

# Elms Farm Community Primary School

Dornccliffe Avenue, Sheldon, Birmingham, B33 0PJ

**Inspection dates** 10–11 October 2013

|                                |                      |                      |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory         | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Inadequate</b>    | <b>4</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Inadequate           | 4        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Requires improvement | 3        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Pupils' achievement has declined since the previous inspection and is inadequate. It has improved recently because teaching is better, but pupils in Key Stage 2 have not made enough progress in reading and writing, especially those supported by pupil premium funding.
- Weak teaching in the past was a major contributor to declining standards of work and behavioural issues.
- Teaching still requires improvement because work is not always matched to pupils' abilities, especially for more-able pupils.
- Time in lessons is not always managed well, and checks on learning sometimes lax. Teachers do not always allow time for pupils to respond to their marking.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in the other subjects they study.
- The management of teachers' performance has not been sufficiently rigorous until recently. Subject leaders have not played a strong enough role in improving achievement or the quality of teaching and learning.
- The governing body has not asked sufficiently searching questions to fully challenge the school's leaders about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' rates of exclusion in the past have been significantly higher than national averages.

### The school has the following strengths

- The impact of the headteacher's effective leadership is evident in improvements to teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are provided with a good range of interesting activities and good teaching.
- Improvements in teaching are clearly reflected in the better quality of work in pupils' books.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe, and attendance has recently risen to above average.
- Staff are highly supportive of senior leaders in improving the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons. This included two joint observations with members of the senior team. Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at samples of recent work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Discussions also took place with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account the views of 31 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also noted the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire and letters received from parents.
- Inspectors observed many other aspects of the school’s work, including an assembly and playtimes. They looked at documents including plans for improvement, recent reviews of teaching, the school’s data on pupils’ progress, attendance records and documentation relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Steven Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dennis Brittain

Additional Inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for groups such as pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard for primary schools, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been some changes in senior staff since the previous inspection, and a new Chair of the Governing Body took up post in September 2013.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that:
  - teachers match work in lessons to pupils' individual needs, especially to extend learning for more-able pupils
  - pupils are given enough time to get on with activities or work by themselves
  - teachers question pupils skilfully to check how well they are doing in lessons and make adjustments to teaching when necessary.
- Improve progress in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils by giving them:
  - regular opportunities to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects
  - time to respond to comments in teachers' marking so that they can understand how to improve their work.
- Ensure leaders and governors accelerate the pace of improvement by:
  - using information from checks on teaching more rigorously to improve the quality of teaching, with a greater emphasis on its impact on learning and progress
  - giving governors the training they need to fully understand performance data and challenge leaders over the results
  - analysing in detail the impact of pupil premium spending on eligible pupils' progress and making adjustments where needed as a result.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- The 2012 and 2013 Year 6 test results show that pupils did not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics during their time in the school. In addition, 2012 results for Key Stage 1 indicate that pupils in the current Year 4 made slow progress, particularly in writing. This is why pupils' achievement overall is inadequate, despite clear improvements evident in teaching and in pupils' attitudes to learning.
- In 2012 pupils' attainment in Year 2 fell in mathematics, reading and particularly in writing. Overall lower attainment has meant that pupils began Key Stage 2 lacking a firm basis for their future work. The decline was arrested in 2013 and standards improved in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, however, standards were below average in 2012 and declined further in 2013.
- Pupil premium funding is used, in part, to provide additional one-to-one adult support and small group work. This has not proved to be successful in reducing the gap between the attainment of these pupils and other groups. In 2012, those in Year 6 were on average a year behind their classmates in mathematics and nearly two years behind in English, and this has not improved significantly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of their classmates. Senior leaders have taken action to improve it by appointing a new member of staff to oversee learning for these pupils. These pupils' needs have been identified and the close support they receive is being well directed, but the impact has yet to show in improved achievement for this group of pupils.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress, and many reaching the goals that are expected by the end of their time in the Reception class because of good teaching.
- The results of the national check for reading for pupils in Year 1 show that the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) has improved recently. There was over a 40 percentage point improvement in the scores in 2013 compared with 2012. Achievement in reading is improving as a result.
- The school has allocated the new sports funding for primary schools to provide a consultant sports coach and appoint a sports curriculum leader. Pupils are already talking enthusiastically about the new sport activities available at lunch time and after school, which are planned to make a significant impact on pupils' lifestyles and physical well-being.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching has had a varied impact on pupils' achievement. In some areas of the school, teaching is good, but overall it requires improvement. Weaker teaching in the past has left pupils with catching up to do, and the gaps in learning have not yet been fully closed. As a result, progress for pupils currently in the school is not yet good.
- Planning is not always good. Sometimes, pupils spend too long sitting listening to the teacher, and this delays and shortens the time they have to work on tasks matched to their abilities and receive individual support. Sometimes, tasks are not well matched to ability, especially for the

more-able pupils. Occasionally, teachers do not tap into pupils' enthusiasm enough by allowing them to be more independent and work by themselves.

