

Elsenham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115129
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357704
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Anderson
Headteacher	Linda Reid
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed seven teachers in 19 lessons. Meetings were held with governors, groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, as well as 110 returned questionnaires from parents and carers and 86 pupils' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which school tracking and other data indicate that all pupils make sufficiently good progress.
- The effectiveness of the school's marking and assessment practice in helping pupils to improve their work.
- The success of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in helping children to make good progress.
- The extent to which the school leadership and governing body have maintained a positive drive for continued school improvement during a period of changes to staff, including of members of the school leadership team.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school that has increased in size in recent years. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and a very few pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. This proportion varies considerably in the different year groups and includes a number of pupils with complex medical conditions. The proportion of those known to be eligible for free school meals is average. There have been some changes to the school's staff since its last inspection. The school has national Healthy Schools status and the Activemark and Eco-schools Bronze Awards.

There has been a pre-school on the school site, but this is not currently operating. The pre-school is not run by the school's governing body.

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

2

Main findings

Elsenham is a good school that has successfully negotiated a period of considerable staff change. During this time, it has maintained its key strength as a school with a strong and inclusive ethos. Throughout this period, the school has been led well by the headteacher, who has the admiration and respect of parents and carers, staff and the governing body. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's provision and the governing body and staff are strongly committed to improving the school further.

During their time in the school, pupils make good progress to reach above-average standards at Year 6, particularly in reading and writing. The school has successfully tackled a small decline in mathematics in previous years and current attainment in this subject now reflects that found in English. The rigorous school tracking shows that pupils in each year make good progress. The very strong care and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that they do as well as others.

Parents and carers are very confident that their children are safe and well supported. A considerable number of pupils have particular learning needs, including medical conditions that result in absence, yet pupils' commitment to school is reflected strongly in their above-average attendance and good behaviour. Pupils enjoy their lessons and, in all years, most understand their targets and how well they are progressing. The school council is very active and the school, regularly, consults all pupils and gives them varied responsibilities. Consequently, pupils demonstrate much confidence and readily play an active part in the school, including being playground buddies and 'eco-monitors' and organising Christmas and summer productions. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, helped by their close involvement in the local community.

The positive attitudes and good progress of pupils reflect the considerable efforts that teachers and support staff make to understand pupils' individual needs and provide learning opportunities that are interesting and purposeful. Lesson planning is mostly good, though some plans are better than others in providing varied learning objectives that challenge all pupils. Lessons are consistently enjoyable, although there is not always an appropriate balance between adult-led activities and time given to pupils working independently or on group tasks. There is much good practice in assessing and recording pupils' progress and this is recognised and appreciated by parents and carers and pupils. The varied and interesting curriculum has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and makes full use of the local sports partnership and links with schools and industry to provide enrichment in modern languages, drama, science and physical education. The school makes good use of the local community to promote community cohesion. Links further afield are growing, including plans to provide direct opportunities for pupils to experience the wider, diverse society represented in the United Kingdom. The exceptional

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care, guidance and support provided by the school is valued highly by parents and carers and reflected in its success in supporting pupils with specific learning and other needs.

All staff receive a good level of professional development and take an active part in school improvement. This involvement results in high morale and a readiness by all to reflect and improve on current practice. Careful tracking of pupils' progress ensures accurate self-evaluation. The school has used this tracking effectively to increase good practice in its assessment and Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The governing body, working with the headteacher, has a clear vision for the future which includes an expansion of senior leadership. Together with its success in pupils' good achievement, the school has demonstrated a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure lesson planning and teaching is consistently good or better by;
 - providing sufficiently challenging learning opportunities for all pupils
 - providing an appropriate balance of teacher-led, independent and group-centred learning activities within each lesson.
- Extend community cohesion by;
 - providing more learning opportunities and experiences that help pupils appreciate better the wider diversity within the United Kingdom
 - building on current overseas links to increase pupils' awareness of the wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

After a period of change within the school, national test results last summer were above average in reading and writing and at least average in mathematics. The current Year 6, which includes a considerable proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is making good progress and on target to exceed the previous years' outcomes. Significantly, the impact of good provision across Years 1 to 5 is improving pupils' rates of progress. Work seen in Year 5 lessons show rising attainment in mathematics, with pupils matching their above-average literacy levels. Higher-ability pupils, increasingly, benefit from specific provision and meet their targets, with similar proportions doing at least as well as their peers nationally in terms of reaching the higher National Curriculum levels.

