

Earl Spencer Primary School

Stratfield Road, Spencer Estate, Northampton, NN5 7DE

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching, in the past, has not made sure that all pupils, including those who need extra help, learn the skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics sufficiently well. Although most pupils made the progress that is expected of them, not enough made good progress. Too few pupils reached the higher levels in English and mathematics.
- All pupils, including those who need extra help, and the most able, are now making better progress. However, these improvements to pupils' achievement are not yet sustained over time.
- Teachers do not always show pupils good examples of how to put their ideas into words and phrases when they are writing. In some cases, therefore, pupils are not clear about what is expected of them.
- At times, teachers' long lesson introductions and their explanations limit the time pupils have to be working on their own and thinking for themselves.
- The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work is uneven. Not all pupils receive clear and precise guidance about what they have done well, what they need to do to improve their work or to help them think more deeply.
- The governing body has not used pupils' achievement information well enough to compare how well pupils in this school are doing compared to all schools nationally, in order to hold the school more to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behave well. They feel safe at school and feel well cared for.
- The strong leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has led to significant improvements to children's education in their Reception Year.
- Under the determined leadership of the new headteacher, the staff are working well together to improve pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is improving because leaders provide teachers with clear guidance and training after watching them teach. This helps them to improve and develop their skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers, and one assembly. Three lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher and senior leaders. Inspectors also undertook learning walks, including one with the headteacher, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at learning across the curriculum.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- The school’s safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils’ behaviour were reviewed. Pupils’ work and records of their progress were also looked at.
- Inspectors took account of the 44 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the 26 replies to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

Aileen King

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Earl Spencer Primary School is larger than most primary schools. It is expanding from a one-form to a two-form entry school which will provide 420 places for pupils by September 2018.
- A well above-average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Bangladeshi pupils compose the largest group. Six in every ten pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school is well above-average. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is well above-average. An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times of the year is above that normally found.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The 'Breakfast Club', managed by the governing body, operates on the school site.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent improvements to teaching so that it is consistently good or better and thereby raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that all staff:
 - show pupils good examples of how writing is composed so that they are clear about what they have to do
 - provide more time for pupils to work on their own and think for themselves
 - give all pupils clear and precise guidance, when marking their work, that lets them know what they have done well and what they can do to improve it.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by developing their skills in understanding pupils' achievement information so that they can better hold the school to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance could be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave the school in Year 6 are broadly average. Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils have made consistently good progress over their time at the school.
- In recent years, most pupils made the progress they should in English and mathematics, but too few pupils, including those who need extra help and those who are more able, made more than the progress expected of them. In 2013, more pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, because of better teaching. This improvement is not yet sustained over time.
- Pupils' standards in reading at Key Stage 1 are improving. Children and younger pupils are taught phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) every day. In the last two years, the proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the national phonics screening check were close to the national average. Standards in reading by the end of Year 6 in 2013 were slightly below average. In response, teachers have provided greater opportunities for pupils to enjoy books and to use their reading skills when learning about other subjects, but it is too early to measure their impact on pupils' achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language, made good progress in 2013 because of the extra help they received in lessons. Adults work with pupils on an individual basis or in small groups and use resources well to reinforce new language and ideas. They use questions effectively to find out what pupils already know so that they can break learning down into small, achievable steps.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are lower than those typically expected for their age, particularly in communication and language. Many arrive at school new to English. Almost all children made good progress in 2013 so, by the time they started in Year 1, their skills were above those found nationally. This is because adults organise a range of activities which help to develop their skills across all areas of learning. They provide good language role models and use pictures very effectively to help children to learn new words and phrases.
- Extra funding received by the school provides one-to-one tuition, extra help in lessons, access to educational trips and to after-school clubs for pupils eligible for the pupil premium. It provides bilingual assistance for those also new to English and additional staff to support pupils' social and emotional well-being. By the time these Year 6 pupils left the school in 2013, they were, on average, six months ahead of their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who join partway through the school year are paired up with a 'buddy' and this helps them to learn new routines. Parents and carers are kept informed of how well their children are settling in. Early assessments are made to ensure that these pupils are provided with the extra help they need. These pupils make similar progress to their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not made sure all pupils make consistently good progress. Not all teachers show pupils good examples of how to put their ideas into words and phrases when writing. As a result, some pupils are unsure about what to do and what is expected of them, and their progress slows.

