fun and help you learn quickly
- you enjoy the excellent range of activities provided and the many interesting clubs after school
- all staff at the school take good care of you and keep you safe.

What we would like the school to do now:

- help those of you who are less confident to do better in your work, particularly in mathematics
- make sure that teachers' marking helps you to improve your work.

You can do your bit by making sure that you respond to teachers' comments on your work.

14 February 2008



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ecton Brook Primary School, Northampton NN3 5DY

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Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Edwards
Lead Inspector