

# Ecton Brook Primary School

Ecton Brook Road, Ecton Brook, Northampton, NN3 5DY

**Inspection dates** 8–9 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is improving but there is not as yet enough good or outstanding teaching to ensure that all pupils achieve well. In some classes, work is set that is too easy for some pupils and too hard for others.
- Although progress has improved over recent years, the progress pupils make is variable, particularly for those of middle ability. Not enough pupils have reached the levels they should by the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2.
- In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow as teachers talk for too long and pupils do not have enough time to practise the skills being taught.
- Teachers' marking in mathematics does not always give pupils clear advice about how they can improve their work.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's relentless focus on ensuring every child can succeed has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching. This is driving up achievement which is improving strongly in most years. She is well supported in this by senior leaders, the governing body and the academy trust.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together.
- The school provides extensive support for pupils and their families to ensure that those at most risk of underachievement are now making as much progress as others. Parents appreciate the support that their children get from the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons or parts of lessons. Seven of these were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteachers.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body and four members of the multi academy trust.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, looked at work in pupils' books, talked to pupils in lessons and in the playground, observed the start of the day and an assembly, and met with two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and letters written by parents. They spoke informally to parents on both school sites as they brought their children to school at the start of the day. They analysed the 48 questionnaires submitted by staff.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including minutes of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement, information on pupils' progress and attainment, evidence on how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress, records of observations of the quality of teaching, safeguarding documentation, attendance data and behaviour records.

## Inspection team

Adam Hewett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

Anne Bark

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much larger than most primary schools and is increasing in numbers. In September 2011 the number of pupils starting in the Reception Year increased by 15 and this increase is set to continue until there are three full classes in each year group.
- Ecton Brook merged with Bellinge Primary School in January 2010 and pupils continue to be taught separately on both sites, under one executive headteacher.
- The school converted to become an academy school on 1 November 2012. When its predecessor school, Ecton Brook Primary, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The school is part of a multi academy trust with four other local primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average, as is the proportion learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and pupils with a parent in the armed forces) is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs who receive extra help in class (school action) is broadly average. The proportion who need help from other agencies (school action plus) or who have a statement of educational needs is much higher than average.
- The number of pupils who join or leave the school during the school year is significantly above average, with over 100 pupils joining or leaving since the start of the school year.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - give pupils more time to undertake and complete their work by reducing the amount of time that they spend talking
  - all teachers have the opportunity to learn from the good and outstanding teaching in the school
  - provide sufficient detail in their marking of work in mathematics to identify for pupils how they can improve their work.
- Improve progress and raise standards in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - teachers check and monitor pupils' progress during lessons and use the information to make adjustments to their teaching where needed
  - all lessons have the right levels of challenge to address the needs of all pupils, particularly those of lower and middle ability.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- There is some variation in pupils' progress between different classes and cohorts. Many pupils make good progress but achievement requires improvement because pupils' learning is not consistently good across the school. Progress has, in the past, been weaker in writing than in reading and mathematics. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that pupils' progress in writing is now improving due to well-planned strategies that the school has put in place. These include the use of drama for writing and an increase in the opportunities to write extended pieces of work.
- Attainment in 2012 at the end of Key Stage 1 was in line with the national average for most pupils. Evidence in books and from the school's own current assessment data shows that middle ability pupils do not do as well in writing and mathematics.
- By the time pupils leave school in Year 6, they achieve standards below those found nationally in mathematics and well below in English. In 2012, higher and lower ability pupils made good progress but middle ability pupils did not achieve as well. The school's assessment information indicates that, in the current Year 6, higher ability pupils are expected to attain well and overall attainment is likely to be much nearer to that found nationally in both English and mathematics, with a particular improvement in writing. This is because school leaders identified the need for a revised approach to the teaching of writing that increased speaking and listening opportunities for pupils and have provided clear guidance and training for all staff.
- In the 2012 Year 6 tests, boys, pupils who received support through extra government funding and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs did not make as much progress as others in school or other similar pupils nationally. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were two terms behind their classmates in mathematics and more than a year behind in English. However, for pupils currently in school, the gap for these groups of pupils is closing rapidly due to additional and very well-targeted support, including the use of learning mentors and family support workers. School leaders have made good use of the pupil premium to fund these appointments.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve better than other pupils in school in English and in line with other pupils in mathematics.
- The high proportion of pupils joining the school at various stages of their primary education has in the past had a significant impact on overall achievement, with the pupils who have been at the school throughout Key Stage 2 making much better progress than those who joined at other times. The headteacher and governors have identified the gap in achievement and have used school funding to provide additional support through one-to-one tuition and small-group work for pupils who are new to the school which is quickly addressing gaps in their understanding and knowledge. Current school data shows them making rapid progress.
- The school adopts a structured approach to the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and has a strong focus on supporting pupils in learning to read. This has resulted in the standards achieved in the Year 1 phonics screening being above those found nationally. School leaders have ensured that all staff are regularly and well trained in the teaching of reading and this is leading to better progress for the large majority of pupils. However, it is not always the case that the books that the pupils read in school are accurately matched to their reading abilities and this slows the progress for a minority.