- In lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers take too long to introduce an idea or to explain what pupils have to do. Consequently, pupils do not have sufficient time to work on their own and find things out for themselves.
- The quality of teacher's marking of pupils' work is uneven. There are good examples in some classes of how teachers' comments help pupils to develop their thinking and understanding. However, not all pupils are given precise feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.
- In most lessons, teachers expect pupils to work hard and to do their best. Pupils respond positively to their high expectations and show that they are keen to listen, do as they are asked and do well. This contributes well to the good progress pupils make in the more effective lessons. Teachers and other adults work well together to support individuals and groups of pupils. The work that is set for them is closely matched to their different needs and levels of ability so that all are able to make good progress.
- Teachers provide plenty of chances for pupils to talk to each other about their learning. Adults regularly ask pupils searching questions to help them to clarify their thinking. For example, Year 6 pupils made good progress in their understanding of how shadows were formed, of how they could be shortened and lengthened, by talking in pairs and small groups to explain what they were seeing.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Adults promote children's independent skills well by helping them to get ready for painting and physical activity by themselves. They actively teach children good behaviour; for example, how to take turns and to share with their friends.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in whole-class lessons, small-group work and in one-to-one situations. Almost all pupils are attentive, keen to do their best and are respectful to teachers and to all other adults. Pupils are polite and courteous as they move around the school. In an assembly observed, they showed pride in being a member of their school community and praised each other's achievements.
- Pupils enjoy school. They say that they feel safe, secure and well looked after. Pupils are confident that adults will help them deal with incidents of bullying, such as name-calling, which they say are very rare. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's systems for managing behaviour and believe that it helps them to behave well.
- The parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire and who shared their views with inspectors were positive in their praise for the school and its staff. As a result of the Breakfast Club and positive partnerships with families, pupils' attendance is moving closer to the national average. In addition, an increasing number of pupils arrive in school on time. Pupils attending the Breakfast Club are well cared for. They are provided with good opportunities to socialise and to enjoy eating a healthy breakfast together.
- On very rare occasions, a very small number of pupils show low-level, disruptive behaviour when working on their own, and this limits their learning.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- In previous years, leaders have not taken sufficient action to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Under the leadership of an enthusiastic and committed headteacher, leaders have since taken decisive action to tackle weaknesses in teaching. They have set targets for teachers and provided them with training and coaching so that they can develop their skills. Leaders and governors make sure that teachers' pay is closely related to pupils' progress. As a result, teaching is improving. However, it is not consistently good in all year groups and improvements to pupils' achievement are not yet sustained over time.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, are ambitious for the school. An overwhelming majority of the staff are behind the headteacher's drive to improve and are working well as a team to raise pupils' achievement.
- Those in charge pay due care and attention to ensuring equality of opportunity and take prompt action to tackle discrimination. Systems for checking how well pupils are doing are helping leaders to identify any pupils who are not making enough progress so that they can get the extra help they need.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Significant improvements have been made to the Reception class areas and to the teaching for the school's youngest children.
- Teachers have developed ways of teaching different subjects which are enhanced by visits and visitors. This engages and motivates all pupils. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills in learning about other subjects.
- Staff provide rich opportunities for pupils to participate in different sports. Plans are in place to use the primary sports funding to enable qualified coaches to work alongside class teachers to ensure that all pupils benefit from better quality, specialist sports teaching. Pupils take part in whole-school singing projects and have the chance to play musical instruments. During the inspection, many pupils and staff enthusiastically took part in a 'Dahlicious' dressing up day in appreciation of the stories and rhymes of the author, Roald Dahl. Such activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well.
- The local authority has provided effective support, particularly in terms of developing the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been fully involved in working with pupils, staff, parents and carers to decide what it wants to achieve for its pupils. They understand that the focus on improving teaching must be maintained to improve pupils' achievement. The governing body check the performance of the headteacher and that other teachers are meeting their targets. Although they look carefully at the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress, they have not been rigorous enough in comparing how well pupils are doing with those in other schools nationally. Governors benefit from training so that they are better informed about making decisions in planning for improvement. They have been involved in planning ahead for the expansion from a one- to a two-form entry school. Governors manage the school's finances effectively, including the spending of the pupil premium. Governors make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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

Unique reference number	121912
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	425013

This inspection of the school 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	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Rendell
Headteacher	Mark Rapps
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2012
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