

Elmswell Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124534
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380912
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Sutherland-Harper

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Heeks
Headteacher	Jane Ash
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2008
School address	Oxer Close Elmswell Bury St Edmunds IP30 9UE
Telephone number	01359 240261
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Age group	3–9
Inspection date(s)	3–4 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper

Additional Inspector

Peter Lacey-Hastings

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 17 lessons taught by eight teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and evaluated the work in pupils' books, the school's development plan, assessment data, monitoring and evaluation records, arrangements for safeguarding, and a range of policies and procedures. Inspectors also listened to pupils read. The inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 97 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Elmswell Community Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The very large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also below average. A very small minority of pupils are supported by school action plus and/or have a statement of special educational needs. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are below average. The school runs a breakfast club. It has achieved ActiveMark and Eco-Flag awards and has Healthy Schools status.

Following the reorganisation of schools in the western area of Suffolk, the school is preparing for reorganisation as an all-through primary school. The headteacher has been in post since January 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- Elmswell Community Primary is a satisfactory school. It is not a good school because teaching and learning are satisfactory and some leadership and management roles are still developing. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily. Standards of attainment are rising and pupils' progress is accelerating in Key Stage 2 following effective work to improve pupils' writing and mathematical skills. Progress is slightly better in reading than in other subjects.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall with a rising proportion of good teaching. Best practice is not yet fully shared. Teaching meets the needs of most groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, but is occasionally not closely enough matched to more-able pupils' abilities. Boys are closing the gap with girls. Books are regularly marked but marking does not consistently show pupils how to improve work or reach some subject targets.
- Pupils are well behaved, have positive attitudes to learning and get on well with each other and adults. Pupils understand clearly what constitutes acceptable behaviour and they readily help others. They feel safe, and parents and carers agree. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding procedures, which are effective.
- The headteacher is working increasingly effectively with senior staff, staff and the reorganised governing body to implement a school development plan that is closely focused on raising attainment. As a result, the roles of middle managers in data analysis and use, and in monitoring teaching and learning, although at present inconsistently developed, are increasing. Satisfactory improvements since the last inspection include pupils' attainment in reading which is now above average in Year 2 and 4. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is good or better by July 2013 by:
 - matching work more closely to pupils' abilities so that all pupils, including the more-able, make more rapid progress
 - sharing best practice across the school so that all teachers fully understand what constitutes good or better teaching
 - making sure that assessment practices clearly indicate to pupils how they can improve their work and reach the targets set in different subjects.
- Develop the roles of all leaders and managers by July 2013 to ensure that the school moves forward more rapidly by:
 - linking use and analysis of data more closely to the raising attainment priorities in the school development plan so that any possible underachievement is quickly identified
 - increasing the role of middle managers in collection and interpretation of data to inform intervention to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Main report**Achievement of pupils**

The very large majority of parents and carers report that their children are making good progress and that the school helps them to support their children's learning. A similar proportion of pupils say they learn a lot in lessons and are helped to make progress. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and their attainment is average. They enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills generally expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. They settle well into Reception where satisfactory progress continues. Speech and language and writing skills are slightly weaker than other areas. A suitable plan to raise attainment is in place for the Early Years Foundation Stage, including further speech and language interventions which are now improving attainment in this area. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers throughout the school because well-deployed support staff offer increasingly targeted interventions.

Pupil progress rates are increasing in Key Stage 1, with greater numbers now reaching more challenging targets because teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' achievement. Following the recent successful focus on improving writing skills, the school is now addressing mathematics skill development. Earlier interventions enable pupils to quickly tackle any difficulties. Other interventions, typified by work on improved spelling and close links with a local authority are assisting progress in English for all groups of pupils.

Progress rates are now rising at Key Stage 2 as monitoring and evaluation

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procedures are refined. Assessment information is being used to inform intervention to improve teaching quality and accelerate pupils' progress. Setting of more challenging targets in order to better match work to abilities, including for the more-able, is increasing but is still at an early stage. Pupils are secure readers by the end of Key Stage 1, able to read for gist and meaning. Pupils acquire and apply skills well at this stage, including in the matching of sounds to letters (phonics). They continue this process into Key Stage 2 and confidently read a good variety of texts by the time they leave school. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is above average.

Learning in lessons is satisfactory and improving in English and mathematics. For example, thinking skills developed in a good Year 3 and 4 philosophy lesson linked with English, when pupils worked closely together to define imagination and how and why we use it. As a result, speaking and listening skills improved and pupils' spiritual and social skills were also enhanced as they considered how to define the sense of awe and wonder new knowledge brings. Learning walls display writing targets over time; the school is now implementing precise long-term mathematics targets, with immediate targets clearly understood. Pupils welcome opportunities to share ideas and conclusions aloud so as to stimulate others' learning but such opportunities are inconsistent. Pupils work carefully with talk partners and settle quickly to independent work whenever tasks are engaging and expectations are clear.

