

Ely St Mary's CofE Junior School

High Barns, Ely, CB7 4RB

Inspection dates 20–21 June 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Standards in English and mathematics are broadly average by the end of Year 6, but not all pupils make as much progress as they could.
- In lessons that require improvement, teachers give pupils work that is too difficult for some and too easy for others. They do not always make best use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers do not always insist that pupils extend their thinking in lessons, and this is particularly reflected in the undemanding work sometimes set for more-able pupils.
- Teachers rarely encourage pupils to develop their ability to work without direct help.
- While standards are gradually rising, leaders and managers have not improved teaching and achievement rapidly enough since the last inspection.
- Although ambitious for the school, senior leaders do not always judge the quality of teaching by its effect on the learning of different groups.
- The governing body is generally well informed about the school's work but has not always asked probing questions of school leaders to challenge its effectiveness.

The school has the following strengths

- The school provides pupils with a good range of subjects that are linked creatively in 'topics' and enhanced by special events.
- Some teaching is good, and there are some instances of outstanding teaching where pupils make rapid progress.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and feel very safe there.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and provides them with a high level of care.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 24 lessons, some of which were seen jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. Observations included a design and technology day with a visiting specialist in Year 6 and a 'Forest School' session for Year 4 in the school grounds.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, other staff and pupils. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, its own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the information it collects on pupils' progress. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed.
- Questionnaire responses from 42 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspection team took account of 42 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They considered the responses to the school's own recent parental questionnaire and two letters sent to the inspection team by parents.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector
Ken Parry	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives support through the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional government funding, in this case for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or have a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is a little below the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is a little above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also slightly above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is good or better by making sure that:
 - teachers always give different groups of pupils work that is matched closely to the next steps in their learning
 - teachers insist on a good work rate in every lesson, especially from more-able pupils in English, so they aim for higher levels in their work
 - pupils throughout the school have regular opportunities to develop independent learning skills and think for themselves
 - teaching assistants are used fully throughout lessons to increase the pace of learning for pupils who need extra help.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management and speed up the pace of school improvement by:
 - making senior leaders' expectations for teachers clearer, particularly ensuring that all teachers plan their lessons effectively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils
 - focusing lesson observation and checks on pupils' work more closely on how well teaching enables all pupils to make progress
 - making greater use of the outstanding teaching already in the school to spread best practice.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although there has been some improvement in the school's performance over the last three years, pupils join Year 3 with attainment that is broadly average and reach standards that are again average at the end of Year 6. They do better at higher levels in mathematics than in English.
- Published results for the last two years suggest that pupils who left the school in 2011 and 2012 made less progress than they should have done in Years 3 to 6. However, the school's own checks on these pupils' attainment soon after they joined Year 3 and their progress across the key stage show that most made the amount of progress expected nationally and some did better than this.
- While the school's records indicate that many pupils have made and are continuing to make good progress, they do not all make as much progress as they should in lessons where teaching requires improvement. More-able pupils in particular could sometimes make faster progress.
- In 2012, test results show that the attainment of Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was on average a year behind that of their classmates in English and one and a half years behind in mathematics. The pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding who are currently in Year 6 have made good progress, and the gap between their performance and that of their classmates is narrowing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with other groups. They make good progress in lessons where they receive effective support from teaching assistants who break learning down into small, manageable steps. At times, however, they and less-able pupils make slower progress where the whole class works on the same tasks. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their classmates. Records show that pupils who at early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language have made good progress during their time at the school.
- In some lessons throughout the school, pupils make good or even outstanding progress. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are able to explain their ideas in detail, produce well-structured pieces of writing and express clear mathematical thinking.
- In a particularly well-taught mathematics lesson, pupils made rapid progress in exploring number patterns in times tables and presenting their findings. In science, pupils showed a very good knowledge of forces, friction and resistance in a far-reaching discussion on gravity. They were able to draw on their learning from previous lessons to come up with convincing arguments to support their ideas.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not enabling all groups of pupils to make good progress. While there is some good and outstanding teaching, over half the lessons seen during the inspection required improvement and work in pupils' books shows that teaching does not always meet their needs fully.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not make enough use of information about what pupils already know and can do when planning their lessons. At times, less-able pupils

struggle to complete work that is too difficult for them and in parts of lessons, teaching assistants are not used as well as they could be. In other lessons, more-able pupils in particular are not challenged enough.

