Eckington Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number	112542
LEA	DERBYSHIRE LEA
Inspection number	278953
Inspection dates	20 September 2005 to 21 September 2005
Reporting inspector	Mr. George Derby LI

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

Type of school	Junior	**School address**	School Street
School category	Community		S21 4FL
Age range of pupils	7 to 12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	**Telephone number**	01246 432549
Number on roll	225	**Fax number**	01246 436442
Appropriate authority	The governing body	**Chair of governors**	Mrs.J Vickers
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	**Headteacher**	Mr. Richard Weld

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7 to 12	20 September 2005 - 21 September 2005	278953

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Eckington is an average sized junior school. The social and economic features of the local area are typical of most of the country. A below average percentage (nine per cent) of pupils is entitled to free school meals. The percentage of pupils who have difficulty learning, as well as those with a Statement of Special Educational Need, is average. Two pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and none is learning English as an additional language. The pupils enter Year 3 with standards which are average. The headteacher has been in post for just one year. His appointment followed the long-term absence of the previous headteacher and a year when the deputy headteacher ran the school. The school is part of a group of schools linked to the local engineering college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school is ineffective. Improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate. The school's performance slipped markedly until recently. A new, experienced headteacher is beginning to help the school turn the corner. As yet, though, the school has very few systems to know how well it is doing. A good start has been to check on how well the pupils are performing. Despite the headteacher's actions and his sound leadership of the school, the school continues to require much additional support in order to accelerate the pace of improvement. The new leadership team is inexperienced and their skills are not developed enough. Improvement is too slow and there is an enormous amount of work to do. Because of all of this, and the lack of governor's involvement in the education of pupils, leadership and management are inadequate. Value for money is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning, too, is inadequate. Teaching seen during the inspection was largely satisfactory. However, evidence from pupils' work, from the pupils' poor performance in previous years, and from the pupils' low standards in English (and especially writing) in the 2005 national tests indicate that the teaching has not been satisfactory over time. Teaching is largely uninspiring. Despite this, pupils like school and generally display good attitudes and behaviour. Care for pupils is satisfactory. The school is now demonstrating a concern for pupils' progress. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and particularly in writing. - Instigate a programme of monitoring, evaluation and support in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and improve the systems the school has to check on its own effectiveness. - Continue to improve assessment and the checking on pupils' progress. - Develop the leadership skills of subject leaders and strengthen those of the senior leadership team. - Improve governance, particularly the way governors hold the school to account for its standards and their involvement in planning for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards and achievement are inadequate. Standards have been low in past years and have generally fallen since the last inspection. In 2003 they dipped markedly. However, work done to improve provision has resulted in attainment in mathematics and science rising. The results of the 2005 national tests are likely to be closer to the average than they have been for many years. However, the results in English, especially in writing, deteriorated considerably and are very low. Very few pupils reached the higher level. More able pupils do not have their writing skills extended, although

attention to their progress in mathematics and science has helped to raise their attainment in the tests this year. Targets have not been reached for many years, although the school is getting better at setting these. Pupils enter the school with standards which are generally average, yet by Year 6 these are lower than average overall. Boys' attainment differs markedly from that of the girls and has done for a number of years. Girls do much better than boys. Initiatives undertaken to improve boys' performance have had little impact. Teachers' assessments in 2005 generally underestimated pupils' performance. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily in relation to their targets because of the close personal support they receive from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and respond co-operatively; the school's new approach to managing behaviour is working effectively. Pupils know right from wrong and respect the school rules. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard but there are a few who lack enthusiasm. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, spiritual and cultural aspects are less well developed. Pupils develop self-confidence adequately and they work well in groups. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle but are disappointed that their idea for a healthy tuck shop has not been adopted. Most pupils feel safe, although a small number of boys have concerns about bullying. Older pupils develop a sense of community through their responsibilities as monitors and librarians. Pupils in all classes value the 'Citizen of the Week' award for helping others. The school council is not held in high regard by some learners, and not enough opportunities are provided for members to make a strong contribution to the life of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching, on the whole, does not inspire the pupils. When it does motivate them, their response is positive. They become inattentive at times and do not know what to do next, as a result. There is a lack of imaginative use of resources to improve learning. In some classes a reasonable range of equipment is available and the pupils are excited and delighted when they can use it themselves. There is little use of computers, which pupils are disappointed about, and the school does not have any modern ways of displaying work interactively in classrooms. The school's support for writing is ineffective and has led to poor results this year in the Year 6 tests. Marking is insufficiently thorough and does not help pupils to improve. In many satisfactory lessons seen during the inspection, strengths and weaknesses were finely balanced. Following changes made by the headteacher to planning, most teachers now make clear what the whole class will learn. Although activities, in the main, are matched to

