

# Ecton Village Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121818
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314112
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Melvyn Hemmings

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Simon Vilette
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne O'Neill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	West Street Ecton Northampton NN6 0QF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 409213
<b>Fax number</b>	01604 409213

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small village school, with pupils taught in three mixed-age classes. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. An increasing number of pupils are from Travellers of Irish heritage families. In recent years, there has been significant disruption to teaching and learning caused by long-term staff absences, particularly those of key leaders. This has led to a sharp decline in the numbers of pupils attending the school. An interim headteacher was appointed in September 2007 to lead the school for three days a week. Since January 2008, the school's leadership has been shared by the addition of another interim headteacher for the other two days.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has made significant improvement since September 2007. Staff, pupils and parents are pleased with the changes that have occurred and the general feeling is that 'a corner has been turned.' The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive of the school, with the following comments capturing the views of many; 'The school now has a far more welcoming atmosphere, staff and pupils seem far happier' and 'A wonderful little school, very friendly staff and children.'

The strong leadership of the interim headteachers has been the critical factor in moving the school forward. They have introduced and overseen a variety of initiatives to improve provision. These have included more rigorous checking of pupils' progress and improved planning to meet their individual needs more effectively. As a result, teaching and learning have improved, pupils' progress has accelerated and standards are rising. The interim headteachers have shouldered much of the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and taking action to bring about improvement. They are now involving subject leaders and governors more in supporting school improvement. Previously, these roles were limited and so they remain underdeveloped.

Children have a good start in the Reception class and make good progress. In the past, pupils' progress has been satisfactory in Years 1 to 3 but has been inadequate in Years 4 to 6. Consequently, there has been significant underachievement in these year groups that led to below-average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This underachievement stemmed from the serious disruption to pupils' learning in previous years. Action taken since September 2007 has successfully eliminated this underachievement. The improvement in teaching, which is satisfactory, means that pupils now make satisfactory progress from Years 1 to 6. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on target to reach broadly average standards in all three subjects, which shows their achievement is now satisfactory. The school has identified the need to raise standards in English, through developing pupils' writing skills in other subjects, and in mathematics, by ensuring methods of calculation are used consistently throughout the school.

Pupils behave well, which makes a positive contribution to the progress they make. They have positive attitudes to their work and clearly enjoy lessons. Relationships are good, reflected in the calm and friendly atmosphere evident throughout the school. Teachers have improved lesson planning, particularly in the class containing pupils in Years 4 to 6, to meet individual needs more carefully. However, there are times when the work does not effectively challenge pupils to improve their performance. This is particularly the case for the more able pupils. This leads to pupils making satisfactory, rather than good progress. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of out-of-school clubs and educational visits. There are growing links with other organisations, such as the local church, to extend pupils' learning further. Pastoral care and support for pupils are strong, and include rigorous safeguarding procedures. There are good links with other organisations to promote pupils' well-being.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children's skills when they start school are lower than usually found. They make good progress in the Reception class because of the good quality of teaching they receive. As a result, by the

time they enter Year 1, the majority are working securely within the levels expected for their age. Staff work well together to provide an effective balance between adult-directed activities and those chosen by the children. Children show much enjoyment in their learning in the very friendly and happy atmosphere. They behave and collaborate well in pairs and small groups. Their progress is tracked carefully, so work is planned that matches their individual abilities well. The monitoring of their performance has identified the need to improve their ability to link letters to sounds. Good procedures help children settle quickly into school life when they first start in Reception. Links with parents are good and they are kept fully informed of the progress their children make.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Promote pupils' writing skills in other subjects and ensure the consistent use of calculation methods in mathematics.
- Sharpen lesson planning to ensure that pupils, especially the more able, are given suitably challenging work.
- Develop the role of subject leaders and governors so they are more effective in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

