

Elm Tree Community Primary School

Ranworth Avenue, Lowestoft, NR33 9HN

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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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.

- Actions taken by the headteacher and deputy headteacher since the previous inspection to improve teaching and pupils' achievement have been very effective. During the inspection, no inadequate teaching was seen, most was good and a small amount was outstanding.
- Teachers skillfully ask questions to check and promote pupils' understanding. The positive relationships in and outside the classrooms, coupled with high expectations, encourage pupils to work hard and reflect the school's ethos: 'Be the Best You Can Be'.
- All groups of pupils make good progress, in English and mathematics, and achieve well. This includes pupils who need additional help with their learning and those supported by the two specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs.
- Children in the Reception classes make good progress. They settle quickly and happily into the school's routines because the adults create a welcoming environment.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe at the school. They are proud of their school and are keen to learn.
- There is a highly developed sense of community, demonstrating the school's strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school accurately and work closely with the school leaders. They hold them to account for the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons work is too easy and does not make pupils think really hard.
- Teachers' written comments do not always make it clear to pupils how to make their work better.
- Information about pupils' progress is not fully understood by all teachers who have leadership roles.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 21 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. All teachers present during the inspection were observed, as well as teaching assistants working with groups of pupils or individuals. Inspectors also observed the work of the two specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs.
- In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons, looked in on pupils at lunchtime, visited the playground during break times and attended an assembly. The inspectors also visited the breakfast club.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in all year groups, listened to pupils read and looked at the quality of displays in the classrooms and around the school as well as information on the school's website.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and teachers with additional leadership or management responsibilities. A discussion was held, by telephone, with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke formally with two groups of pupils and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school.
- A variety of the school's documents were examined. These included: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan; the school's information about pupils' progress and the support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 51 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parental survey and six letters sent by parents, together with views expressed by parents as they dropped off their children at the start of the day. Inspectors analysed 32 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Christine Mayle, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Matthew Klimcke	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils attending the school are of White British Heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. In this school, this extra government funding is for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs: A hearing impaired unit with seven pupils, using both spoken language and British Sign Language, and a speech and language unit with eleven pupils (Reception to Year 2).
- There is a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body and was included in this inspection.
- Pre-school provision is also available on the school site. This is not run by the school and is subject to separate inspection.
- Following re-organisation within the local authority the school became a primary school in September 2010 and had its first Year 6 pupils in 2011. The school finished moving into new buildings in July 2012.
- A significant number of pupils leave and join the school at times other than the usual entry year in Reception.
- There have been staff changes since the previous inspection, including six new teachers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers' written comments clearly explain to pupils what they need to do to make their work better
 - teachers plan and set work that makes all pupils think really hard about their learning.
- Make sure leaders at all levels have good skills in analysing information to check the progress that pupils make, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children start in the Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age group, especially in reading and writing. They settle into school quickly and get on well together. They make good progress especially in language and communication, preparing them well for their learning in Year 1.
- Since becoming a primary school and moving to new buildings there has been a significant number of pupils leave or join the school. Many of those joining have additional learning or social needs. However, the school quickly identifies the support these pupils require, so that they achieve well. Key Stage 1 results in 2013, with almost half the pupils in Year 2 joining the school at different times other than Reception, were below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The enjoyment of reading is promoted strongly from a very young age and opportunities are seized in lessons for pupils to use their reading skills to support their learning in other subjects. There has been an upward trend in the school's results in the national check on phonics (how the letters in words relate to their sounds) taken in Year 1, although they remained below the national average in 2013.
- Standards in reading at the end of Year 6 improved from well below average in 2012 to average in 2013, and continue to rise. Improvement was also pronounced in mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. In a year 5 lesson pupils were asked to write about what they saw when looking through a window. Some pupils stood at a window, others imagined their favourite view while others used well-chosen, brightly coloured books, to first talk about and then write a description of the view.
- In the same lesson, the teacher and teaching assistant through skilful questioning extended the pupils use of adjectives and time connectives, so that the pupils' writing was creative and accurate. Pupils worked enthusiastically together correcting, using dictionaries, both each other's and their own spellings, or punctuation errors. Handwriting was neat and pupils took pride in the presentation of their work.
- All adults have high expectations of what all pupils will achieve so that they now make good progress in their learning.
- The most able pupils make good progress as most teachers plan activities to extend their knowledge and understanding and make them think hard. However, they are not always encouraged enough to think deeply about their learning for themselves.
- The effective support provided by teaching assistants, and specialist teachers helps to ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. The hearing impaired pupils and those based in the speech and language unit also make good progress.
- The school's actions to improve teaching across all year groups, particularly in reading, have been very effective in raising standards. Inspectors' observations in lessons, the work seen in pupils' books and the school's own information show that the pattern of rapidly rising standards and improving progress is set to continue.

