

Ecton Village Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121818
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340016
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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

The registered childcare provision, 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 of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Villette
Headteacher	Mrs E McIntosh
Date of previous school inspection	0 March 2008
School address	West Street Ecton Northampton
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Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2009
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, senior leaders, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan, key policies, the tracking of pupils' progress, arrangements for safeguarding pupils and 13 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of strategies to raise standards in writing and mathematics
- how well teaching provides for the wide range of abilities in the three mixed-age classes
- pupils' personal development as confident and independent learners
- how well the school leadership monitors and evaluates performance, linked to action to drive improvement.

Information about the school

This is a small village school with three mixed-age classes. Class 1 is made up of Reception and Year 1 pupils, Class 2 of pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4, and Class 3 of pupils in Years 5 and 6. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Only a few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds including four Traveller pupils. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school other than the usual time of admission or leaving. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The on-site Acorns Pre-School group is managed by the school and was observed as part of the inspection. The headteacher took up post in January 2009 after a period when there was no substantive headteacher.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Ecton Village Primary School is a satisfactory school with good features. The school is justly proud of its inclusive nature and its place at the heart of the community. It is a welcoming school and one in which pupils feel safe and valued because staff know the pupils really well and provide good levels of care. As a result, several aspects of pupils' personal development are good. Relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils are polite, have positive attitudes towards their learning and enjoy coming to school. They are keen to contribute to the school community, take their responsibilities seriously and become increasingly independent and confident learners.

Provision for children in the pre-school is satisfactory. Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. An appropriate focus on the development of social skills helps to prepare children for their move into the main school, but links with the Reception class are not close enough to ensure continuity in children's learning experiences. Children make a satisfactory start in the mixed Reception/Year 1 class and most quickly settle into the day-to-day life of the school. They make satisfactory progress and enjoy the range of activities on offer. But there is not always enough challenge for the more able. Staff use a range of methods to assess children as they learn and develop, but do not use regular focused assessments to ensure that children practice their basic skills across all areas of learning and in play situations.

Because of the small cohorts and the range of abilities in each year group, attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 fluctuates around the national average from year to year. Attainment in reading is generally above that in writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that although attainment in the current Year 6 is slightly above previous years, there is a continuing need to raise standards of literacy and numeracy, particularly among those of higher ability pupils. This is because frequent changes in leadership since the last inspection have slowed the drive to raise standards. The new headteacher has evaluated the school's work accurately, identified the right priorities for improvement and is beginning to implement appropriate strategies to drive improvement. This is being done while carrying a substantial teaching commitment in addition to her leadership responsibilities. More challenging targets are being set and more effective use is being made of assessment information to check pupils' progress. Those at risk of underachieving are being identified at an earlier stage and additional support provided. This is particularly beneficial for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, Traveller pupils and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The headteacher is, rightly aware that there is a need for good or better teaching to be a consistent feature across all year groups if standards are to rise. In many lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Not enough

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use is being made of assessment information in lesson planning to ensure that pupils of all abilities in the mixed-aged classes are provided with learning tasks that really stretch them.

Governance is satisfactory. The school benefits enormously from the expertise and commitment of the chair of governors. However, while governors as a whole are very supportive of the school, they are not sufficiently involved in the direct monitoring and evaluation of school performance to fully act as 'critical friends'. Nevertheless, the improvement seen under the new school leadership, together with the willingness of all staff to tackle weaknesses, gives the school satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment at the ends of Years 2 and 6 by implementing an agreed school strategy for raising standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and ensure that it is carefully monitored to ensure that it is having a positive impact.
 - Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that expectations are raised and that in all lessons assessment information is used to plan work that offers appropriate challenges to pupils at all ability levels.
 - Improve leadership and management by:
 - providing the headteacher with more time to monitor and evaluate the work of the school
 - implementation of school policies and plans
 - ensuring that governors are better equipped to fulfil their role as critical friends.
 - Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that learning activities are guided by accurate daily assessments of children's needs
 - strengthening links with the Ecton Acorns Pre-School.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Although there is some variation between cohorts, taken overall, children's skills on entry to Reception are generally consistent with those usually found in children of their age. Most achieve the age-related expectations by the time they enter Year 1. From Year 1 to Year 6, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and Traveller pupils make satisfactory progress. The small number of pupils in the school means that aggregated data about their attainment at the ends of Years 2 and 6 must be treated with caution. The school's results in national tests and

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assessments, as shown in percentages, are often influenced significantly by the addition or loss of a single pupil at the time of the assessment. On paper, therefore, results can fluctuate widely from year to year. Scrutiny of the progress of individual pupils, which included their work and observation of lessons shows that all are making the expected progress and attainment is average.

Pupils are thoughtful and caring to each other and their behaviour is consistently good. Those who join the school in Years 3 to 6 settle well into their new classes and quickly become part of the 'school family'. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe and healthy, and speak enthusiastically of their responsibilities, including being on the school council or being assembly or playground monitors. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils accept and respect each other's differences, and have many opportunities to develop an awareness of people from other cultures, religions and backgrounds. Such experiences help to ensure that by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, they are well-rounded and sensible young people, satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education. The vast majority attend very regularly unless they are unwell and the school is working with the families whose children are not as reliable in their attendance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, there are some good aspects throughout the school. Good relationships characterise all teaching and these form the basis of effective class management and good behaviour. Teachers use speaking and listening activities well to help pupils to develop ideas for their writing. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length or to apply their basic skills in subjects across the curriculum. Teaching assistants work effectively to support pupils in lessons and, in the best lessons good use is made of interactive whiteboards to stimulate interest and reinforce learning. In some lessons, assessment information is used well to guide the planning of learning tasks that are suited to the ability levels of all pupils in these mixed-age classes. In other lessons however, the work planned is not pitched at the correct level and progress slows because the learning tasks do not offer enough challenge. Pupils' books show good practice in the marking and assessment of the work. This practice helps them understand their strengths and how to improve.

