

Elveden Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124765
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359766
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Greatrex

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Brooks
Headteacher	Maria Curry
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2007
School address	London Road Elveden, Thetford IP24 3TN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He observed nine parts of lessons involving the work of four teachers and teaching assistants working with classes, groups or individual pupils. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and governors. The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work, and looked at school documents, external monitoring reports and development planning. Responses from 27 parental questionnaires were analysed as well as those from school staff and pupils

The inspector looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Are standards in writing high enough?
- How effective is the work to improve girls' confidence and achievement in mathematics?
- How effective are national and international links with other schools?
- What is the impact of the lack of an outdoor area on Early Years Foundation Stage provision?

Information about the school

Elveden Church of England Aided Primary School is much smaller than most primary schools. The vast majority of pupils come from White British families, with a small number of pupils of other White heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is high. These pupils have a wide range of needs including moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Children start full-time in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception class) at age four. Pending re-organisation means that the present Year 4 will stay as the school expands to become to a 4-11 primary. In September 2009, the school formed a partnership with Forest Academy, sharing several key personnel including the headteacher. The intention is to federate the two schools.

The school has a 'Healthy School' award and an 'Eco-Schools' 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Elveden is a good school that is moving forward rapidly after emerging from a period of instability. It has outstanding capacity for further improvement because it is managed and led well and all staff and governors share the vision for the school's future, and strive for identical goals. The close partnership with another nearby school means excellent leadership and management systems and personnel are shared. The benefits are clear and numerous; for example, staff train together, sharing expertise and experience so that staff morale is high. The headteacher brings vast experience and expertise. Parents and carers are very enthusiastic about recent changes, for example, 'The head takes time to talk to parents and makes herself available very regularly. Her approachability and warmth are reflected in the attitudes of all the staff.' Consequently, the school has become very popular with parents and carers.

Key to the school's success is the excellent drive and ambition for all pupils to achieve all that they are capable of. Leaders have been single-minded in pursuing high-quality teaching and learning so that pupils' progress is rapid. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 4 are well above those expected. When pupils struggle, they are given excellent support so that limited vocabulary, for example, is not a barrier to learning in another subject. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent and these pupils do very well. When pupils show high levels of ability in a subject, the school recognises this and caters for it very well. For example, very able pupils may work with older pupils in that particular subject. Parents and carers recognise this, one stating, 'We are extremely pleased with the progress our child has made.'

Every pupil is known as an individual and all thrive in the school's nurturing environment. Pupils' safety is paramount. Pupils are proud of their school and enthusiastic to learn. They behave extremely well, particularly in lessons, and contribute much to their own learning. Relationships with staff are excellent so that no time is lost in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to give pupils the help they need, when they need it. Teaching is good because lessons are planned meticulously so that every moment is fully utilised. Tasks are invariably at the right level for each pupil because assessment is thorough and accurate. Consequently, activities are neither too hard nor too easy and pupils are always at the cusp of new learning. Pupils know, at the start of every lesson, how well they did in the last, what they achieved and where they need to focus next. This is very beneficial, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to review their own progress, or give one another helpful opinions. Teachers prepare their pupils to achieve well by giving them the tools they need to succeed, such as the useful prompts and reminders in, 'My instruction book checklist'.

The school is becoming so effective because every improvement starts with an accurate assessment and is supported by a systematic action plan. While many governors are new

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and still developing their roles, great care has been taken in selection to ensure each can make a valuable contribution. For example, a governor's skills in health and safety benefit the school. An associate governor with expertise in governor training is helping governors quickly understand their roles. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's close partnership with their parents and carers. Pupils benefit also from activities with other local schools. However, although the school has plans to forge partnerships with other national and international schools, this has yet to benefit pupils, particularly in their understanding of life in a multi-cultural society.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress, and that of their peers, in lessons and over time so that they develop greater awareness of their role in the assessment process.
- Better prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society by further developing national and international links in contrasting locations to incorporate meaningful activities into the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment at the end of Year 4, when pupils currently leave the school, is now well above that expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 fell below average in 2009 in reading, writing and mathematics. Because new management introduced a clear focus on raising standards, they recovered in 2010 so all three subjects were above average. Current standards are well above average.

