

Epworth Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117917
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	326716
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Barbara Martin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	255
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sam Croxall
Headteacher	Mr John Hodgkins
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Birchfield Road Epworth Doncaster South Yorkshire DN9 1DL
Telephone number	01427 872345
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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

This school is larger than average. It serves the community of Epworth and several surrounding villages. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with a statement of special educational need is above the national average. Free school meals and rates of deprivation are considerably lower than average. The school has been awarded the Bronze Activemark for improving provision in physical education. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for Reception children and building for the Children's Centre has started on site. The headteacher took up his post in January 2009, following a long period of instability in staffing, including the leadership team.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of care and support for pupils, statutory requirements especially with regards to safeguarding, and standards in Key Stage 1.

The school provides an inadequate quality of education. Since the last inspection there has been a prolonged period of instability in staffing due to several leadership changes and high levels of staff absence. These have had a negative impact on the school's effectiveness and standards, especially in Key Stage 1. There has been some monitoring of performance and some teaching has improved as a result. However, whole school weaknesses have not been identified fully or targeted for improvement with enough focus and speed. Consequently, there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. The school is moving in the right direction but the pace of change is too slow. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve because there is evidence of impact due to changes made by the headteacher. In particular, pupils' behaviour has improved considerably, setting a more stable environment and atmosphere within which to accelerate pupils' learning. Writing at Key Stage 1 has also improved significantly during the past year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now making satisfactory progress, a better picture than in previous years, as a result of better planning and provision provided in recent months. The school knows its strengths and areas for development.

Progress made by pupils is too variable across the three key stages. As a result, too many do not achieve as well as they could by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6. Children start school with skills that are typical for their age and make good progress in Reception, reaching levels that are slightly above national averages. Achievement in Key Stage 1 is inadequate. Standards at the end of Year 2 were below average in 2008 and teacher assessments for the current cohort show a further decline, particularly in mathematics and reading. Standards in writing, however, have improved this year as a result of new initiatives, and are now at average levels. More able pupils are not reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2 and national test results show an improving picture across three years. Pupils work hard but their achievement is not as good as expected given their starting points. In the 2008 national tests more able pupils did not achieve the higher levels of which they are capable in mathematics. Current teacher assessments show that more able pupils continue to underachieve in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support are inadequate because policies and procedures are out of date. On a day-to-day basis, staff are caring and kind to the pupils. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy some aspects of school especially the enrichment activities related to music, dancing and residential visits. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive despite the fact that they say they find some mathematics lessons dull because they were often taught things that they already know. They are keen to learn and cooperate well in class. Likewise, they play sociably in the playground. With a few exceptions, behaviour is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some that is good. It is these inconsistencies in provision that result in variable progress between key stages. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, recently introduced strategies to improve the way it

is delivered are not yet consistently implemented or effective. As a result, pupils are not always sufficiently motivated or engaged. The staff work hard to provide a range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities. The pupils enjoy and appreciate these very much. However, on a daily basis lessons lack excitement and this reduces interest and motivation. The curriculum overall is satisfactory. The school does not have an action plan or means of evaluating its promotion of community cohesion and so this aspect of its work is inadequate. Pupils interact well with the local community but their understanding of other communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world is less well developed.

The school works hard at partnerships with others. In particular, its partnerships with parents and carers have greatly improved in recent months. Likewise the working partnership with an extended schools officer has led to a good range of services, for example, the 'Stay and Play' toddlers group. Much work has been done to improve the buildings in school, and this has had a positive impact on the attitudes of pupils and the morale of staff.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, and is well led and managed. Children start Reception with skills that are typical for their age. Good induction arrangements and levels of welfare help children to settle happily and thrive. Children's progress has improved recently and this year they are leaving Reception with skills and knowledge above those expected for children of their age.