In a Year 6 class, pupils worked with their mathematics partners to read and interpret graphs and charts and all showed good progress in being able to derive information and calculate scales for different graphs and each axis. In an English lesson, looking at how film is able to convey different perspectives, Year 5 pupils showed considerable perception and understanding in evaluating the different techniques. In earlier year groups, pupils' good progress was seen clearly in a phonetics (the sounds words make) lesson in Year 2, where pupils, confidently, recognised and spelt complex words accurately, while work in their books showed a growing capacity for extended writing.

All pupils said they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their positive attitudes. They behave well and appreciate opportunities to take responsibility. All feel extremely

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safe in school. As one commented, 'Staff care about us, and we have at least one person we are close to.' Pupils have no issues about bullying and they say such behaviour is very rare. The school council is very active in promoting different aspects of healthy eating, including regularly agreeing the school lunch menus. Every pupil in the school participates in an extra-curricular sport or physical activity. Pupils act as monitors and librarians and play a part in making decisions about playground equipment and charity support. They are closely involved in various village, church and community activities, including summer fetes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and this is reflected in pupils' positive, responsible behaviour and readiness to respond to the many opportunities for reflection. Pupils respond well to work in lessons on different religions and other societies. Awareness of the wider society in this country is relatively less evident, though work is in hand to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?

A key strength of teaching is the very positive relationships with pupils, who feel well supported. Resources are used well to support learning. Information and communication technology is used particularly effectively by staff in consistently interesting and engaging lessons. Most teachers use questioning well to develop and confirm pupils' understanding and there are many valuable opportunities for pupils to work together, share ideas and to work independently, although sometimes these opportunities are more limited than at

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other times. The school benefits from skilled and committed learning support staff, who, ably, support individual pupils and contribute to group activities. All lessons have clear learning outcomes, though these are not always adapted sufficiently to match and challenge the widely different abilities in the classes. The school is well regarded for its good assessment practice, which underpins its rigorous monitoring of pupil progress. Marking is positive and shows the pupils when their learning targets have been met.

The curriculum has considerable strengths in the way it focuses on developing basic skills through a varied and engaging programme that is much appreciated by the pupils. Links outside school enable the pupils to benefit from specialist teaching in French and from trained coaches in cricket, rugby and other sports. In addition to its conspicuous care for all pupils, the school has an excellent track record of supporting potentially vulnerable children and others with special needs, which includes those with complex and sometimes high-level medical conditions. One parent commented, 'Sending a child with special needs to a mainstream school is a massive step and one we have never regretted. Our child's needs have been met incredibly well and...is achieving at levels we could never have dreamt of.'

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?

The school's inclusive ethos is reflected in the supportive and welcoming approach of staff, while pupils' good progress illustrates its commitment to equality of opportunity and the reduction of discrimination. The involvement of the headteacher and some senior colleagues in the local schools' federation and local authority networks is used effectively to share good practice and promote professional training and development. The close links with the social and educational support agencies, similarly, reflect the school's considerably strong partnership links.

The governing body, actively, challenges the school and demonstrates a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. It ensures that all legal requirements are met, including the important aspects of child protection. Safeguarding is secure and monitored carefully, with the governing body ensuring, for example, that the perimeter fencing is strengthened and extended, so improving the use of outdoor areas for learning and play. The school works hard to engage parents and carers through day-to-day contact at the school gate, an active parents' and carers' forum, detailed termly reports on pupils' progress, newsletters, email and the Internet. Consequently, almost all parents and carers say they are kept very well informed.