Progress through the school in writing is particularly good because of the improvements made in the curriculum. This is seen particularly in the greater variety of types of writing in work across subjects. Since the last inspection, handwriting is taught more consistently and skills are generally good. Likewise, opportunities to write using a range of styles are much better. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils took notes about the Egyptians before writing an information sheet for a class book. They saw the purpose of notes and learnt how to write in paragraphs. They used a good range of vocabulary to make their writing interesting to the reader. Girls are equally enthusiastic about mathematics and achieve as well as boys because staff build their confidence and provide very good role models. Able pupils generally make excellent progress because they learn with their ability group rather than their age group. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive support tailored closely to their individual needs, and good quality activities carefully matched to their levels.

Pupils say, and parents and carers confirm, they feel very safe in school and have an outstanding understanding of how to stay safe, including e-safety. Pupils behave exceptionally well, particularly in lessons, and this has a positive impact on the pace of their learning. Pupils' understanding of how to stay healthy is outstanding and they are enthusiastic ambassadors. For example, the school council makes a very relevant contribution to school life by conducting a questionnaire about health and monitoring packed lunches. They describe their role as, 'We try to sort things out.' Other pupils, too, make a good contribution, for example as play leaders. Their basic skills are good, so they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Children attend well because they enjoy school so much. A recently arrived pupil said, 'I was anxious when I first came to

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the school but the staff were very understanding and my new friends helped me settle in well.' Pupils' spiritual development is excellent and assembly provides a very positive start to the day because of the warm, positive atmosphere and genuine care and 'family' atmosphere.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Teaching is good because teachers prepare very thoroughly so that everything is in place to support pupils' learning. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach are strong. For example, pupils in a music lesson in Year 2 quickly learnt the meaning of 'dynamics' and 'pitch' because their teacher illustrated these for them. Pupils are very keen to meet teachers' high expectations of the quality and quantity of work they produce. Technology is used effectively, particularly to enable pupils to re-draft text or gain more understanding of the activity through a visual explanation that extends the oral teaching. Teaching assistants are effective and work closely with the pupils they support, particularly those who struggle. Most lessons make a lively start so pupils are enthused. They try hard and persist with challenging tasks. Lesson closure is generally used effectively. In a mathematics lesson in Year 2, for example, the teacher used examples from the pupils to clarify and extend their thinking, and showed those who struggled how to approach the problem. This does not always happen and closure can be an account, not an evaluation, of work done. Occasionally, pupils who finish tasks early have no

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meaningful activity to extend them further. While teachers assess pupils' work very carefully, and use this information to plan lessons that fully meet pupils' needs, they use assessment in lessons less effectively, and do not give pupils enough opportunities to assess themselves and each other. Pupils are keen and respond enthusiastically to lessons that bring the curriculum alive, such as a discussion of mummification. This was further enlivened by a theatre visit so that pupils clearly developed deeper understanding and interest.

The curriculum emphasises basic skills but is increasingly cross-curricular so that learning in one subject is reinforced in others. Pupils say they like this way of working and feel they better understand the purpose of some lessons. Pupils' excellent memories clearly demonstrate the impact made by days and weeks given to specific themes, such as the Lord's Prayer. The school makes very good use of the surrounding area and links with other schools to widen pupils' experiences, including weekly cooking lessons, regular concerts and a 'masterclass' for able mathematicians. A good range of homework tasks, including opportunities to research, supplement work done in school. A good range of extra-curricular activities, much enjoyed by pupils, extends the curriculum further.

All pupils receive excellent care, but Elveden staff 'go the extra mile' for any pupil who needs a little more attention. The school works closely with outside agencies, parents and carers to ensure pupils thrive. Much is done to see the transition from the pre-schools is smooth. Parents and carers confirm that their children settle quickly. Transition to middle school has been equally good because the school ensures pupils gain the self-confidence necessary. Because management is so thorough, plans are already being discussed for future transition to high school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

From the moment they arrived, the headteacher and senior teacher have relentlessly pursued excellence for the pupils. A clear and accurate assessment of every aspect of the school has led to rapid improvement. Teachers receive the support and guidance to enable them to be effective. All staff work as an effective team and say they benefit from opportunities to train and plan with their partner school.