Good and imaginative teaching gives children a wide range of exciting activities matched to their individual needs. Children gain the confidence to follow their own interests within the safe and secure indoor learning area. Enjoyment is evident in all that goes on in the Reception class. Children were totally engrossed in their pirate adventures and their language and mathematical skills were developed and encouraged by the enthusiastic staff. Outdoor provision is used well to support the areas of learning and the school plans to develop this further. Adults have high expectations for standards of behaviour, demonstrating how to be good listeners and modelling role-play. Children experience an appropriate mix of adult-led, adult-guided and independent activities. In this supportive atmosphere, children make significant gains in their learning in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They work harmoniously with each other, are well behaved and enthusiastic about their learning and achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure as a matter of urgency that all statutory duties relating to safeguarding are met and that procedures are up to date and effective.
- Ensure that the impact of the school's provision, particularly on standards and achievement, is rigorously monitored to enable more focused and faster improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it leads to consistently good progress, particularly in Key Stage 1 and for more able pupils in mathematics.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion through more rigorous planning that is informed by regular evaluation of its impact.
- Develop the curriculum so that it is more exciting and stimulating in order to engage all pupils in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement from the start of school in Reception to the end of school in Year 6 is satisfactory overall because standards remain average. However, this masks an uneven pattern across the key stages that includes two years of inadequate progress. Pupils enter Year 1 with at least average standards, but in the teacher assessments in 2008, standards at the end of Year 2 were below average. The school's assessment information and further inspection evidence show that this year standards have recovered to average levels in writing but have fallen further in mathematics and reading. This represents unsatisfactory achievement across Key Stage 1 when taking into account the pupils' starting points. Insufficient numbers of pupils reach the higher levels. There is a more positive picture of achievement in Key Stage 2 and this has been improving slowly for three years. Standards in English and mathematics are broadly average and above average for science. However, not all groups of pupils achieve equally. Some of the more able pupils throughout the school are not achieving the higher levels in their end of year tests. In Key Stage 1 this is across all core subjects and in Key Stage 2 in mathematics. Plans are in place to challenge these pupils more in lessons, but as yet signs of impact are limited. Pupils with learning difficulties have made less than expected progress in the past. The school has identified this and special provision is now given to support these pupils in their learning. This has led to better progress this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is satisfactory with some good features. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is average. They appreciate the camaraderie in the playground and the increasing number of activities outside the classroom. Pupils are keen to learn and they maintain concentration in lessons well, even when the work is not stimulating. When talking with pupils many said they did not find mathematics exciting. Overall, they maintain good self-esteem and develop sufficient basic skills to prepare them satisfactorily for their life ahead. Behaviour is good. The vast majority of pupils behave very well, but a minority does not and some pupils feel that the adults are not always consistent in dealing with misbehaviour. Other pupils, especially older girls, feel that not all the teachers are approachable and do not respond to personal issues sensitively enough. As a result, not all pupils feel valued and wholly secure in school. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles. They enjoy the exertions of sport and are active at break times, but they are less enthusiastic about opting for healthy food. They develop a sound understanding of social responsibility through the school council and have some good links with the local community. Links with the United Kingdom and world communities and pupils' knowledge of other cultures are underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is more effective in Key Stage 2. Most classrooms have a positive atmosphere where teachers present new learning clearly and check how well pupils understand before expecting them to proceed. In some classes teachers use good strategies,

such as games, to motivate pupils: for example Year 6 pupils enjoyed the challenge of a countdown activity during the inspection. In more effective lessons such as this progress is good. Teachers have a methodical approach to learning, which is particularly helpful for less able pupils. However, not all teachers use assessment information skilfully enough to match work consistently to pupils' abilities, nor do they always expect enough from them. Pupils feel that lessons are moderately challenging, but that work in mathematics is not very demanding or enjoyable. Teaching styles are not sufficiently varied to suit the differing needs of pupils. An example of this is when pupils sit for a long time listening to teachers. In these lessons pupils do not have the opportunity to learn through discussion or independent activities. In some lessons pupils are encouraged to contribute to the lesson. A good example of this is when pupils talk to their partners and then report their ideas back to the teacher. Teaching assistants are supportive but not proactive enough in whole class sessions. More able pupils do not have enough scope to work independently and at their own pace.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, but not as effective as it could be in raising pupils' achievement. The school is aware of this and teachers are in the early stages of planning the curriculum in ways that link subjects together. They are starting to provide opportunities for pupils to use their skills and knowledge in other areas of learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is beginning to support pupils' learning and enjoyment of their work. Visits and visitors are broadening pupils' knowledge and skills. An example of this is a recent Year 5 writing project with a local author on a book about the Wesleys in Epworth. The much enjoyed extended visits, to Kingswood in Year 4 and Whitby in Year 6, provide further opportunities for pupils to access a range of activities to develop their physical and social skills. However, it is very early days, and these initiatives have not yet impacted on raising standards. Some older pupils learn to play a musical instrument which broadens their contribution to the school. In a class assembly attended by parents some older pupils proudly played their guitars and demonstrated what they had learnt so far. The school has won the Bronze Active Mark award for improving physical education and this has had a positive impact on this aspect of the curriculum. The opportunity to learn French has been introduced in one class and is being trialled in others. Pupils enjoy the variety of after-school activities which include pottery, gardening, music and sports clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The school does not provide adequate care for its pupils. The headteacher and governors have not been vigilant enough in ensuring that all procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place and meet statutory requirements. Much of the documentation for areas of safeguarding is out-of-date, especially for child protection, and so does not take into account new legislation. There are also gaps in some records, although the school does check the suitability of all adults who work with children. The procedures for risk assessment are efficient and scrupulously recorded. On a day-to-day basis, staff look after the well-being of pupils but not all pupils feel cared for, especially a small number of girls. Some pupils feel that adults do not listen attentively to them. The school was not sufficiently aware of this and has not taken suitable action to allay their anxieties. Pupils appreciate the help given by teachers in lessons, but this is not universal. Pupils learn little from teachers' marking because it is inconsistent and does not provide enough advice on how to improve. Systems to monitor pupils' progress over time are satisfactory, but