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Community cohesion has developed well. The school makes much use of the local community and the curriculum provides insight into wider British society and different global issues. Links already established to provide pupils with more direct contact and experience further afield in this country and beyond are being extended.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good Early Years Foundation Stage provision ensures that the children make good progress across all areas of development, with strengths in physical, creative, social and personal skills. As a result, attainment is broadly average when children enter Year 1. The good progress is made possible by the good and, on occasion, outstanding learning opportunities that gain children's interest and foster their growing independence.

The curriculum covers all areas of learning, with many activities to develop imaginative and structured play both in and out of the classroom. The activities provide a good balance between adult-led work and opportunities for children to explore for themselves. The skilled staff are sensitive to the children's needs and help them become more confident learners. Just sometimes, however, the more-able children are not challenged sufficiently to speed up their learning.

Leadership is founded on a thorough knowledge of Early Years Foundation Stage practice. Staff are very effective in providing safe, attractive and well-resourced learning areas for the children. Children's progress is assessed carefully and accurately. Parents and carers are encouraged to be fully involved with their children's education through the weekly newsletter, which provides helpful guidance and support. The school has forged strong links with other local pre-schools and is providing advice on learning in other settings.

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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 return of questionnaires from parents and carers was well-above average. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school, with many taking the time to comment very favourably on the school's leadership and the quality and support from teachers and other staff. Their most frequent comments refer to children's enjoyment and good progress, as well as the responsiveness of the school to parental concerns and readiness to meet the individual needs of pupils. The inspection team's findings concurred with the parents' and carers' views, particularly the exceptional care and support provided for pupils and positive engagement with parents and carers. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that facilities for pupils to change for physical education could be better and wanted to be even more involved in supporting their children's learning. Inspection evidence showed the school made considerable effort to involve and inform parents and carers. The school is aware of the limited space, including changing facilities, and is reviewing arrangements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elsenham CofE Voluntary Controlled 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 inspection team received 110 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 174 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	69	33	30	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	83	75	25	23	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	77	70	32	29	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	60	41	37	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	78	71	31	28	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	76	69	29	26	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	70	64	38	35	2	2	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)	63	57	43	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	59	38	35	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	53	43	39	6	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	54	41	37	9	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	79	72	30	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	76	23	21	3	3	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



11 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elsenham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Bishop's Stortford, CM22 6DD

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Your school gives you a good education and ensures that you achieve well. It was good to hear that so many of you like coming to school and feel it is a very safe place to be. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how you work well together in lessons. We noted that some of you are involved in the school council and many others have responsibilities around the school, such as monitors, librarians and playground buddies. Many of you eat healthily and have a say in the school lunch menus. We were impressed with the range of activities at the school and that all of you are actively involved in after-school sports and other physical activities.

Very many of your parents and carers told us how much you like school and this is reflected in your above-average attendance. You get on well with your teachers and like the opportunities to be involved actively in discussion and group work, although these activities sometimes do not happen as often as they should. We spent some time looking at your books and could see the care many of you put into work. Very many of you said how much you appreciated the help you get from teachers and support staff and that most knew your targets from your teachers' regular marking, which lets you know how well you are progressing. Your teachers plan different activities and visits that make your learning interesting. However, we think you would do even better if teachers varied class activities more to match work closely to your particular abilities and make sure you are all challenged fully. Many of you are involved in your school and local village activities, including the summer fete. The school encourages you to look at the wider issues in society and has forged links with a community in Uganda. We found that these links with other areas in this country and communities abroad are very helpful in helping you understand the wider world, so we have asked your school to develop more links.

The governing body and all the staff are working hard to improve the school further. You can all help by maintaining your good attendance and continuing to take an active part in school activities.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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