

Elm CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110800
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378176
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Hughes

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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Rhodes
Headteacher	Fiona McCallum
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2009
School address	Main Road Elm Wisbech PE14 0AG
Telephone number	01945 860295
Fax number	01945 860295
Email address	office@elm.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	4 –11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Hughes

Additional Inspector

Wendy Davies

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team sampled 20 lessons taught by seven teachers, of which three were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at monitoring information, improvement plans, analysis and tracking of pupils' progress and records of classroom observations. They also sampled pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked attendance. Inspectors analysed questionnaires submitted by 17 staff, 103 pupils and 71 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Elm Church of England Primary School is smaller than an average-sized school of its type. It has a smaller proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals than schools nationally. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are below the national average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at school action plus or with a statement is below average. The school meets the current government floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress which set out the minimum attainment and progress expected. The school has Healthy Schools status and has gained the Active Mark award. The headteacher joined the school in September 2010 and formed a new leadership team in 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

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because attainment in English and mathematics is average and progress is not yet consistently good enough to improve this. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school and leave at the end of Key Stage 2 with broadly average standards of attainment in English and mathematics. Some boys do not achieve as well as girls, although the gap between boys' attainment and that of girls is closing as progress is improving in some classes. Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress and some make good progress.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is some good teaching in the school and this is accelerating progress for some pupils. However, it is not consistent throughout all year groups so some pupils make better progress than others.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils demonstrate a high level of respect for adults and for each other. Disruptive behaviour in class is rare and lessons run smoothly. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and respond well to work planned by their teachers.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since coming to the school, the headteacher has initiated new strategies to engage and enthuse pupils. The leadership of teaching and management of performance have resulted in improving progress in some areas of the school but are yet to make a full impact on standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards in English and mathematics through:
 - embedding the development of literacy and numeracy skills in all areas of the curriculum
 - ensuring the pace of all lessons gives pupils opportunities for independent learning
 - developing pupils' investigative skills through problem-solving activities.
- Close the gap between boys' and girls' attainment so that by 2014 it is at least in line with national figures through:
 - ensuring that the curriculum enthuses and engages all groups of pupils
 - identifying target groups for support, monitoring the impact and ensuring they make accelerated progress
 - working closely with parents and carers of identified groups to help them support their children's learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they start and leave with skills broadly in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. This represents a rise in standards of reading and writing over the last two years. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the sounds letters make (phonics) and demonstrate that they are able to use these skills in their reading and writing throughout the key stage.

Satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 2 ensures average attainment in English and mathematics by the end of the key stage. Boys do not generally achieve as well as girls but school data indicates that accelerated progress in some classes is narrowing the gap between the attainment of boys and girls. This is particularly evident in lessons where activities are practical and linked to pupils' own interests, such as writing blogs in Year 5. In some other lessons, an element of competition excites pupils and engages them so that they make good progress. In mathematics, pupils demonstrate sound number facts and are able to use different methods of calculations, such as when finding perimeters of shapes.

Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs are well supported. Interventions are accurately targeted to meet individual needs; the impact of this support is being closely monitored. As a result, these pupils make at least expected progress and some make good progress. Other pupils, whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, such as those eligible for free school meals, make satisfactory progress and are supported sensitively by caring and skilled staff.

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Almost all parents and carers and most pupils say that they make good progress and learn a lot. This is not quite accurate as progress is currently variable and, therefore, satisfactory throughout the school.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory with work matched to most pupils' needs. However, in some lessons boys do not achieve as well as girls and this is because the pace allows some pupils to become compliant rather than active learners. Where teaching is good, pupils are enthusiastically engaged in their learning. For example, Year 6 pupils were keen to check their newly acquired knowledge about the parts of a flower against the computerised diagram. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 enjoyed refining their higher order speaking and listening skills by interviewing each other for their blogs.

In most lessons, pupils are keen to learn and quickly follow their teachers' instructions. In some lessons, however, a few pupils are too reliant on adults motivating them and providing support when they could be more independent. For example, in group work, some pupils are allowed to spend too much time waiting for others in the group, limiting their learning and progress.

The teaching of phonics successfully gives pupils appropriate skills to read and by Year 3, boys and girls alike read fluently and with obvious enjoyment. Throughout the school, pupils are happy to talk about the plots in their books and read with expression and comprehension. Specific targets help pupils to develop their writing skills. Pupils say that they help them understand what to do next to improve all their writing, whether it is topic work, science or English. Marking in books is encouraging and most marking identifies next steps in learning. Sometimes, however, it is not specific enough to be helpful. Occasionally, work is not challenging enough for all pupils so they do not make the progress of which they are capable. Opportunities to use their mathematical skills in practical problem-solving situations are not well enough embedded in the curriculum to engage all pupils and stimulate independent learning.