A small proportion of 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**

Children make good progress in the Reception class and achieve well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 2 attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils maintain satisfactory progress through the rest of the school and reach standards by the end of Year 6 that are broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils' attainment in writing is a weaker aspect of their performance in English. In mathematics, pupils' skills in calculation are improving but they are not yet as strong as other areas of the subject. The performance of boys in recent years has been lower than that of girls. Leaders have introduced initiatives, such as a wider range of stimuli in lessons, to engage boys more effectively in their learning. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these initiatives but it is being closely monitored. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are confident and articulate. They say they enjoy coming to school because it is a friendly place and teachers give them interesting things to do. Most come to school regularly but there is a significant minority of pupils, mainly from Travellers of Irish heritage families, whose attendance is poor. The school is doing all it can to improve their attendance. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community by taking on responsibilities, such as class and school monitors. They also support the life of the village, as is seen in their growing involvement in the local church and the way they raise funds for local charities. Pupils'

satisfactory basic skills in literacy and numeracy mean they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is improving, which is clearly shown by the faster progress pupils make, particularly in Years 4 to 6. At the start of lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are to learn and how to set about their activities. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs and small groups, which makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Although teachers are making better use of assessment information when planning lessons, it is not always used effectively to set sufficiently challenging work for the range of ability within the class. Pupils' involvement in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing and how they might improve their work is at an early stage of development. Inconsistencies in the teaching of calculation methods in mathematics remain because the recently introduced whole-school strategies have not yet been firmly embedded in all year groups. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the way the curriculum is made more interesting by the visits they take part in and the visitors they work with. They also enjoy the opportunity to participate in the after-school sporting clubs and the healthy-cooking club. These make a positive contribution to pupils' social development. There are good links with other visitors, such as musical groups and guest authors, to widen their horizons and develop their skills further. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop further their literacy skills by writing in a variety of styles in subjects other than English. The programme for pupils' personal development effectively promotes their understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. The school is exploring ways of developing a more cross-curricular and creative approach to learning to enable pupils to use skills learned in one subject to support learning in others. Pupils say they would welcome this, as it would give them more fun things to do in lessons.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

All staff are fully committed to ensuring pupils' health and well-being and provide good pastoral support and care. Child protection and risk assessment arrangements are thorough. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know they can talk to a member of staff if they have any worries. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and good links exist with outside agencies to provide extra support for individual pupils when required. Parents are very appreciative of the way the school cares for and looks after their children. The support and guidance for pupils' academic progress have improved in recent months and are now satisfactory. The marking of pupils' work is more focused and helpful in suggesting how they might improve. The setting of targets is improving and pupils say they enjoy having them. However, information about pupils' progress is not always used effectively to plan work that is sufficiently challenging to pupils of different abilities.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The interim headteachers have a clear vision for the school's future development. All involved in the school share this vision and a strong team spirit is evident. Self-evaluation is accurate and has enabled the correct areas for improvement to be identified and prioritised. The school has worked closely with the local authority to bring about improvement in these areas, which includes closer monitoring of pupils' progress and using the information more effectively to set challenging targets for improvement. Local authority staff have advised, provided training and worked alongside teachers across a variety of aspects. The positive impact of this partnership is shown by the increased progress that pupils are making in English and mathematics. Despite this improvement, leaders are not complacent and acknowledge the need to involve subject leaders and governors more effectively in taking the school forward. The school's recent successful track record shows there is satisfactory capacity to make any necessary changes.

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## 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	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	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 the 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?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	3
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ecton Village Primary School, Ecton, NN6 0QF

Thank you for the really friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. Yours is a satisfactory school, which is improving. Most of you make at least satisfactory progress and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. This letter is to tell you some of the other things I found.

What I liked most about your school

- Children make a good start in the Reception class.
- You enjoy coming to school, behave well and are kind and considerate to others.
- You adopt healthy lifestyles and have a good awareness of how to keep safe.
- You are making a growing contribution to the life of the village.
- You have positive attitudes to your learning, which helps you to make satisfactory progress.
- All adults take good care of you and make sure you are safe in school.
- Relationships between you and the adults are good and help to make the school a friendly place in which to work and play.
- The people who lead the school are working hard to help it improve further.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Help you to improve your writing skills in other subjects as well as English and develop your calculation skills in mathematics.
- Improve lesson planning to make sure all of you receive work that makes you think hard.
- Make sure that subject leaders and governors are more involved in helping the school to improve further.

Some of you do not come to school every day so you could help the school improve by attending as regularly as other pupils. I hope you continue to enjoy your learning and carry on being kind to others.

All my best wishes for the future

- Melvyn Hemmings
- Lead inspector

**Annex B**

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