- Children join the school in Reception with skills and understanding well below those expected for their age. Many have weak language and social and personal skills. They settle in quickly and make good progress, listening well to adults and other children and playing co-operatively with each other. Work in their 'learning journals' shows a good range of activities and indicates rapid progress.

## The quality of teaching

## requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because some teachers do not ensure that pupils achieve consistently well. There is a reasonable proportion of good and outstanding teaching but not enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. There are sufficient highly skilled teachers in school who have the necessary qualities to support others whose teaching requires improvement. Although the school makes some good use of staff to demonstrate good practice to colleagues, not enough opportunities for this have, until recently, been made available.
- Not all teachers use assessment information to plan and teach lessons that are relevant to the abilities of the pupils. This results in activities that are not sufficiently demanding of the pupils and produce little purposeful learning. Some teachers spend too long talking at the start of the lesson, resulting in not enough time for pupils to work independently and get actively involved in learning. Their questioning is not directed at individual pupils and does not require them to explain their learning or give extended answers. In these classes the same task is set for all pupils and can be too hard or too easy for a large number of the children. In too many classes, whilst there may be additional support or challenge for higher ability pupils, the tasks set for the middle ability pupils is either too difficult or too easy, resulting in limited progress.
- Marking in books does not always provide sufficient information for pupils on how well they have done and how they can improve their work. Marking in English is usually more informative but too often, in mathematics, there is not enough detail to help pupils increase their progress. The most effective marking, for example in Year 6 English books, is detailed, identifies what the pupil needs to do next, celebrates what has been achieved and often results in a written dialogue between the pupil and the teacher.
- The quality of work in pupils' book is variable. Where teacher expectations are sufficiently high, standards of presentation are good, with a strong focus on handwriting and imaginative use of language. In other classes, there is less evidence of progress and work is not set out well enough. This results in pupils making careless errors.
- The school uses computers and other forms of information and communication technology extremely well to support teaching and learning. Pupils are taught how the use of technology can enhance their learning and make very sensible choices about how and when to use it.
- Most teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning and pupils say they enjoy lessons. They talk confidently about what they are learning and can see its relevance for the world they are growing up in.
- Good use is made of additional staff to work with small groups of pupils to address gaps in their learning or to provide higher levels of challenge. This is proving to be particularly effective in Year 6, where specialist support in mathematics means that a small group of pupils are progressing very well and are assessed by the school as capable of achieving Level 6 in the national tests.