The planning for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is thorough and their progress is rigorously monitored. In most lessons, well-briefed support staff play a valuable role in the progress that these and other vulnerable pupils make, which is at least in line with their peers.

Personal, social and health education and class assemblies help to promote pupils' awareness of themselves and others around them. For example, Year 2 pupils were talking about working together and this gave them the opportunity for reflective thinking about empathy and co-operation. The reading of a well-chosen poem and quiet time to pray brought the day to a calm and appropriate close.

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children are taught well. Although this is the case for some pupils, it is not consistent through the

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school as overall; teaching is satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school demonstrates a high level of control and respect. In lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to work. They are enthusiastic about their learning and support each other by being positive and encouraging at all times. They demonstrate high levels of co-operation and good collaboration skills are evident from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6.

Pupils on the school council were instrumental in putting together the school rules, in consultation with their peers. The result is that all pupils understand and abide by the rules most of the time. They are clear about the behaviour policy and feel that it is fair. They report that behaviour has improved and are very clear about different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying and inappropriate name-calling. They say that bullying of any kind is rare but on occasions when it happens, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. This is confirmed by most parents and carers.

Most pupils say that they feel safe in school and all parents rightly agree that it offers a secure environment for their children to learn. Pupils can talk about ways that they can keep themselves safe, such as when using the internet. They have a mature understanding of safe and unsafe situations. For example, a group of pupils specifically approached the inspection team to express their concerns about parking around the school entrance before and after school.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and has worked with the new senior leadership team and governing body to address areas identified as part of the school's accurate self-evaluation. Performance management for all staff has been introduced, helping teachers identify clear targets for raising standards. A whole school ethos of effective teaching is being supported through a comprehensive programme for professional development.

The school promotes equality and rigorously tackles discrimination, ensuring that all groups of pupils make at least expected progress through well-focused individual and group work. However, the attainment of boys still lags behind that of girls. Celebration of the diversity of pupils in the school creates opportunities for storytelling and discussion about different ways of life.

The planned curriculum has been revised over the past year and is now based on creativity and topics, impacting on pupils' attitudes to learning. For example, boys in Year 6 talked enthusiastically about their work on invaders and settlers, whilst most pupils cited 'topic' as their favourite subject. Themed days and activities such as 'the superheroes' and the 'pirates rampage' in Years 1 and 2 excite and engage pupils.

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The impact of such actions can be seen in the recent acceleration of progress for some pupils, especially boys, demonstrating the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education runs through all the school does. The good behaviour of pupils supports a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Strong social development is reflected in the way they interact with each other. For example, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are able to play games together, following the correct rules of turn taking and co-operation. They show clear enjoyment and delight, regardless of whether they are the winner or loser. The school works hard to give pupils a deeper understanding of other cultures through direct experiences and through the curriculum. When studying India, pupils had the opportunity to learn Indian dance with a specialist teacher, while as part of religious education, all pupils visit places of worship from different religions and cultures.

The governing body's own self-evaluation identified key areas of underperformance in the past leading to the reorganisation of its committee structure and monitoring policy. Members of the governing body now hold the school to account while effectively supporting and challenging the headteacher. Leaders have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding comply fully with current requirements. Records and checks are robust and appropriate policies and practices provide a safe environment for the pupils and staff.

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.



16 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elm CofE Primary School, Wisbech, PE14 0AG

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed with how polite you were and it was lovely talking to you about your school. Elm CofE Primary is a satisfactory school, with sound leadership. You make satisfactory progress but boys do not always achieve as well as girls. You know how to keep yourselves safe and your behaviour is good. In lessons, you are enthusiastic about your work and co-operate well in group and paired activities. Occasionally, though, some of you sit back quietly and do not get as involved in your learning as you could. We can see why you enjoy your topic lessons because your teachers make these interesting and exciting.

We have asked your teachers to do a few things to help you all reach higher standards with your English and mathematics. We have asked them to:

- make sure that you have the chance to develop your numeracy and literacy skills in all subjects, not just English and mathematics lessons
- make sure that you have plenty of opportunities to work independently and tackle investigations in lessons
- make your curriculum exciting so that you really want to work hard
- help pupils who are not making as much progress as they could to catch up.

You can pay your part by always trying hard and making sure you play an active part in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hughes
Lead inspector

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