- Teachers' marking is variable. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils are given enough time to act on their written advice, which delays pupils' understanding of how to improve their work.
- In some lessons, teachers seek responses to their questions from those pupils who show that they know the answers. Teachers do not make sure that all groups understand and are making sufficient progress during lessons and adapt the lesson if necessary.
- The overall improvement in pupils' learning this year reflects the mostly good or better teaching now evident. High levels of intervention and high expectations from teachers and teaching assistants are raising levels of progress. While more needs to be done, a fact recognised by the school's senior leaders, improvements in teaching have resulted in better attainment and progress for most pupils currently in the school.
- The best teaching encourages pupils to work together and share their ideas. In a Year 3 mathematics session, for example, the teacher frequently checked pupils' responses and challenged them to check their own understanding of adding numbers to solve problems. No time was wasted on overly long explanations and pupils engaged in meaningful and suitable activities which matched their needs, over which pupils had a degree of choice.
- Teachers develop very good relationships with their pupils and there are almost no difficulties remaining with managing pupils' behaviour. All the adults work as a team to provide valuable additional support to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those for whom the school receives the pupil premium.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is a good balance between play and formal teaching and assessments are used effectively to build up a picture of the children's development. Activities provide a wide range of learning experiences that ensure children make good progress in their social, emotional and academic development.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons has improved considerably from a low base, but is not yet good. Teachers and pupils are unanimous in their views that behaviour is much improved. The big drop in exclusions supports this although the figure remains higher than for most primary schools. Exclusion rates were considerably higher than national averages in 2012, and attendance was low.
- Attendance, too, has improved substantially, and is currently above average. Pupils behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn, well motivated and happy to share their learning in discussions with their partners.
- Pupils also mostly behave well when not in lessons. They often play happily together, do as they are told by dinner supervisors and move around the school sensibly. Most have good manners and are polite towards visitors. Occasionally, play equipment is not available for the pupils to use at lunch time and this can lead to many becoming bored towards the end of the lunch break, with consequent lapses in the quality of their behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe and are aware of how to keep safe and secure, for example when using the internet. They report, and records show, that staff deal with bullying effectively. Where it does

occur, pupils say that it is mostly related to minor disagreement and name-calling. The vast majority of parents also feel that their children are kept safe and are well looked after.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The new senior team has already been successful in bringing about many improvements, but has not yet eliminated underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, and has not yet ensured a consistently good standard of teaching across the school.
- Equal opportunities have not been assured for pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, as they made less progress than other groups. Until recently, there had not been a good enough analysis of the impact of spending of the pupil premium on pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders have thoroughly investigated the reasons for the high exclusion rates and have revised their strategies to ensure exclusions rates continue to drop. Already the impact of this is significant. There have been no exclusions this academic year and behaviour is now much better.
- The headteacher has a clear vision of the pathway to improvement and is now ably supported by the other members of the senior leadership team, teachers and teaching assistants in the school. There is a new-found confidence among staff, and the current quality of teaching demonstrates that they are able to move learning onwards.
- The analysis of pupils' progress and evaluation of the school's work now provide teachers with a good understanding of the school's performance, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures that improvement planning is sharply focused on identified weaknesses.
- Leaders regularly monitor lessons and pupils' work, and have had significant success in improving the teaching of individual staff. Whereas assessments of how well pupils were doing were previously not accurate, they are now checked to ensure their validity. The resulting information is used extensively to check the progress of pupils on a half-termly basis and, at the same time, to make sure that the quality of teaching is improving.
- This information is also used to set teachers' targets for improvement. There is a clear understanding that decisions about promotion and pay rates will be based on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- The curriculum offers pupils some opportunities to develop their learning across a range of subjects, but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills in different subjects. Learning is linked by interesting themes that promote a positive attitude to learning. Changes have provided more opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, as part of a 'Health and Safety' themed week held during the inspection, pupils visited a 'Health Bus' parked on site and learned about the moral and social consequences of addiction.
- The local authority has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school through regular visits.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance requires improvement. The governing body, under the leadership of a new Chair, is in a better position to provide more effective challenge to leaders over the performance of pupils and teachers. Records of their meetings show that in the past they knew that Key Stage 2 results were not good and challenged this, but did not ask sufficiently probing questions to get at the reasons for weak teaching and underachievement.
- The governors have regular training on various aspects of their role and make sure the school meets national requirements for safeguarding, but have not yet had enough focused guidance on how to interpret performance data in detail. They are now appropriately involved in overseeing the way staff performance is linked to pay and promotion.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funding has been used and its poor impact on pupils' progress, but have not acted firmly to ensure it enables pupils to make up the ground previously lost. Governors have a good understanding of financial matters.

## 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

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 103381     |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Birmingham |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 429626     |

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

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                 |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community               |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 368                     |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body      |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Hayley Sumner           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Elizabeth Gallagher     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 25 April 2012           |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0121 4644634            |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 0121 4642497            |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | bgallagher@elmsfarm.org |

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