

Elm Tree Community Primary School

Elmers Wood Road, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale, Lancashire. WN8 6SA

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The majority of pupils make good progress and most achieve levels expected of pupils their age.
- Those with more complex needs make rapid progress from their starting points which helps them make up gaps in learning. Progress is equally good for all groups.
- Highly individualised programmes and a small, nurturing class help the youngest pupils to settle so that they make good progress.
- Reading has improved as a result of a focused approach last year. Mathematical skills develop well.
- All staff know pupils well and teaching is good overall. Teachers manage behaviour effectively. Support staff contribute well to the smooth flow of lessons.
- Pupils say they enjoy their learning and show good interest in their lessons.
- Behaviour is generally good and pupils benefit from the caring and supportive community of the school which makes them feel safe. Parents agree.
- The headteacher provides very strong, perceptive and highly effective leadership. The newly created senior management team is rapidly bringing about significant improvement. Teaching is managed efficiently and support is provided quickly if lessons fall below good.
- An effective partnership is in place with the local authority. The school’s capacity for further improvement is outstanding.
- Governors challenge senior managers well and are fully involved in school life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes the planned rate and pace of teaching are insufficient for the best learning to take place.
- The systems to check pupils’ progress at Key Stage 1 and for pupils with more complex needs are not as good as those used for Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons – one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher, listened to pupils read and discussed their work with them. Additionally, short visits to check behaviour in lessons were made and pupils also provided their views and thoughts as they led a tour of the school.
- Discussions were held with the school staff and senior leaders, three members of the governing body, the school's counsellor, learning mentor and nurture manager, and a representative from the local authority. A meeting with headteachers from the school's consortia group also took place.
- Information from the school's most recent parental questionnaire and a written response from parents were taken into account. Insufficient responses were available on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to be able to access them. Staff views were gathered from discussions and from the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at information about pupils' progress, teaching, planning and monitoring documentation. The school's documents on safeguarding were reviewed, together with records of attendance and pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

Linda Clare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school serves a geographically large area of north-west Lancashire and pupils are brought to school on escorted transport.
- All pupils attending the school have statements of special educational needs indicating social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Since the last inspection the number of pupils with additional needs – physical difficulties, specific learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, cognitive and complex learning difficulties – has risen.
- This special school caters for pupils aged between five and eleven. The number of pupils entering the school at Key Stage 1 has historically been very low but is now rising.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds and currently there are only five girls in the school.
- Elm Tree County Primary School holds Healthy School status and has achieved Investors in People and Extended Services Awards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers are clear in their plans and in lessons about what pupils are to learn and not just what they have to do
 - making sure that each activity does not go on for too long so that pupils stay interested in their work
 - giving pupils more time to get on with their work by reducing how much time the teacher spends talking in lessons to the whole class
 - setting work at the right level so that it challenges each pupil individually throughout the lesson.
- Extend the school's good and developing system to check pupils' progress so that it:
 - identifies the learning of the increasing number of pupils who start at the school at Key Stage 1 as effectively as it does for pupils at Key Stage 2
 - compares the progress of those with additional and complex needs to others who are at the same age and level both locally and nationally.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils work well with one another, are keen to answer questions and are respectful to staff. They enjoy lessons and learn to work independently, in pairs and in groups. Pupils are happy to discuss their work and are rightfully proud of their achievements.
- The school's calm and ordered atmosphere enables pupils to settle quickly to their work. This is key to their progress as they enter school at different times and the majority finish Key Stage 2 having attended more than one school.
- They enter school with low attainments, often the result of disrupted education or long periods of absence, and make good and better progress in their personal and social development and in their communication skills. These skills, together with the trusting relationships they make with staff and other pupils, help them to build confidence as learners.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress through practical activities which boost self-esteem and effectively prepare them for learning. Their social progress is guided well but the system to check their literacy and numeracy progress is less well developed.
- From their starting points, the majority of pupils make good progress and by the end of Key Stage 2 almost half reach the expected levels for pupils of their age nationally. Those not attaining national levels show good and better progress from much lower starting points. The rapid rate of this progress is successfully helping them to close the gap between their achievements and those of other pupils of their age.
- Pupils listened to by the inspector clearly enjoyed reading. Younger pupils use pictures well, keenly observing details and using them to help their understanding of words. Older pupils read fluently and know how to break down unknown words into sounds to aid comprehension.
- Progress is consistent across subjects and the majority of pupils achieve well. Those with additional needs are well supported by counselling, speech therapy and small group teaching sessions which focus on specific difficulties. These services support pupil progress effectively particularly for those whose circumstances may put them at risk.
- There is little difference in the progress of different groups, such as those entitled to pupil premium support, or between boys and girls. There are far fewer girls in the school and care is taken to ensure that their progress and well-being are checked. Friendship pairings and group activities are provided for girls and they say they are happy and their needs are well met.
- Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. Their generally positive attitudes and good progress, particularly in their reading, writing and mathematical skills prepare them well for their next stage of learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good expertise, knowledge and skills in teaching pupils with a range of special educational needs and support staff provide valuable assistance.
- Social and communication skills to develop discussion, reasoned opinion, tolerance and to teach pupils to respect the views of others feature in most lessons. These were clearly demonstrated as pupils discussed remembrance poppies with sensitivity, listened well to each other's opinions and offered thoughtful, articulate responses.
- Planning is mostly good; however, sometimes it focuses on what pupils have to do rather than what they are to learn. Questioning is generally good, but occasionally teachers do not check that all pupils have understood the lesson.
- Over-long teacher explanations at the start of some lessons sometimes reduce the amount of time pupils have to complete their work. At other times pupils finishing their work quickly are given additional work that is more of the same – not stepped up in pace or difficulty.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is structured and well planned, and pupils

