

Earl Spencer Primary School

Streatfield Road, Spencer Estate, Northampton NN5 7DE

Inspection dates 17–18 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. He is passionate in his quest to improve the school in every aspect so that pupils are given the best opportunity to succeed.
- The highly effective senior leadership team shares the headteacher’s vision and ambition for the pupils in the school.
- Governors support the school’s leaders extremely well. They have improved significantly since the last inspection and now provide a good balance of support and challenge.
- Teaching throughout the school is good as a result of high-quality training and support. Teachers plan interesting and engaging learning experiences for pupils which they say they enjoy.
- Pupils achieve well because they make at least good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around the school. There are exceptionally positive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils feel extremely safe, and safeguarding systems are accurately followed and meticulous in detail.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. This is because precise analysis identifies accurate teaching and support for them.
- Parents are warmly welcomed into the school and they appreciate the improvements made since the last inspection.
- Children in the early years get off to an excellent start. A rich environment and high-quality, skilled staff enable all children to make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able and White British pupils do not always achieve as well as they could because they are not always provided with the right level of challenge.
- Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to widen their reading experience.
- Pupils do not always take enough care with their spelling or handwriting. Some pupils do not form their letters and numbers accurately or carefully enough. This spoils the quality of their work and can lead to inaccurate calculations.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further so that it is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the most-able and White British pupils are effectively challenged
 - pupils' spelling, handwriting and letter and number formation increase in fluency and accuracy
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to read a wider range of texts, increasing fluency and enjoyment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The school is extremely well led by the headteacher who has a relentless focus on all pupils' success. 'The children are at the centre of what we do,' reported one teacher, and this captures succinctly the driving force behind the rapid improvements made since the last inspection. Rigorous practices have been implemented to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can.
- Senior and middle leaders, staff and governors all share the headteacher's ambitious desire to continually improve outcomes for pupils of all abilities. Leaders review all aspects of their work regularly and consider different ways to approach school improvement. Consequently, plans are assessed carefully so that the outcomes for pupils are the best they can be.
- The management of teachers' performance is closely linked to pupils' progress, and it is expected that all pupils will make accelerated progress. High-quality professional development is carefully planned to link with whole-school priorities as well as individual teachers' needs. Staff are well motivated. In fact, all those who completed Ofsted's inspection questionnaire are proud to be a member of staff at the school and enjoy working there. As a result, teaching is effective.
- The curriculum is very broad and includes visits to places of interest and visitors to the school. Lessons in English and mathematics, although seen by governors and staff to be important, are enhanced very well by many other subjects and activities. As a result, pupils experience a wide range of interests including chess, gardening, French, music and sport. This varied and challenging curriculum strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many pupils spoke enthusiastically about the different ways in which they learn and the opportunities they have to learn about themselves, people and places. They know that all adults in the school support them very well and value their achievements and successes.
- Pupils understand the need to become responsible citizens and they relish being given positions of responsibility such as school ambassadors. At playtimes, pupils of all ages play and socialise extremely well together. A wide range of activities are provided to ensure there are plenty of things to do to keep pupils occupied and engaged.
- The development of British values is strong in the school, with pupils taking part in democratic processes such as the election of class and school councils. In lessons, as well as around the school, pupils show high levels of respect and get on well together. There are extremely positive relationships between all pupils and adults in the school. The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
- Pupils who receive additional government funding are now making rapid progress throughout the school, and in some instances outperforming other pupils because the support is so well targeted. Intervention programmes are very effective and leaders regularly check that they are making a difference.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium has made a positive difference to pupils' health and well-being. It enables a broad range of experiences such as specialist sports coaches who provide lunchtime activities for all pupils, as well as additional clubs and training for staff. The school has increased the range of PE and sport and works closely with the Duston Cluster to play competitive fixtures such as netball. These improvements have resulted in an increase in the numbers of pupils taking part in PE and sport, participation in local competitions and improved behaviour in lunchtime and in lessons.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View would recommend this school to another parent. Parents support the school very enthusiastically by attending regular meetings to find out what their child is learning in class and how they can provide support. They overwhelmingly feel pleased with the improvements in the school and consider their children to be happy, and well looked after, and that the school's leaders are successful. The school's website provides a wealth of useful information for parents.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors share the vision and expectations of the headteacher and contribute significantly to the improvements made since the last inspection. They have responded positively to the governing body review and have formulated their own improvement plan which outlines their priorities and developments for the future.
 - Governors know the school and the pupils extremely well. They visit the school regularly. They are diligent in their focus on the priorities for improvement and ensure that goals set are achieved. They are meticulous in making sure that no aspect of the work is neglected.