- Children in Reception have access to a wide range of well-planned activities that promote social skills, language development, understanding of numbers and an increasing knowledge of the world around them. The teaching of early reading is good, although some support staff are not sufficiently skilled in teaching the correct letter sounds.
- In the good or outstanding lessons, teachers have high expectations for all pupils and set challenging tasks that require pupils to apply skills and to extend their learning. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils working together in groups found relevant information about recent climate changes in Europe, its impact on the weather in Northampton and the likely effect for people living there. They confidently presented their findings for the class using tablet computers to display images and facts onto a whiteboard. The teacher skilfully used probing questions that were adjusted to the different abilities of the pupils to assess their understanding.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils, parents and staff are all positive about behaviour. The school has high expectations of the pupils in terms of how they should behave and this is reflected in how they react with each other and with adults. Strong, mutual respect exists, and this creates a positive learning environment.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They say that bullying is very rare and that, when it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school. They know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet.
- All staff show a deep understanding of the needs of the pupils and recognise the social and emotional difficulties that many of them face in their lives. This is reflected in all staff managing behaviour well and allowing pupils to fully access the opportunities that the school offers them.
- Pupils are given a range of opportunities for taking on responsibility, including active participation in the school council. They plan for and involve themselves in activities that support the school and the wider community
- Pupils are polite, caring and communicative. During the inspection, they talked enthusiastically with inspectors about Ecton Brook and about all the activities that the school offers. They showed consideration for each other, both inside the buildings and on the playground. The attitudes they displayed towards learning were almost always positive and it was only when the teaching was less effective that there was any lack of concentration by a very small number of pupils.
- The school has strong procedures in place to ensure good attendance and these have resulted in an overall improvement in attendance rates since conversion to academy status. Attendance is now in line with the national average.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is very effectively leading the work to ensure that all pupils should enjoy high-quality learning and achieve their full potential. She has made changes to the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage that are resulting in good progress for pupils in Reception and has introduced changes in the leadership of English that have, over the past year, led to rapid improvements in the teaching of writing across the school. Her focus on driving up standards in all areas in school is reflected in an increase in the proportion of good or better teaching. She is

aware of where teaching still requires improvement and is using external advice and support to address practice that is less effective. This is having a positive impact on achievement, which has improved over the past year. She is well supported by the three deputy headteachers, who help to ensure that pupils on both school sites have the same opportunities. They are all committed to continuing to improve the school so that all aspects of its work become at least good.

- The school has developed and implemented plans that focus on improving teaching and pupil achievement. The actions from the plans include the use of expertise from within the school and by sharing good and outstanding practice from the other four schools in the multi academy trust. The use of drama for writing has resulted in a clear improvement in the standards of written work in most classes within the school.
  - The headteacher and other senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and link the findings to planning ways of improving achievement. Where teaching has been found to be inadequate in the past, the headteacher has not hesitated to take strong and successful action to eliminate it. Senior leaders set clear targets for all teachers that relate to pupil progress and are linked to progression on the pay scale.
  - The school has developed a curriculum that provides highly positive learning experiences for all pupils. Skills learnt in mathematics and English are applied in other subjects through a very well-planned series of topics. The school provides a very wide range of sporting, musical and arts activities that are open to all pupils, and these are reflected in the striking displays seen around the school and through the school's status as Northampton Sports School of the Year in 2012. The range of visits and visitors, including whole-school trips to Norfolk, help to develop pupils' self-esteem and raise their aspirations.
  - The school has developed very positive relationships with parents and they are universally supportive of the work the school does. One parent's comment that 'Ecton Brook is a school that goes the extra mile in order that the pupils will be become productive members of the community' reflected the views expressed by many others.
  - Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements.
  - The school is part of a multi academy trust and it is this partnership that provides high levels of support and challenge. The five headteachers have carried out a detailed review of the work of the school and this has led to the opportunity for staff to work alongside outstanding teachers in each other's schools. The work of the trust is in its early days as it was only established in November 2012, but it appears to be already having an impact on improving teaching where this is required.
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**■ The governance of the school:**

- Governors show high levels of commitment to the school and recognise the many challenges that it has faced since the merger in 2011. They are knowledgeable about the performance of the school through direct monitoring of its work and frequent and regular visits. All governors are paired with staff and receive reports from them about teaching in classes and subject leadership. They provide strong and effective challenge to the school. Governors monitor and review the performance of the headteacher and hold her to account for improving pupils' achievement. They recognise that achievement has been below that found nationally and are actively involved in using all the information available to them to ensure that recent improvements are maintained. They understand how the additional funding available through the pupil premium is used and have been involved in decision making about ensuring that it is effectively targeted, including the appointment of a learning mentor. They monitor and manage the use of the resources available to the school effectively and make sure that the school is using its funding to raise achievement.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138953
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	411689

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	527
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sean Usher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julia Kedwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 409608
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