- Teachers do not always demand enough from pupils, not only in the work they set but also in terms of how much pupils should be able to do without direct support. In all but the best lessons, teachers tend to provide too much guidance and help rather than pushing pupils to think for themselves and develop the independent learning skills they will need in later life.
- There is, nevertheless, some good and outstanding teaching. In an inspirational science lesson in Year 4, outstanding teaching enabled pupils to make rapid progress in their understanding. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge was reflected in probing questions that made pupils think scientifically, pushed them to explain their understanding in detail, and prompted them to come up with questions of their own.
- Throughout the school, teachers enjoy warm relationships with their pupils and classroom organisation is good. Lesson introductions are often lively and teachers easily gain pupils' attention.
- Pupils are generally clear about their targets and receive some good advice through teachers' comments in their books, though some marking concentrates too much on praising pupils for their efforts rather than giving pointers on how work could be improved. Older pupils increasingly have opportunities to identify the strengths and weaknesses in each other's work, and this helps them understand how to improve their own work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons, at playtimes and around the school. Pupils are polite, friendly and helpful, and they learn in a calm and orderly environment. Staff manage behaviour well and usually notice immediately if any pupils begin to lose concentration in lessons. Pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils enjoy school, and this is reflected in their attendance, which is broadly average but improving. They say that most lessons are interesting, although work is 'sometimes too easy'. They typically have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school keeps thorough records of any instances of inappropriate behaviour, investigates issues fully and supports pupils to improve. As a result, pupils develop self-discipline and there have been very few exclusions. Pupils readily take on responsibilities in class, around the school, through the house system and in raising money for various charities.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and say that it occurs only rarely. They are confident that any bullying, racism or harassment will be quickly dealt with by the staff.
- The school promotes good relationships and takes effective action to tackle any discrimination. Pupils get on well together and they are usually kind to each other.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They are able to talk about road safety, the dangers of fire and how to stay safe when using the internet.
- The home-school worker provides outstanding support to pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and does a great deal also to help their families. This is having a very positive

effect on these pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance.

- Pupils cooperate very well with their teachers and respond exceptionally well when staff give them challenging tasks. However, they are passive and very occasionally restless when the pace of lessons drops, or teachers do not expect enough work from them.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While standards are gradually rising, the school has not developed as much as it should have done since the last inspection. This is because senior leaders, though ambitious for the school, have not communicated their expectations clearly enough to the staff or made full use of existing strengths in teaching to spread best practice.
- In particular, leaders have not made clear to teachers that matching work to the needs of different groups must always be considered when planning lessons. As a result, teachers' lesson planning varies widely. Some plan in great detail and carefully consider the needs of all groups, whereas others do not make enough use of information about what pupils can already do and need to learn next.
- Over the past year, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have increased the frequency with which they check teachers' work and look at pupils' books. This is providing teachers with useful guidance and in the lessons observed jointly during the inspection, senior leaders generally reached similar conclusions to inspectors. At times, however, leaders do not take enough account of the effect of teaching on the learning of different groups of pupils when forming judgements about the quality of teaching.
- Termly meetings between senior leaders and teachers focus on pupils' progress, and the school keeps a careful record of the achievement of different groups of pupils to try to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. This helps in identifying pupils who need extra support, contributes to the management of teachers' performance and is enabling leaders to build up a clear picture of pupils' progress across the school.
- Since the last inspection, the school has improved the range of subjects and topics provided, and they now meet pupils' needs well. Science has been significantly strengthened and there are meaningful links between subjects. All pupils learn French and are also introduced to German and Spanish, and pupils' home languages are celebrated.
- Special events make learning interesting, such as the 'insect day' in Year 6, Forest School and many other stimulating activities. All year groups go on residential trips. Many pupils learn a musical instrument and at the time of the inspection, pupils were putting on evening performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Together with good opportunities to reflect and learn about other faiths and cultures, these experiences contribute to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. It has provided valuable support to leaders in analysing data and developing better ways to check on teachers' work. It has checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments of attainment in Year 6 and soon after pupils arrive at the beginning of Year 3. This has helped leaders in forming the right judgements about the progress pupils make during their time in the school.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are generally well informed and the Chair of the Governing Body has a clear

understanding of how the school's effectiveness compares with other similar schools, based on the results pupils achieve.

- Governors have been involved with the headteacher in tackling past underperformance. They are aware that teachers now have sharper targets linked to pupils' progress, so only the most effective will be rewarded with pay increases.
- Individual governors visit the school and meet with leaders of subjects to which they are linked, but in general governors have tended to accept performance information in reports provided by school leaders and have not always done enough to collect information directly from observing the school at work to form their own view.
- Governors are aware of how pupil premium funding is spent, but have not asked for information about its effect on pupils' achievement.
- The governing body makes sure that national requirements are met, including for the safeguarding of pupils.

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	110842
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	412077

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Shiers
Headteacher	James Hickish
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2009
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