- Governors regularly challenge senior leaders and set high standards for the headteacher through his performance management objectives.
- Governors ensure that additional funds are used appropriately so that staff provide the best possible help for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are extremely vigilant and well trained in order to keep pupils safe and to identify any potential issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The higher expectations of the senior leadership team and a wide variety of training have led to improvements in teaching across the school. Teaching is consistently good and promotes good learning in a wide range of subjects. The raised expectations in pupils' progress is confirmed in pupils' books, visits to classrooms, discussions with pupils and the school's own checks of the quality of teaching over time.
- Teachers plan well-thought-out learning experiences for pupils and ensure that they engage positively in the lessons. However, the more-able are not always set challenging enough tasks. For instance, opportunities are missed in subjects other than literacy and numeracy to provide greater challenge because they are given similar work to others in the class.
- Teachers routinely check pupils' progress during the lesson and use this to move learning on at an appropriate pace, ensuring pupils are aware of their learning focus. Teachers ask stretching questions to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils confidently use the correct words or terminology relevant to the discussion.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and a secure understanding of how pupils learn. Teaching is precise. It is clear that teachers know what skills and what knowledge pupils are expected to develop and where pupils are expected to be for their age in learning. New learning is explained carefully so that pupils understand.
- Adults are deployed effectively. Teaching assistants know which pupils they will be working with in each lesson and what they need to do to ensure the pupils are challenged sufficiently.
- Writing has been a recent school improvement focus. Pupils' work and books show that they are writing at length and using more interesting and engaging vocabulary. Opportunities are also provided for pupils to write in other subjects such as science and history. Pupils are keen to write. However, their efforts are impeded because they do not always form letters and numbers correctly. Some do not have a well-developed handwriting style. In addition, some do not take sufficient care with their spelling. In some mathematics books, poorly recorded numerals lead some pupils to calculate inaccurately.
- Children in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 are taught phonics (letters and the sounds they make) well. They apply these skills in their reading and writing. However, some pupils, particularly the higher attaining, read a limited range of texts which restricts opportunities to increase their reading fluency and develop the joy of reading.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the topics they study which incorporate subjects such as science, history, geography, art and design and technology. Year 6 pupils in particular spoke with particular glee about dissecting hearts and Year 3 pupils enjoy finding out about predators, especially the size of a great white shark's teeth! There are plentiful displays of pupils' work in classrooms and corridors, including some 3D constructions of mountains.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and in a consistent way across the school. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, courtesy and manners. Rare instances of unsettled behaviour or disengagement are dealt with immediately and in a calm and respectful way.
- Marking and accurate checking of pupils' progress informs pupils of their next steps and helps teachers to know when pupils need extra help. This is addressed quickly and in an appropriate way. Pupils usually respond to marking promptly which helps to reinforce their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils speak with great pride about their school and their achievements. There is an exceptionally calm, friendly and nurturing atmosphere around the school.

- Pupils are confident and take their learning seriously. They support each other very well, especially when their peers experience difficulties with their work or at playtime. They interact sensibly and encourage each other and enjoy working independently, in pairs or in teams both in and outside the classroom. Pupils thrive on taking responsibility. For instance, one Year 6 pupil confidently led the warm-up session for her class prior to a PE lesson, which illustrates how successfully pupils' personal development is developed.
- Leaders promote a culture where pupils feel safe. Understanding the rule of law is promoted very well and ensures pupils know what they can and cannot do when using modern technology, for example.
- Pupils have forged friendships groups across ethnic, religious, social and cultural boundaries, and this shows a level of respect and tolerance towards each other.
- Bullying is very rare, and staff deal with it rapidly and effectively when incidents arise.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are very detailed and followed correctly. All staff, governors and volunteers have undertaken relevant training to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. A determined effort to raise the quality of teaching has had a significant impact on improving behaviour in lessons, so that inattentiveness is rare and there is no disruption to learning because of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils strive to do well.
- Attendance has risen significantly since the last inspection and is around the national average. School staff have worked tenaciously to address persistent absence which has reduced considerably.
- Pupils love coming to school as shown by their improved attendance. They rush into class, eager to get on with their work. There is always something for them to learn. Consequently, pupils make very good use of lesson time and appreciate the opportunities provided for them.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well around the school, between lessons and at lunchtime and playtime. They have very positive attitudes to learning, showing high levels of respect to staff and pupils alike.
- Most parents who replied to the online questionnaire have no concerns about pupils' behaviour or how staff deal with any very occasional misbehaviour. This view was supported by staff and inspection evidence.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Standards have improved at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. Most pupils make at least good progress from their different starting points throughout the school and across subjects to reach expected levels for their age. However, White British pupils and the more able do not always achieve as well as they should.
- Typically, children enter Reception with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make excellent progress from their lower than expected starting points and enter Year 1 with knowledge and skills that are appropriate for their age.
- In 2015, the percentage of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average. The outcomes of the spelling, grammar and punctuation test at the end of Year 6 was broadly average. This is the result of tightly focused teaching throughout the school.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015 showed a continuing three-year upward trend at all levels in reading, writing and mathematics to be in line with the national average. Last year, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was lower at the higher levels in reading and mathematics compared with writing. However, most pupils made good progress from their starting points.
- Assessment information for pupils currently at the school, in all year groups, shows that most are achieving at least expected levels with a good proportion exceeding expectations. This is supported by evidence in books. However, in some subjects such as science, history and geography, the more able are provided with work similar to that of other pupils which does not challenge or extend them suitably. Some White British pupils have made slower progress and are being targeted to improve their outcomes.
- There is little difference between the achievement of disadvantaged and other pupils. In fact, in some year groups, disadvantaged pupils outperform other pupils. They make good progress as a result of effective teaching and additional support. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress from their different starting points. Pupils who join the school unable to speak English fluently are given good support to improve their English. Although their progress may be slower

