

Elmley Castle CofE First School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 116808 |
| Local Authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 358035 |
| Inspection dates | 21–22 September 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Christopher Parker |

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

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| Type of school | First |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–10 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 76 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Tony Hilton |
| Headteacher | Megan Thomas |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 November 2007 |
| School address | Main Street Elmley Castle, Pershore WR10 3HS |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons, taught by three teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors looked at records of the pupils' progress, lesson plans, some of the school's policies and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from staff, pupils and 37 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well pupils are learning and making progress in mathematics and science.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan tasks that accurately meet the needs of pupils, particularly in writing.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average first school. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and English is their first language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is low, and a very small number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher has been in post for one year. A new teacher joined the school at the start of this term. The school has an Artsmark Silver award.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education for the pupils. The pupils consistently do well in reading throughout the school. In writing and mathematics, there is greater variation in their progress, which results in attainment, although above average, not being as high as it could be by the end of Year 5.

One parent referred to the school as 'an extension of home'. It is a very warm and welcoming place for the pupils, who feel very safe at all times. The high levels of attendance are a testament to their great enjoyment of school. The effective care and support they receive result in their good personal development, high levels of confidence and good behaviour.

The headteacher and the assistant headteacher have identified accurately key areas where improvements are needed. They have taken steps to modify and improve assessment in writing, but similar changes in mathematics are at a very early stage. Although aspects of the teaching are good, there is variation in its impact because lesson planning is not focused sharply enough on building on what pupils already know. In addition, the marking of the pupils' work is not consistently helping them to improve or indicating what they need to learn next. Consequently, the pupils' progress is accelerating at a satisfactory rather than a good rate. The quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' work are monitored by the headteacher, but not enough emphasis is placed on evaluating the impact of the teaching on the pupils' learning and progress.

Improvements to the outdoor area have enhanced the provision for the youngest children, who make a good start to school life because of the effective induction arrangements and good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. The governing body and the staff team are committed to improving the school. Secure self-evaluation underpins the school development plan which, this year, is focused on improving the assessment of writing and mathematics. Changes to the curriculum have generated considerable enthusiasm among the pupils. However, a wider range opportunities to develop and extend their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum have been planned and introduced only very recently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' learning so that they make consistently good progress and reach high standards in writing and mathematics by:
 - planning challenging lessons that build on what groups of pupils already know and are able to do

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- improving marking so that it clearly identifies how the pupils can improve their work
- providing more opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills and use and apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that all aspects of monitoring are sharply focused on the impact that teaching has on the pupils' learning and progress.
- About 40% of the 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**

Many children enter school with a range of skills and abilities that exceed those expected for their age. They make a good start in the Reception class. By the end of Year 5 attainment is above average, but not as high as it could be, because progress from Year 1 to Year 5, although satisfactory, is inconsistent. The school's data show some marked variation in progress from year to year and between subjects. The pupils make good progress in reading. Progress in writing and mathematics is satisfactory, but it is stronger in writing than mathematics because some early steps have been taken to improve assessment and lesson planning.

Variations in progress are evident in lessons and in the pupils' work. In a number of lessons seen during the inspection, the pupils made good progress because the lessons built successfully on what they already knew. However, in a few lessons in mathematics and science, the teacher's plans, were not clear about what the pupils were expected to learn, and did not take sufficient account of the next steps in their learning. As a result, progress was satisfactory rather than good.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The school has used the one-to-one initiative to ensure that a small number of pupils continue to make the progress expected of them in both literacy and numeracy.

The pupils behave well, are confident, and are very keen to contribute to discussions and answer their teachers' questions. They collaborate successfully to solve problems. They respect the views of others and value the links they have with a school in Gambia. In conversation, it is clear that they greatly enjoy school. They say they find lessons interesting, and appreciate the many opportunities provided for them.

The pupils say they feel safe at school at all times, and their parents strongly agree that the school keeps them as safe as possible. They have positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles and enjoy physical educational lessons, particularly swimming and after-school sports clubs.

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

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 | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| 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

How effective is the provision?

Although aspects of the teaching and learning are good, there are inconsistencies and weaknesses in key areas. Variation in the quality of lesson planning, some superficial marking, and insufficient rigour in assessing the pupils' achievements all contribute to a slowing of pupils' progress.

The teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. They manage lessons well and set tasks that interest the pupils. However, some lesson plans and activities are not focused sharply enough on what pupils of differing abilities are expected to learn. Recent developments in the assessment of writing are providing more precise information, which is being used effectively by the teachers. In a lesson in Year 4/5, when examining how an author constructs the setting for a story, the pupils made good progress because the tasks the teacher set them were well matched to the needs of different groups in the class. In this lesson, the teaching assistant was also very effective in supporting those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, because the tasks were skilfully tailored to build on what they were already able to do.

In a few mathematics and science lessons, the work was not planned well enough to match the pupils' needs and enable them to make good progress. In such lessons, progress ebbs and flows, because too long is spent on activities where the pupils are not learning new things or practising and honing new skills.

