

Etching Hill CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124292
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328099
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	371
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	Tim Gladdy
Headteacher	Teresa (Terri) McGregor
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Penk Drive North Etching Hill Rugeley WS15 2XY

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2009
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Telephone number
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Introduction

At the inspection in January 2008, the school was given a notice to improve. Improvements were required in achievement, teaching, marking, the knowledge and skills of middle leaders and meeting all statutory requirements regarding policies. The monitoring visit in September 2008 judged that progress on the issues was satisfactory.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. Pupils come from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. The pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds with English as their first language. A below average number require additional support with their learning. The acting headteacher took up the post full time in September 2008, having previously been working in the school on a part-time basis since the start of the summer term. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for children of Nursery and Reception age, which is not run by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This school is now satisfactory. Since the last inspection, it has been through a time of considerable uncertainty and change in its leadership. This has recently been followed by a period of greater stability under the excellent leadership of the acting headteacher, which has resulted in a rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's provision. Standards are rising and the improvement is most noticeable in the pupils' personal development and well-being, which are now good.

Achievement is satisfactory. Although pupils' progress is satisfactory overall in relation to their starting points and capabilities, they are making good progress in lessons now. Standards are broadly average. They are improving, but more slowly in writing and in mathematics than in science. Effective systems have been put in place to track the progress that individual pupils are making. Thus, the school is able to identify precisely which children are falling behind and act to remedy the situation.

Pupils love the school and they told inspectors how much they enjoy their lessons. This is evident in their enthusiasm for learning and their good behaviour. Attendance is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe, and value the support that the adults in the school provide. They take advantage of a growing range of opportunities to make a positive contribution to the school, for example as members of the new school council. Their contribution to the wider community through musical events and charity collections supports their understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The curriculum is satisfactory, and recent additional features support the pupils' social and emotional development well. The focus for improvement has been the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders and increasingly, middle leaders, too, are rigorously monitoring the work of class teachers. Professional development opportunities are then provided, as required. As a result, teaching is good across the school. Some features of the teaching are outstanding, especially the exciting and imaginative activities that the pupils so greatly enjoy. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and provide suitable challenge for different levels of ability. They share the objectives of the lesson with the pupils, but sometimes this is in language that the pupils do not readily understand. When teachers explain the objectives, they sometimes focus on what this will require the pupils to do, not why they are doing it.

Pupils receive good care and support which results in them feeling safe. The guidance they receive to help them improve their work is satisfactory. Those with additional needs are well supported and the school works well with outside agencies to ensure these are met. Pupils can recite their targets, but are not always fully aware of what they need to do to meet them. This is because the teachers do not always involve them in setting the targets. In addition, when they provide written feedback on the pupils' work, it is too often merely confirming what has been achieved and not providing guidance on the next steps. In a short time, the leaders in the school have addressed the issues from the last inspection and ensured improvements have been made in all aspects of the school's provision. This is because the systems to monitor and evaluate its work are rigorous and accurate. The capacity for further improvement is good. An exceptionally high proportion of parents took the time to respond to the questionnaire for the inspection. Above average levels of satisfaction were expressed on all questions, but in particular,