Quality of teaching

The very large majority of parents and carers feel their children are well taught and a similar number of pupils agree. Inspectors judge that teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, there are some good elements in provision including good use of electronic technologies, questioning and support provided to advance learning. The proportion of good teaching is rising across the school, especially at Key Stage 2, with some opportunities for pupils to take a lead in lessons to ensure that lessons are not always adult-led and to boost pupils' self-confidence through sharing of their thinking and ideas. Delivery of the planned curriculum is being enhanced through more thematic or topic days like Victorian Day or use of the local environment for younger learners. These first-hand experiences now make learning more enjoyable and promote achievement and engagement.

Best practice is beginning to be shared to help teachers have a consistent understanding of good or better teaching. Lessons are planned with increasing care. Teachers and support staff work together to ensure that all groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught satisfactorily. In a good Year 2 mathematics lesson, the blend of visual and written resources and on-going challenge ensured all pupils' full concentration as they reached their learning goals. In some lessons, teachers talk too long and expectations are not high enough to ensure more rapid progress with learning, especially for the more-able. Assessment information is used effectively to develop pupils' basic skills. Well-trained support staff ensure that pupils are clear about lesson objectives and help create an inclusive learning environment.

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Pupils' work is regularly marked, with some opportunities for self-marking but marking more often shows pupils how well they have done on current exercises rather than how to advance their work to the next level in order to meet targets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The very large majority of parents and carers believe behaviour is good and that lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour. They are right. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good. The school is a welcoming community with clear expectations of good behaviour. Behaviour is well managed in the great majority of lessons because teachers ensure any low-level misbehaviour is addressed quickly. Support staff form positive, understanding relationships with pupils to advance learning. The majority of pupils think behaviour is good and they are well cared for. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults and feel proud to be at the school. As a result, they try hard in lessons. Pupils are clear that issues will be addressed quickly by an adult and that they are free from bullying or harassment of any kind, whether it is name-calling or bullying based on racial or other prejudice. A good assembly during the inspection used an Indian fairy tale to underline acceptable behaviour, thereby also addressing pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

Attendance is above average. Pupils are punctual to lessons and to school. Transitions into and out of the school are carefully prepared. Pupils understand how to be safe, including e-safety. The large majority of pupils feel safe and the vast majority of parents and carers agree. Pupils know how to stay fit and healthy as these aspects are regularly covered in personal, social and health education and reinforced by a range of clubs, including the breakfast club before school. Arrangements to meet the needs of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are securely in place.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision of her school as a place where all year groups will attain well and achieve or exceed set targets. Following some staffing turbulence, senior leaders, staff and the governing body are now working together to raise achievement. Their detailed school development plan with its clear expectations and time scales is leading to improved teaching and outcomes. Teachers have started to evaluate their teaching in order to understand what constitutes good or better teaching and refine the match of work to pupils' abilities, especially for the more-able. Use of support staff is now closely tracked to improve their impact and narrow any remaining gaps in learning. Middle leaders have been assigned increased roles in monitoring teaching and learning to ensure consistently high expectations but work here is at an early stage of development and is still inconsistent. Accountability for class progress has been reinforced as part of performance management. Middle managers are also developing their role in data collection and analysis to quickly address any potential underachievement and continue the current trend of rising

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attainment. This process is aided by more regular discussion of pupils' progress at assessment and progress meetings.

The recently reorganised governing body brings varied experience to the school and provides growing challenge and support. Links with other local schools are growing through cluster work on initiatives related to the Olympics. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve because self-evaluation has accurately identified areas for further development and expanded on these in the school development plan. Results are improving because leaders and managers have made their expectations clearer and improvement does not depend on one or two leaders.

Classrooms are inclusive communities without discrimination because adults work conscientiously to ensure equal opportunities. Teachers and support staff are working more effectively as a team to ensure that any remaining gaps continue to narrow quickly and that support systems enable every pupil to be a confident learner. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements with regular staff training in child protection and in safer recruiting for senior leaders and governors. The broad, balanced curriculum is satisfactorily planned and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. Following a recent review, it offers a growing range of activities for engaging pupils with learning through visits, for example, the recent Duxford trip which gave pupils a better understanding of the world at war. Recent visitors have exemplified the 'People who help us' topic. The school is involving parents and carers further by inviting them to see the curriculum in action and how these well-received activities promote better outcomes.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



7 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmswell Community Primary School, Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9UE.

I am writing to thank you for our welcome when inspectors visited your school recently and for helping us by talking to us so readily and by filling in your questionnaires.

Elmswell Community Primary School is a satisfactory school. Here are some of the things that your school does well.

- You know how to stay safe, fit and healthy, are well-behaved and look after each other.
- The curriculum is being developed to provide you with more interesting ways to learn.
- You like some recent initiatives like the 'philosophy for all' class which gives you a chance to express your opinions.

The headteacher, staff and governing body are looking for ways to make your school even better. To help them, we have asked them to:

- make sure all teaching is good or better and carefully match work to your ability level
- make sure that all teachers show you how to improve your work and meet the targets you are expected to reach in each subject
- help the teachers who have particular responsibilities to use data more, such as information on your progress, to see if teaching and learning are improving.

The inspectors believe that your pride in your school and good relationships with each other and adults can aid the school to move forward. You can also help by always being ready to contribute in class and say when work is too easy or too hard.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sutherland-Harper
Lead inspector

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