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A 'new' curriculum has recently been introduced. This makes links between most subjects, other than English and mathematics, around central themes. The pupils speak very enthusiastically about these developments and they clearly enjoy and are very interested in the themes they are studying. There is a clear plan of science topics but no structure to the teaching of investigative skills. The development of a forest school has extended opportunities for outdoor learning and makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.

Arrangements for caring for pupils are well organised and provide a climate in which they feel safe, and that supports their well-being and personal development. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with the support that they need in order to help them to tackle the difficulties they face.

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?

The headteacher and teachers are keen to bring rapid improvement. They, along with the governing body, have accurately evaluated how well the school is performing. The governing body has, rightly, identified the need for the school to 'add greater value' for pupils. The school development plan sets out a broad range of activities to strengthen its work.

The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. The headteacher is tracking each pupil's progress. She also monitors the quality of lessons, scrutinises the pupils' work and reviews the teachers' planning. These activities provide a broad overview of the teaching but they are not focused sharply enough on the impact on pupils' learning and progress, nor do they provide an insight into precisely where improvements are needed in order to accelerate the pupils' progress.

The school engages well with parents and keeps them well informed. For example, a change of approach to the organisation of the curriculum was recently presented to parents. Links and partnerships with agencies are particularly effective in supporting the very few pupils with specific needs. The school and the pupils also benefit from partnerships that enhance the provision for sport.

The procedures for safeguarding are good, and result in staff and pupils working in a safe environment. Risk assessment systems are well developed. The school satisfactorily promotes community cohesion. It provides pupils with an international dimension through well-developed links with a school in Gambia, but is not as successful in giving the pupils the opportunity to gain an insight into diversity within this country.

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

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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| 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

The children who started school in the last few weeks have settled very quickly into the daily routines because of the good induction arrangements and strong links between home and school. The children respond readily and confidently to the adults and the Year 1 children with whom they share a classroom. They listen to the adults and follow instructions well. Activities to encourage the children's fine motor control, recognition of initial letter sounds, and the counting and matching of objects to numbers all illustrated the good progress they are making at this very early stage in their school lives.

The children in the Reception class last year made good progress and most reached the goals expected by the end of the Reception Year, preparing them very well for Year 1. The activities the adults plan for the children combine those that are led by the teacher and those which the children initiate themselves. Activities flow freely from indoors to out, and the children make good use of the recently covered area adjacent to their classroom.

The adults are constantly making observations and assessments of each child's progress. They are already modifying and adjusting activities for the children who have recently started school, to make sure that they interest and challenge the children so that they can develop and extend their skills at a good rate.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

All of the parents who responded to the questionnaire were happy with their child's experience at school. Many of the parents who added comments were very positive about the 'lovely atmosphere' and 'staff who are always approachable'. A few parents, while being generally supportive, raised questions about whether their child is 'being challenged' or 'stretched enough'. The inspectors found that, while pupils are making satisfactory progress, the teachers are not consistently making effective use of assessment information to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know, and to challenge them to attain higher standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 5.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elmley Castle CofE First 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 26 | 70 | 11 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 29 | 78 | 8 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 14 | 38 | 22 | 59 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 11 | 30 | 24 | 65 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 17 | 46 | 20 | 54 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 16 | 43 | 20 | 54 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 18 | 49 | 17 | 46 | 2 | 5 | 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) | 19 | 51 | 15 | 41 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 16 | 43 | 18 | 49 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 13 | 35 | 19 | 51 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 12 | 32 | 19 | 51 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 15 | 41 | 19 | 51 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 17 | 46 | 20 | 54 | 0 | 0 | 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 all 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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 58 | 36 | 4 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Secondary schools | 10 | 35 | 42 | 13 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 39 | 45 | 3 |
| Special schools | 33 | 42 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 18 | 40 | 29 | 12 |
| All schools | 11 | 42 | 38 | 9 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



23 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmley Castle CofE First School, Pershore, WR10 3HS

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I really enjoyed my discussions with those of you who came to talk me about your school. You are very happy at school and feel safe at all times. You told me about the 'new curriculum' and the many activities you enjoy.

The school provides a satisfactory education for you. You are making the progress expected of you, and some of you are doing well, particularly in reading. I would like to see you all making good progress. This is also the aim of the headteacher and teachers. So, I have asked them to make sure that you all make faster progress in writing and mathematics. I want them to plan more tasks that build on what you already know so that you learn more new knowledge and skills. I have also asked that you be given more opportunities to write in subjects like science. The teachers make most lessons interesting but they do not always point out how you can improve it or what you need to learn next. So, I have asked them to make sure that they always give you much clearer guidance when they mark your work. You can help by always reading and responding to your teacher's comments. I have asked the headteacher to look closely at the teaching and learning in lessons to make sure that all of you make progress at a good pace.

You are able to learn in a very friendly atmosphere where the adults provide good care and support for you. You behave well, and work and play together very sensibly. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for you, both in and after school. Your involvement in many of these activities, and the good support that the school provides, mean that you do well in your personal development. I enjoyed being in your school, and hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector

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