Management is very pro-active. Expansion plans are well thought out, clear and focused on improving provision so that learning continues to improve. Approximately three quarters of governors have changed in the recent past. New governors are receiving very good guidance so they are developing quickly but processes by which they hold the school to account are not fully embedded.

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Equal opportunities are promoted in all policies and seen in the day-to-day practices of the school. As a result, all pupils, regardless of ability or background, make good progress. Clear procedures exist to tackle any discrimination should the need arise. Pupils' safety is given the highest priority and parents and carers are confident their children are safe in school. Collaboration with other agencies is good and staff and governors take part in high quality training so that school systems and procedures are very thorough and comprehensive. While pupils make a good contribution to village life and links with their local partner school are excellent and growing, links with schools further afield and overseas are very much in their infancy.

The efficient use of funds available to the school ensures every penny is spent wisely so that the school has a good number of well trained staff and good quality resources. Pupils appreciate everything that has been done recently to provide a well maintained, attractive and welcoming environment.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's range of skills and experiences is broadly as expected for their age when they join the school. They make good progress because they have positive attitudes and a love of learning so they apply themselves well to the interesting and varied curriculum. As at the last inspection, access to the outdoors is restricted. In the short term, staff plan very interesting and imaginative activities that fully engage children, for example pretending to take a train ride, to negate this disadvantage. In the longer term, the new purpose-built accommodation will enable children to have 'free-flow' opportunities. In the meantime, children particularly enjoy the woodland experiences, such as creating three-dimensional art. Other activities, including shelter building, give them opportunities to work as part of a team and begin to learn life skills such as cooperation and collaboration.

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Teaching is good; activities are interesting, varied and relevant so children make good progress. Strong emphasis on basic skills means that children make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Children respond very positively to their teacher's high expectations, for example that they will try to spell new words themselves. Assessment of one lesson is used well when planning the next so children know what they have done well and where they need to improve next. Catering for each child's unique needs is a particular strength. Whether a child has special educational needs and/or disabilities, or a particular ability, their levels are accurately assessed and suitably challenging tasks given. One parent stated, 'The school has met (our son's) academic needs excellently allowing him to learn with others of equal ability.' The link with the partner school is seen as very beneficial, offering very helpful advice and expertise.

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

The response from parents and carers to the questionnaire was very positive indeed. Over half of families responded. Very few parents and carers disagreed with any of the questions or expressed written concerns. It is clearly evident that the school has the overwhelming support of parents and carers, although a small number of parents feel that communication could be better, particularly by taking better account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection found the school to be taking account of many parental suggestions, particularly those made in a recent questionnaire sent by the school to the parents. Furthermore, although parents' evenings are felt to be very beneficial, a few parents and carers would like more information about the progress their children are making in between these meetings. The inspector concurs with the positive view that Elveden Primary is a good school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elveden Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 inspector received 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	67	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	70	8	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	59	10	37	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	67	8	30	0	0	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	41	15	56	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	48	14	52	0	0	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)	12	44	10	37	0	0	5	19
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	63	9	33	0	0	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	30	17	63	0	0	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	33	14	52	3	11	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	14	52	13	48	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	63	10	37	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Elveden Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Thetford, IP24 3TN**

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school, and for sharing your thoughts and ideas. Thanks also to Red Deer Class who completed the questionnaire for me. All this information helped me to make my judgements about your school. Like your parents and carers, I think Elveden is a good school. I have said so in my report for them. In it, I mention many good things. Here are a few of the best.

Your behaviour is excellent, particularly in class. You try hard and persevere to do your best.

In your lessons and books I saw that you are making good progress.

You feel safe because you are looked after extremely well.

You have an outstanding understanding of what you need to do to be healthy.

The adults in school and your parents and carers work together very well to make sure you do well.

Lots of exciting new developments mean your school is improving all the time.

There are two main areas where I feel your teachers and leaders can improve your learning. These are:

- giving you opportunities to work with pupils from schools further afield, both nationally and internationally, so you are better prepared for the future
- providing you with more regular and consistent opportunities to think about how well you are doing in your learning, and to offer each other helpful advice.

I hope you will continue to enjoy your time in school and to try your best in everything you do.

Yours sincerely

Robert Greatrex

Lead inspector

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