initially, they soon make rapid progress and catch up, achieving levels appropriate for their age.

- Where pupils have lower starting points, or are at risk of falling behind, support is timely and effective and most reach expected levels for their age. Regular pupil progress meetings enable leaders to discuss with teachers each pupil's progress and identify strategies to support any pupils who need additional help.
- Pupils of different ages read well and use their basic literacy skills to work out unfamiliar words and what they mean. Pupils enjoy reading at school and at home; older pupils understand the benefits of reading competently, both to gain knowledge and to help develop writing skills, preparing them for the next stage of their education. However, they do not always have the opportunity to read from a wide and varied range of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Although there is year-on-year variation, most children enter Reception class with levels of development that are well below those typical for their age, particularly in reading, writing and communication and language. By the end of the Reception Year, most children are extremely well prepared for Year 1. Generally, girls have better skills than boys, although the gap narrowed in 2015 as a result of improved provision, and the percentage of boys reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was above that found nationally.
- Children of all abilities make outstanding progress in all areas of learning because teaching is of high quality and activities provided are enjoyable and motivating. The learning environment is bright and stimulating and used effectively to support learning. Children are kept safe and secure because staff ensure that they are well cared for at all times.
- Adults check regularly on how well children are doing, making careful observations and using the outcomes of these to shape children's learning. Adults are highly skilled in talking to pupils to assess their learning, recognising which children need work that is harder or when they need extra help in order to catch up.
- Adults are highly effective in supporting children. As a result, children are confident, understand the school routines and work well together. They show high levels of care for others.
- Children learn in a caring, nurturing environment. Adults encourage them to take risks and foster a 'can do' attitude. Children are praised for their achievement and as a result they want to achieve more. Adults support disadvantaged children, those in the early stages of learning English and those who find learning difficult extremely well. Additional funding is well targeted to narrow the gaps for disadvantaged children. As a consequence, they make exceptional progress.
- A wide range of learning activities are provided to develop different skills. These are exciting, interesting and engaging. For example, children show awe and wonder at the lights in the 'space craft' and how added lights make things brighter. Because children enjoy their learning, they show high levels of concentration.
- Leaders encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning. For instance, a high number of parents attended a parent morning during the inspection where they worked with their child to develop fine motor skills. They thoroughly enjoyed giving their fingers a workout by manipulating and moulding play-dough in time to 'Uptown Funk'.
- Staff work closely with parents and carers, who are pleased with the way children settle into school life. They talk regularly with parents and carers at the start and end of the day to share their child's learning.
- The early years leader is a leading practitioner. She supports the local authority as a beacon of excellence, and staff from other schools visit to observe the high-quality practice evident in this provision.

School details

Unique reference number	121912
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10001813

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Rendall
Headteacher	Mark Rapps
Telephone number	01604 751130
Website	www.earlspencerprimary.org
Email address	head@earlspencer-pri.northants-ecl.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2013

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school which is increasing from one form to two forms of entry.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with pupils of Bangladeshi origin comprising the largest group.
- The proportion of pupils receiving special educational needs support is above average with speech, language and communication difficulties identified as the greatest need.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of educational need or with an education health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to looked after children and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school serves an area of high economic deprivation.
- The school is above the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a number of before- and after-school clubs including a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body and operates on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 14 lessons, seven of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or one of the assistant headteachers. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 51 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They took account of five responses that were made online. Inspectors also talked with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day and at parents' meetings.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to an inspection questionnaire from 53 members of staff.

Inspection team

Paul Weston, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Rath	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Drabble	Ofsted Inspector

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