

# Elm Tree Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	124642
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	380942
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Susan Lewis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	302
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Orves
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hilary Day
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Ranworth Avenue Lowestoft NR33 9HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01502 562930
<b>Fax number</b>	01502 515769
<b>Email address</b>	office@elmtreeprimary.suffolk.sch.uk

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## Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Lewis

Additional Inspector

Andrew Phipps

Additional Inspector

Cecelia Davies

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons led by 14 different teachers and were accompanied for part of the inspection by a sign language interpreter. Inspectors held meetings with senior staff, teaching assistants, the heads of the enhanced resourced facility for pupils who are deaf and that for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. They also met with members of the governing body, parents and carers and pupils who were prefects or members of the School Council. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and development planning, its safeguarding documents and practices and the data the school holds about pupils' progress. Inspectors heard pupils read and talked with them about their work. They scrutinised 111 questionnaires from parents and carers and those returned by staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school which has changed considerably since its previous inspection. At that time it was a first school for pupils aged four to eight years. However, in 2010 it became a primary school and took in its first Year 5 pupils. It moved into its current accommodation in January 2012. Since its previous inspection, there has been considerable change in staffing. Over half the teachers are new since then.

The large majority of pupils are of White British origin, with a small proportion from mixed heritage or other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is high. The school has two specialist resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs. These provide currently for five pupils who are deaf and for 11 pupils who have speech, language and communication needs.

The school runs a daily breakfast club.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory but improving school. The school is not yet good because teaching, though improving, is not yet consistently good. The monitoring role of middle managers is not yet fully in place and some of the school's initiatives, such as the way they manage behaviour and how well their children are doing, are not fully understood by parents and carers. 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, though improving for all groups whatever their starting points, backgrounds or needs. This is because of the ways in which the leadership now monitors pupil progress and rigorously checks on teaching. Pupils who are deaf also make satisfactory and sometimes better progress. Those with speech, language and communication difficulties make good and sometimes outstanding progress because the resourced provision staff are very skilled in supporting and extending their language and literacy skills. Progress and achievement is good in reading throughout the school, because it is well provided for in the different subjects.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. It was consistently good or better during the inspection but there have been incidents of disruption and poor behaviour. Pupils nonetheless say they feel very safe in school.
- Teaching is satisfactory, but rapidly improving. New staff have been supported well by leaders. Occasionally, pupils are not challenged to think enough in all parts of lessons and not all teachers ensure activities and lesson pace are sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs.
- The headteacher and the governing body have led the school successfully through the reorganisation and staff changes. They and other senior leaders know the school's strengths well and have accurately identified areas for development. They have clear plans to bring about further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By June 2013, improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by ensuring that:
  - the pace, challenge and activities in all parts of lessons meet the needs of all learners
  - marking gives pupils a clear indication as to how they are doing, what is good about their work and what needs to be improved
  - the school's homework policy is consistently applied so that homework is regularly set and tailored to pupils' needs
  - all available support, for example from teaching assistants, is used effectively in all parts of lessons.
- Develop further the role of middle managers in monitoring and improving standards and teaching in their subjects or areas of responsibility.
- Improve communication with parents and carers so that they understand the new initiatives, their intended outcomes and how effective these have been.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Reception classes with skills generally below those typical for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and sometimes better progress in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development because of the systematic ways in which these skills are supported. In Years 2 and 6 attainment is broadly average in writing and mathematics and better in reading. Year 6 pupils have made at least expected progress in these subjects since Year 2. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics has improved in recent years. New approaches to teaching these subjects, such as more opportunities to write at length and more systematic teaching of mental mathematics, are already having a further positive impact and accelerating progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 made good progress, for example, as they really challenged themselves to complete mathematical tasks accurately in a timed task and were proud as they improved on their previous scores. Others in Year 6 used their planning, discussion and writing skills well as they considered the challenges and roles involved in building a new school in Ghana. Progress for all pupils including those who are disabled or have special educational needs in reading is stronger than in other subjects however because of the systematic support for pupils' skills in sounding out words and the well targeted work in guided reading groups.

Parents and carers are pleased with the improvements in their children's achievements although inspection findings were that achievement is satisfactory overall. Writing has improved because teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in different subjects and spelling is systematically supported by most teachers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those who are deaf, make satisfactory and, sometimes, better progress. They make good progress in their communication skills and personal development from their

starting points because the school is careful to ensure that they have many opportunities to express their views and join in all of its activities. Those with speech, language and communication difficulties make good and sometimes better progress because specialist teaching and the therapy available are used to very good effect and staff work very well together as a team. All other groups also make at least satisfactory progress, including those known to be eligible for free school meals.

## **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving as the school's new approaches to the curriculum and to writing and mathematics build staff confidence and secure the systematic teaching of skills. Pupils, parents and carers are very positive about the quality of teaching and in particular the way the curriculum enthuses pupils. Inspectors found that teaching overall is satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and the ways in which they group pupils for learning, for example in guided-reading sessions, ensure that, usually, tasks are well matched to pupils' targets. However, occasionally the work does not meet the needs of particular groups in parts of lessons as it is too easy or too hard for some. This makes pupils less attentive at these times. In their pupils' progress meetings, the relatively new year-group and key-stage teams are sharing good practice and challenging teachers to ensure that pupils can achieve even more. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning in group parts of lessons, but they are not always used effectively in the whole-class parts of lessons. Pupils do not always take on board points made in teachers' marking about how they can improve their writing or mathematics. Inspectors agree with parents and carers that homework is also not used systematically to help pupils improve their work so that parents can support their children's learning.

Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, through the many opportunities provided for pupils to work together and the interesting topics covered. There is appropriate support available in mainstream classrooms for pupils who are deaf, including the use of technological aids. Occasionally, however, the support staff are too quick to tell such pupils the answers or do not position themselves when providing British Sign Language or sign support so that these pupils can also see easily what the class teacher or other pupils are saying or doing. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is satisfactory overall. Sometimes pupils spend too long on the carpet doing the same thing and some lose interest because the learning is too hard or too easy.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Although the majority of parents and carers considered behaviour to be good at the school, a significant minority raised concerns about the quality of behaviour. The inspection team reviewed evidence relating to this over time, as well as behaviour in classrooms and the playground during the inspection. Inspectors judged the school's practices for supporting behaviour and safety to be satisfactory. Incidents of bullying whether verbal, physical or linked to race or other factors are rare. They have occurred in the past but pupils are quick to say that they are dealt with fairly and swiftly. A new behaviour policy, including rewards and sanctions, the high quality learning environment of the new school and the improved curriculum, mean that the

very large majority of pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. A few pupils who find behaving well difficult have found it harder to adapt to the school's expectations of behaviour and this has occasionally disrupted lessons. However the school has dealt with these issues appropriately and in almost all cases has helped these pupils manage their own behaviour more effectively. Inspectors' discussions with pupils, including those who are deaf and those who have speech, language and communication difficulties, show that pupils feel very safe in the school and are clear as to the school's rules. Pupils have a good understanding of the risks they might face in different contexts such as when they use the internet and how to keep themselves safe. Parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. Attendance is average but steadily improving.

## **Leadership and management**

The leadership team and governing body have had much to do since the previous inspection to enable the school to move into its new premises and adapt to its new age groups and it has done this well. However this work, together with the changes in staffing, has meant that some aspects of the school's work have not developed as rapidly, such as the development of middle managers' roles in monitoring. Whole-school monitoring systems have helped to identify weaker teaching. These support improvements in performance well, so that there is now a much higher proportion of good or better teaching. The school uses data rigorously to monitor pupils' progress, regularly meeting with teachers to review this and check on the impact of interventions to support any pupils who were falling behind. This is generally improving the match of work in lessons to pupils' needs. The governing body understands the school's strengths and areas for improvement and holds it to account. The rising standards linked to improvements in teaching and the evidence of improved leadership mean that the school has the capacity to improve further.

Middle managers have worked well with the leadership team to establish a curriculum that has an appropriate emphasis on developing key skills. It has particular strengths in challenging pupils to use their initiative and to think for themselves. The many opportunities that pupils have to work together develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities well. Initiatives such as 'learning together' help pupils of different ages to grow in confidence and support older pupils' sense of responsibility. The 'enquiry' approach provides many opportunities for pupils to think about the world they live in and its values. Discussions with pupils reveal them to have a keen sense of justice and compassion for others. Parents and carers are almost all positive about the teaching and the learning experiences their child receives. However, not all understand the intended outcomes of some initiatives such as 'learning partners' and some would like more information about how to help their child. The breakfast club is well organised and supports pupils' social and independence skills well.

Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. The school works well with parents, carers and outside agencies to secure the safety and well-being of the pupils in its care and to make improvements such as in attendance and in its provision and support for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. These actions and the rigorous monitoring of each group and pupil's performance secures

equal opportunity for all.

## 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](http://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.**



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Elm Tree Community Primary School, Lowestoft, NR33 9HN**

We did enjoy visiting your school recently and watching you work. Thank you for being so welcoming. We enjoyed talking to you and are particularly grateful to those of you who read to us and showed us your work and filled in the questionnaires. Thank you too to the prefects and the School Council for telling us about what you do and sharing your views of the school. It was good to hear how much you, including those of you in the school's resource bases, like your school and the new buildings. We found that your school is satisfactory, but it is improving quickly. This is because the governing body, your headteacher and staff now check very carefully on how your learning is improving. These are some of the other things we found out about your school.

- You like the different topics you study and the new work you do in mathematics and writing.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory overall and often good in lessons. You are confident that if anyone does misbehave or is unkind, your teachers or the head teacher will sort it out.
- You make good progress in your reading and the school is helping you to improve your writing and mathematics through the new approaches that you tell us you enjoy.

We have asked your headteacher and the governing body to do the following things to make your school even better:

- to make the teaching even better by making sure the work you do in all the different parts of lessons is always at the right level for each of you and by improving homework and the ways in which teachers mark your work
- to make sure teachers who are responsible for different subjects or different aspects of the school's work check regularly on how everyone is doing
- to make sure that your parents and carers understand more about the new things that the school has introduced and how they are making a difference.

You can help too by continuing to improve your behaviour and attendance.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis  
Lead Inspector

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