on leadership and management, where every single parent responding was happy that the school is now well led and managed. This response from a parent sums up the feelings expressed by many: 'The obvious improvements speak for themselves. Last year, I was looking to move my two children to another school – now I wouldn't even consider it.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The newly appointed leader of the EYFS has set a clear direction for developments and linked this with the whole-school development planning. Many improvements are already evident and the overall effectiveness has improved since the last inspection. From their average starting points, children make good progress in all areas of their learning. Children demonstrate initiative, asking appropriate questions in order to further their learning. They can follow instructions and readily help each other by playing cooperatively and taking turns. Behaviour is very good. Teachers' planning is well structured and covers all areas of learning well. Activities allow them to learn in a variety of ways and over different lengths of time. Effective use is made of the outdoor and indoor learning environments. Teachers model good language to extend and develop the children's speaking skills. The children's physical, social and emotional needs are met well and they are given sensitive guidance to help them look after themselves. All policies and procedures are in place and followed so that the children are safe and secure. Noise levels are sometimes rather high. While this stems from the enthusiasm of the children, it sometimes has a negative impact on their concentration.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress that pupils make in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure teachers share with the pupils objectives for the lesson that make the intended learning clear to all.
- Increase pupils' involvement in setting their targets for improvement and ensure that marking guides them on their next steps.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average and they make satisfactory progress throughout their time in the school. In 2008, results in national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 showed standards were broadly average overall, but slightly below average in writing and in mathematics. Data from the school's thorough monitoring of the progress pupils are making show that a significantly higher number are on track to meet or exceed the expectations for their age group this year. Writing is still weaker than other subjects, but this is improving as a result of a consistent and clear focus on key skills. Progress in the lessons observed during the inspection was generally good and this improvement was confirmed by an examination of the work in pupils' books. No groups of learners now make less than satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are tolerant and the inspectors saw many examples of pupils helping each other in lessons and on the playground. Their spiritual development is well-supported by the links with the church. Pupils show a good understanding of moral and topical issues such as the effects of pollution and the value of recycling. Their understanding of cultural diversity is less well developed, especially in relation to life in multicultural Britain. Pupils relate well to adults and to each other. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and applaud the school provision to support healthy diets and provide opportunities for exercise. Pupils are fully aware of safety and security and adopt safe practices around the school. They appreciate how well the adults look after them. They enjoy school enormously and praise their teachers for making the lessons fun. They are polite and attentive in class. The litter-pickers and playground buddies help to make the school a pleasant place to be and the school council is developing a solid voice in school affairs. Pupils are gaining some work-place skills such as cooperation and teamwork, but their weaker writing skills are a limiting factor to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Year teams plan lessons together, allowing them to share expertise and create opportunities for collaboration. Teachers use assessment information to plan for the different needs in their classes. Teaching assistants skilfully support those children needing extra help or those who are able to attempt more challenging tasks. Teachers choose topics that will interest the children and link them to real-life situations. For example, Year 6 used their problem solving skills in a mathematics lesson to plan the prices for the new school stationery shop, while Year 4 experienced a very realistic simulation of a newspaper production room to encourage them to improve their writing. Teachers share the lesson objectives with the pupils and some refer back to them as the lesson proceeds. This enables the pupils to understand what they are going to do and allows progress to be monitored. Sometimes, the pupils do not understand why they are doing the activities and this hinders their understanding of what they need to do to reach the higher levels. Marking has improved and teachers celebrate successes, but do not consistently give helpful advice on how to improve the work or the next steps in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. Refinements made since the last inspection are having a positive impact, especially on the pupils' personal development and well-being. The planning and delivery of lessons meets the needs of all groups of learners, but longer-term planning is more detailed and helpful in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. The impact is already visible in the increased enjoyment of children in the lower classes. The learning environment is stimulating and external speakers and visits to places of interest enrich the learning experience. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, but these are mainly available to pupils in Key Stage 2. The teaching of basic skills is now an integral part of the curriculum and is starting to contribute well to standards in literacy and numeracy. The development of pupils' writing across other subjects is less well supported and this is an aspect that the school has already begun to develop.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a high level of care for its pupils. Good use is made of outside agencies to supplement the provision within the school. Those who need additional support are enabled to make at least satisfactory progress. The school can provide evidence of individual success stories, but does not yet analyse the progress of this group as a whole. Systems for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and comprehensive. A minority of parents expressed concern about the level of supervision at lunchtimes, but the inspection found that this was good and pupils confirmed that there are always plenty of adults around to help if they are needed. Good relationships mean the pupils can talk freely to their teachers and they listen well to the advice and guidance they are given. They know the level at which they are working in their different subjects, but are not always fully involved in setting their targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior leaders have set up thorough systems to monitor the work of the school. Responsibilities have been realigned and leaders at all levels share a clear vision for the school. Middle leaders are held to account for the work in their areas and class teachers meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss the progress of the children in their groups. Development opportunities for all staff have improved the skills and understanding of middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. This successful combination of challenge and support has created a positive ethos in the school and staff morale is high. The school considers the views of parents and pupils when planning developments and has a clear view of the needs of the local community. As a result, changes have been made to the school's provision and it is making a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

The governors are very knowledgeable about the school and take an active part in its self-evaluation. They bring a range of valuable skills to their roles. They actively seek first-hand evidence of the day-to-day work of the school and this puts them in a good position to challenge and support effectively. Financial planning has improved. Sensible improvements to the fabric of the school have greatly enhanced the learning environment. It feels a happy and stimulating place to be with lovely displays and a wide range of resources. One parent told inspectors: 'My son is very happy to be at this school and loves Sunday evenings knowing he has to get up for school the next day.'

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	3
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?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
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

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

28 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Etching Hill CofE (C) Primary School, Rugeley, WS15 2XY

On behalf of myself and the other inspectors who visited your school recently, I want to thank you for your help with the inspection. You spoke to us honestly and sensibly and we thank you, because it made our task both easier and very enjoyable.

You will remember that the previous inspection considered that the school urgently needed to improve some aspects of its work. The school has dealt with these issues well and it is now satisfactory. You have contributed greatly to that success. We want to congratulate you on the way you behave, your positive attitudes to your lessons and the wonderful relationships you have built up amongst yourselves and with the adults in the school. We recognise that you enjoy school and attend regularly. You know your targets, but some of you told us that you are not always sure what the targets mean and you would like them to be in words that are easier for you to understand.

Your teachers are working very hard and making lessons fun for you. They are planning your work carefully to make sure it is at the right level. You know the level you are working on, but are not always quite so sure what you need to do next and we think your teachers could help you by telling you how to improve when they mark your work. You could help in this by asking them to explain if you are not sure.

Your headteacher and the school's leaders know what Etching Hill is good at and what could be better, because they are keeping a careful record of how well you are all progressing. They are continuing to make things even better and you can help by supporting the school council and making suggestions for the things you would like to see improved.

Therefore, to summarise, we have asked the school to look at the following matters before inspectors come and visit you again.

- Accelerate the progress you are making in writing and mathematics. You can help by practising these things whenever you can.
- Share with you very clearly, why you are doing the activities teachers have chosen for you in lessons.
- Allow you to help when the targets you are given are being set. You could think about this and be ready to contribute when you are asked. We have also asked teachers to make sure that marking tells you what your next steps are.

Best wishes

Elaine Taylor Her Majesty's Inspector