the pupils' needs, few staff specify what different ability groups in the class are to learn. In some lessons the more able pupils are not stretched enough. Many pupils say the work is too easy. Pupils are concerned about the long introductions which leave little time for them to complete their practical work and slow the pace of learning. Teaching assistants work well with pupils during the practical parts of lessons and support the pupils well. During the whole class parts they are unclear of their role and often sit and do little. Teachers' attitudes towards assessment are now more positive and they are beginning to gain a better understanding of their pupils' performance in English and mathematics. There is still much to be done in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is adequate. It provides a reasonably broad range of activities. A substantial amount of time is given to developing pupils' literacy and number skills. Recent analysis of pupils' performance has usefully led to new initiatives, such as the need for different approaches to boost the low standards in writing. Satisfactory attention is paid to pupils learning to stay safe and healthy. Support for new pupils and more challenging work of pupils of higher ability has improved, although there is still more to be done. Pupils with learning difficulties have adequately modified work. There is some attempt to enrich school work, by providing opportunities such as clubs, sports and outings. However, their availability throughout the year is fairly hit and miss. The school has insufficient oversight of what is taught and guidance is considerably out of date. Occasionally, the way that timetables are planned gives rise to gaps in what pupils learn, which affects the progress they make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care and support for pupils are satisfactory. Staff are concerned for the pupils' well-being and safety and pupils are mostly confident of adult help and support. Improvement in behaviour management has resulted in many pupils now behaving well. The procedures to safeguard pupils are effectively in place and adequately co-ordinated. Pupils' progress has not always been watched over sufficiently, although this situation is now improving. The school provides effectively for vulnerable pupils and satisfactorily for pupils with special educational needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher has worked hard over the past year to address some of the school's major long-standing deficiencies. Important beginnings have been made in the collecting and using the information on pupils' progress and establishing a climate for learning. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable amount to do. The headteacher has begun to gain the staff's confidence, identified some of the main priorities to be addressed and formed a senior leadership team (SLT). There are still a few important

areas that have not been tackled though, or have been addressed too slowly. These include checking on, and improving, the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that performance management systems (a legal requirement) are in place. The school has too few systems to know how well it is doing and could not provide inspectors with a clear view of its performance. Parents generally feature little when decisions are to be made. This, and the lack of information they receive, were valid criticisms they made of the school. The staff's own leadership skills are considerably under-developed. The members of the SLT are enthusiastic but have much to do, including developing a greater understanding of their role. The deputy headteacher's leadership role has significantly increased, but all senior staff are relatively inexperienced and need guidance and support to carry out their work. Work has recently begun in developing the roles of subject leaders. However, subject leaders, need to take a bigger part in developing their subjects, checking on the quality of teaching and especially on how well pupils are doing. The school improvement plan is a brief short-term document which addresses the main things the school needs to do over the forthcoming 12 months. It is based on an analysis of the issues undertaken by the SLT but staff and governors have not been involved in drawing up the plan. The actions are not always sharply focused and are more a list of things the school needs to do. It is not costed and there is little to guide the school in terms of the impact of some of the actions. This means that the governors are not able to assess whether the school has been successful. The picture of governance is similar to that seen in the previous two inspections. Governors are still not involved sufficiently in school planning, in holding the school to account or in monitoring its effectiveness. In addition, they do not meet their statutory responsibilities in many areas.

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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**	**16-19**

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards[1] reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

[1] Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	No
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thanks for taking to the time to talk to the inspectors. We found your comments very helpful. You and the staff made us welcome. We were pleased with the following: - The way that you get on with each other; you mostly work hard and your behaviour has improved and is good. - You like your lessons and practical work, such as in science, excites you. - Some of you are quite mature, especially some spoken with in Year 4, and the jobs you are given help to make you more responsible citizens. - Mr Weld has worked hard this year to make things better in the school. - The SATs results in mathematics and science are getting better and maths and science are more fun to learn. Unfortunately, the school has not been improving very quickly. There are still a lot of important things that you and the school need to do to make it better: - You need to improve your English work, especially your writing; the SATs results were quite poor this year so please work hard. - The head and senior staff need to know how well the school is doing and find ways of accomplishing this; they have made a good start in recording the progress you make in English and maths but there is a lot to do. - Some of you said that you did not have enough time to do your work and were sad that there was not a lot of use of computers in lessons; we agree and think that some of your lessons could be a lot more interesting and the work you do a bit harder. - Mr Weld can't do all the work on his own and needs an experienced and knowledgeable team of senior staff to help him improve things. - The governors help to keep the school's budget and the building in good order; they need also to make sure they know how well you are doing and to help plan for the school's improvement. Mr Weld and the staff need a lot of support to do all this. Inspectors will need to help the school and check up regularly on how well it is doing (this is called 'special measures'). They will do this until they think the school has improved enough.