The curriculum satisfactorily meets pupils' needs and offers them an increasing range of interesting activities. There is a strong focus on learning about life in other countries and about Christianity and other faiths. This is reinforced by opportunities for pupils to broaden their experience of the diversity of cultures beyond the immediate locality. A themed cross-curricular approach is being introduced that enables staff to plan more creatively and flexibly. This, together with the use of role-play, as seen in the work of Class 3 on the Jarrow March for example, helps to give topics more relevance and meaning. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a good range of extra-curricular activities in sport and the arts.

The commitment to the care, support and guidance of all pupils is at the heart of the school's philosophy and pupils are well cared for and supported in both the main school and the pre-school. All are treated as part of the 'school family' and are given good support when they need it. Pupils feel valued and know what to do if they have a worry; as one said, 'Teachers are kind and help us when we need it.' The school works closely with outside agencies to find additional help when it is needed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

After a period of considerable instability in school leadership, staff, governors and most

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parents and carers welcome the positive impact the new headteacher has had on the school. They have noticed in particular a more purposeful and clearer sense of direction. Systems for evaluating school effectiveness have been strengthened in the last year. As a result there is a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas to be developed. The school improvement plan is centred appropriately on the importance of raising standards and inspection evidence indicates that these are beginning to rise. Governors support the school and help to give the school a positive profile in the local community. They ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. However, they are not engaged enough in the strategic management of the school.

The school works well with outside agencies such as the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller support service and educational psychologists to support individual pupils when required, showing a commitment to promoting equal opportunities for all pupils and ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is strong and there are good links with the local community and awareness of life in other countries. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to gain an understanding of Britain as a diverse, multicultural society but the school has not yet evaluated the impact of provision in this area. The school has good relationships with parents and carers, who are provided with regular information about the progress their children are making.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although there are some weaknesses in the provision for children in the Early Years

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Foundation Stage which account for satisfactory outcomes, there are also some notable strengths. The setting provides good-quality care which is much appreciated by parents. The level of commitment and care shown by all adults is evident in the way that children settle into the school so well and immediately begin to learn. As a result of these strengths, children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Children are happy in the on-site Ecton Acorns Pre-School and make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Many children enter Reception from the pre-school. The positive impact of this is seen in their good behaviour and the way children work and play well together, and mix well with the older Year 1 children in the class. In other areas of learning, progress is satisfactory because other aspects of provision have relative shortcomings. Chief among these is that planning for individuals does not ensure that each child enjoys balanced and challenging experiences across all the areas of learning. Leadership and management of the Early Years provision are satisfactory. With good support from the local authority, procedures for observing and recording children's progress in the pre-school are being improved. However, because of weaknesses in liaison between the pre-school and Reception, the best use is not made of this information to plan children's next steps in learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Although the number of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire was quite low, the majority indicate that they are happy with the school. They agree that the school has a very warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere and that they are satisfied with their children's progress. There were some concerns expressed by a very small minority of parents. These included concerns about children's safety and about school leadership and management. Neither of these appear to be worries for other parents. Inspectors found that children's safety and well-being are given a high priority and that all statutory requirements are met. After a period of instability in school leadership, under the new headteacher, leadership and management have improved and the school is moving forward. Inspectors found no evidence to support the few concerns indicated in other areas.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ecton Village Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 13 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	62	3	23	2	15	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	46	6	46	1	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	62	2	15	2	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	69	2	15	0	0	1	8
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	54	4	31	0	0	1	8
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	62	4	31	1	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	5	38	4	31	1	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	62	2	15	2	15	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	46	5	38	1	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	54	3	23	1	8	1	8
The school is led and managed effectively	7	54	4	31	0	0	2	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	62	4	31	1	8	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for the help you gave us with the recent inspection of your school and for the friendly way you received us. We spoke to many of you and I have told your headteacher how really helpful you all were. I particularly enjoyed listening to your singing in assembly and I am writing to tell you the main things we found out about your school.

You all say that you enjoy school, listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and are willing to work hard in your lessons. We have asked your teachers to make sure that in all of your lessons you are really stretched so that you make the best possible progress. Although you are making satisfactory progress, the standards you reach by the end of Year 6, particularly in English and mathematics, could be higher and we have asked that a big effort is made to help you do this. Your teachers spend a lot of time planning the things you do in lessons and we have asked that they make sure that the activities really make you think. We have also asked that in Reception there are regular checks to make sure that there is a good mix to the activities that children enjoy and that there are closer links with the pre-school group.

You understand the importance of being healthy. Most of you eat sensibly and take part in physical activities regularly. You learn to work and play well together and help each other. Adults in the pre-school group and in the main school look after you well, so that you are safe and happy.

The headteacher, governors and staff are all determined to give you the best education they can. To help with this, we have asked that the headteacher be given more time to check how well the school is doing and that the governors are also more involved in this. We think that everyone at Ecton can work together to do these things and that you will want to play your part by continuing to behave well and work hard.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Thomas

Lead Inspector

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