learn to use information and communication technology well.

- Pupils like active lessons and generally take part with interest and enthusiasm. Their work is usually well marked, and they are keen to earn merits or tokens.
- Systems to check how well and how much pupils have learned were revitalised last year. Increasingly good information is being provided for use in planning pupils' next steps and to identify those who may need a boost to their learning through extra help.
- Structured, smaller groups receive coaching to improve their progress. These 'intervention groups' are newly in place and have already started to raise pupils' confidence as learners and to increase the amount they learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils taking the inspector on the tour of the school were polite, friendly and showed the good manners typical of those seen in all classrooms during the inspection. Pupils say they like school – confirmed by a lively discussion at school council about wishing they could stay there longer.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good and they learn to manage their own behaviour well. Behaviour improves as pupils continue through the school and this is matched by the good gains they make in learning.
- Parents, staff and pupils all agree that the school's caring and supportive atmosphere contributes much to pupils' generally good behaviour. Staff are well trained in supporting pupils' behaviour and realistic school rules are consistently applied. The words chosen by pupils to describe their school – enthusiastic, encouraging, organised, inspirational, supportive and ambitious are widely displayed in large stylised figure-shapes across the school to remind and motivate pupils.
- Pupils know they can turn to staff for support or go to the settees which are strategically placed about school. These provide time to reflect on feelings and a chance to calm down, if needed, before returning voluntarily to lessons, where they know they will be welcomed and may continue their work.
- Pupils are aware of all aspects of bullying, including cyber-bullying and know how to keep themselves safe. The school places high value on developing pupils' social and moral understanding and a comprehensive personal, social, citizenship and health education programme is in place. Counselling is available and supports individual pupils well.
- Attendance is average and improving. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection and far fewer recorded incidents of poor behaviour, a reflection on the school's growing success in meeting pupil needs more effectively.
- Pupils' work is celebrated and pupils are keen to discuss their contributions to class projects, displays and weekly assemblies. Representation on the Pupil Parliament links Elm Tree pupils with all local mainstream primary schools.

The leadership and management are good

- The highly effective headteacher is ably supported by recent leadership appointments which have strengthened and extended the management of the school.
- Staff are fully supportive of the new developments, morale is high and all, including governors, share the same views about how successful the school can be.
- The performance of staff is managed effectively and through high quality links with other schools, staff are extending their skills. The proportion of teachers who have progressed to higher pay levels appropriately matches the level of good teaching in the school.
- Senior managers have a good overall understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. Useful and timely information on how well pupils are doing is not as detailed at Key Stage 1 as it is at Key Stage 2. Similarly, the progress of the rising number of pupils with

additional difficulties should be compared with pupils of similar complexity of need so that school can better judge its performance in this area.

- The leadership of teaching is good. Teaching is observed regularly and good improvement has been achieved recently in how well teachers check pupils' progress and match targets more closely to their needs. Teaching is improving as a result.
- Pupils make at least good progress in mathematics, reading and writing from their starting points and attainment in writing has improved since the last inspection. Subjects that are taught are exciting and makes pupils keen to learn. Pupils particularly enjoy specialist teaching in art, music and physical education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A wide range of trips and visits contribute to their understanding of being part of a community and multi-ethnic society.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- Additional counselling, nurture, reading, speech therapy and a wide range of strong links with specialist support networks help the school meets the needs of all pupils. The school has generally good relationships with parents. Home-school diaries keep parents well informed and the learning mentor is already strengthening links between home and school.
- The school works well with the local authority. The high quality advice and support received have assisted the school in furthering its development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide good support and effective levels of challenge to the school's senior leaders. Their decision to use the pupil premium to contribute to the appointment of the learning mentor and to create small groups to support teaching has improved pupils' confidence and their readiness to learn. Governors make sure that equipment is of good quality, that financial resources are used efficiently and best use is made of staff.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135457
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	402702

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Hodgson
Headteacher	David Lamb
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2010
Telephone number	01695 50924
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