they are too recently in place to have had time to influence pupils' achievement. The use of pupils' targets to improve literacy and numeracy is inconsistent; they are more effective in upper Key Stage 2.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school has had to cope with a lengthy period of difficult circumstances caused by unavoidable staff changes and absences. Lack of clear and consistent direction and too many changes in leadership have led to lapses in promoting high quality care in school. This means that leadership and management are judged to be inadequate. The new headteacher has put a permanent leadership and management structure in place with recent appointments of an assistant headteacher, special needs coordinator and teaching and learning posts. There are early signs that this strengthening of the leadership team is already having a positive impact. There has been a raised awareness amongst staff of the need for accountability, and higher expectations that standards will rise for pupils. There are plans in place to develop the role of subject leaders but these are in the early stages.

Partnerships with parents are much stronger than at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher has a visible presence at the school gate on a daily basis and a weekly newsletter informs parents of events in school. Parents appreciate the headteacher's work so far, including better communication, and this is reflected in a comment from a parent reflecting the views of many that 'his heart is out there with the children'. There have been major developments to the learning and physical environment and further improvements to the building are planned. Parents appreciate the use of the pre-school extended learning sessions. The introduction of a behaviour policy has impacted favourably on pupils' conduct. Breaks are calmer and challenging behaviour is less frequent. Procedures for recording accidents are now in place and parents are informed of all accidents. Feedback to teachers from the leadership team after monitoring lessons is starting to improve the quality of teaching. Given that new staffing structures are in place and that the recent initiatives introduced by headteacher are beginning to have an impact on school improvement, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. Governors are committed to the school and are very supportive of new initiatives which the headteacher has introduced, but their monitoring of the school's performance is insufficiently robust. For instance, procedures for safeguarding have not been kept up-to-date. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory and shows a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 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?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

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

30 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Epworth Primary School, North Lincolnshire DN9 1DL

Thank you for your help and making us feel welcome when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days with you all. Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires. It was very interesting talking to you and I should like to tell you what we thought about your school. These are some of the things that we liked about your school.

- The children in Reception make good progress because they have interesting and fun activities to help them learn.
- Your behaviour is good.
- Most of you enjoy coming to school and playing with your friends.
- You have opportunities to go on visits and people come into school to make learning more fun.
- Some of you love learning to play a musical instrument.
- You have a variety of exciting after-school clubs.
- The school works well with your parents.
- The new building work has improved the environment for you all.

Despite these good things, there are some very important improvements the school needs to make so we have given it a notice to improve. We have asked your school to improve the quality of care and support that you receive. We think that the teachers need to help you make better progress, especially in Key Stage 1. Some of you who find work easy need more challenge so that you reach the highest levels, especially in mathematics. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that things are checked more regularly to ensure that everyone is achieving their best. We would like to see more lessons that excite and interest you. We also ask that you learn more about other parts of the United Kingdom and the wider world.

Another inspector will be visiting next year to help the school check the progress it is making. You can help with these improvements by continuing to work hard, attending school regularly and behaving as well as you do at the moment.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Martin

Lead Inspector