- Pupil premium funding is being used effectively to reduce class sizes and provide additional adult support to work within classes and with small groups. In 2013, those pupils in Year 6 known to be eligible for support though this funding were six terms behind their peers in reading, were about three terms behind in writing and four terms behind in mathematics. For the current eligible pupils the gap between their progress and that of others is rapidly reducing.
- The additional funding for primary school sport is being used to provide specialist physical education (PE) coaching within lessons and run a wide variety of after-school sports clubs. As a result the quality of learning in PE is improving. It is now good, and sometimes outstanding. Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, enjoy participating in PE and make good progress in the development of their physical skills and in developing healthy lifestyles.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Since the previous inspection, the senior leaders' systematic and rigorous monitoring of the school's performance has ensured that weaknesses in teaching have been tackled. Good teaching, including in English and mathematics, is now the norm throughout the school with some outstanding practice evident.
- The teaching of reading has a high profile and is promoted around the school on wall displays and in the use of the well-stocked library. Teachers encourage pupils to read for pleasure and for information so that they develop a love of reading, which helps them make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils know that teachers always expect them to do their best and they are keen to show this in their work and their concentration in lessons.
- In the Reception classes the development of pupils' early reading, writing and mathematical skills, as well as their social and imaginative skills, is given a high priority within a safe and caring environment. Adults organise activities to make good use of the indoor and outdoor spaces to support learning. Very occasionally these are not managed well and children's attention wanders, although they remain enthusiastic towards their learning.
- Positive and productive relationships contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their learning.
- Pupils trust and respect the adults who support them, so there is a strong sense of partnership in the learning that takes place. This is particularly so for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, the hearing impaired pupils, who are taught predominantly in their mainstream classes and the pupils based in the speech and language unit. With the effective support they receive, these pupils make good progress alongside their classmates. As a result there is equality of opportunity in all areas of the school and no sign of discrimination of any kind.
- In most lessons, teachers set work so that pupils have to think really hard. Occasionally the work is too easy for some pupils, including the most able pupils, and they do not complete it with the same enthusiasm.
- Teachers regularly check how well pupils are doing and if there is a sign of learning slowing, individual and small-group work takes place so that pupils catch up quickly. Teachers mark pupils' work and most write detailed comments to let pupils know what they have done well and

what they need to do next. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of these written comments and pupils are not always clear what they need to do to make their work even better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is a calm and harmonious place. Pupils are keen to learn and this helps them to concentrate and listen well in lessons, so that they make good progress. Their concentration only wavers when teaching does not fully engage them. Pupils, who have joined the school other than in Reception, say that they were made to feel welcome, settled in quickly and made new friends.
- In Reception children enjoy sharing toys and helping each other, reflecting the high expectations that the school places on their personal and social development.
- There is a strong sense of community within the school. Pupils spoken to referred to 'The Elm Tree Family' demonstrating the school's strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. In an assembly an expert interpreter of British Sign Language, stood alongside the teacher, so that all pupils could take their full part in the proceedings. Everyone sang and signed the song, 'Shalom', with gusto and enjoyment. All the pupils and adults were very attentive and keen to practise their skills.
- Adults in all areas of the school model the school's high expectation for the way that pupils should conduct themselves in and outside the classrooms. Pupils arrive on time and are courteous and welcoming to visitors, often offering to help to escort them around the school. They take great pride in their school and in wearing their school uniform.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and that adults are always willing to help. They say that bullying of any kind, including cyber-bullying, racism or name-calling, is rare and when it does occur is dealt with promptly. Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View and the school's own survey agree that the school keeps their children safe. One parent commented: 'I feel completely at ease leaving my son in their (the school's) care and confident in their abilities to support my child.'
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility throughout the school. At playtimes older pupils act as buddies for younger ones or for those who find making friends difficult. Pupils are aware of other's needs, including those with physical disabilities, so that playtimes are happy and harmonious. They spoke enthusiastically about the visit of a 2012 Olympiad as part of the legacy programme 'Be the Best You Can Be'.
- The school's actions, including the appointment of an attendance support assistant, have resulted in an improvement in attendance since the previous inspection so that it is now average. The number of fixed term exclusions fell between 2012 and 2013.
- The breakfast club provides a safe and friendly place for pupils, from which to start their school day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, with the support of governors and a committed team of teaching and support staff, have successfully secured improvements in teaching, by increasing the rigour with which they check teachers' work and hold them to account for pupils' progress.

Expectations of what staff and pupils can achieve are high and clearly communicated to all staff.

- Leaders responsible for subjects or other aspects of the school's work are well supported and undertake their roles in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas effectively. They work well together as a team.
- The school uses a range of activities to check the progress of individual pupils in detail so that effective support can quickly be put in place for any in danger of falling behind in their work. It also checks different groups to make sure pupils make good progress from when they join the school. Not all leaders use this information strategically to analyse the progress made by all pupils, particularly in The Early Years Foundation Stage.
- There have been changes in the teaching and support staff teams since the previous inspection and these have strengthened the school's capacity for further improvement. Professional development provided for staff is accurately linked to the improvements that need to be made in teaching. However there is insufficient sharing of the best practice, particularly in marking.
- The school has close, beneficial links with a range of other partners, including the on-site Nursery, to ease transition for pupils between settings. In addition, links with Norwich City Community Sports Foundation using the primary school sport funding are making a positive difference to the quality and range of sporting activities available for pupils, their level of participation and their physical well-being.
- The school provides a range of experiences to engage and enthuse pupils in their learning. The pupils record these in their 'enquiry' folders. These show how pupils learn across a range of subjects including history, science and design and technology and achieve well. Pupils are also able to take part in out-of-school activities such as sports clubs, residential visits and musical performances. As a result the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development well.
- The local authority, in consultation with the school, has provided effective, well-chosen support that has contributed to the school's improvements in teaching and pupils' progress.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding fully meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a wide range of experience and skills to their work with the school. They are well informed and actively seek training to make sure that they are in a good position to both challenge and support the school leadership in their drive to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching. They visit to check the work of the school regularly, ask probing questions of leaders and receive detailed and comprehensive reports from the headteacher. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance relative to schools nationally, particularly in relation to how pupil premium funding has been spent and its impact on pupils' progress. They make sure there are close links between teachers' pay, promotion and the quality of teaching and are clear about the expected outcomes for the spending of the primary school sport funding on pupils' health and well-being.

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	124642
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	430797

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Justin Coote
Headteacher	Hilary Day
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2012
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