

Elmwood Primary School

Guys Farm Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, CM3 5NB

Inspection dates

4–5 February 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and other school leaders have successfully improved teaching and its impact on pupils' learning since the last inspection.
- The pupils' progress is accelerating and their attainment is rising as teaching improves. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of different ability groups and often adapt lesson activities swiftly in response to the pupils' learning.
- Strong teamwork is increasingly becoming the key to the school's success. Teachers and support staff are united in working to meet the headteacher's aims and ambitions for the pupils.
- Teaching and the environment have improved considerably in Reception. Children become immersed quickly in the wide range of stimulating activities provided, both inside and out.
- Pupils are polite, considerate and show considerable respect for adults and each other. They feel very safe in school, and have great confidence that staff will look after them and sort out any problems.
- Hard work, concentration and perseverance are all features of the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning.
- The school engages well with parents. It keeps them informed and encourages them to contribute to their children's learning.
- The teaching of subjects through topics and themed events provides a wide range of interesting and exciting experiences for the pupils and contributes much to their learning.
- The promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development runs through all that the school does.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers are skilled at checking how well pupils understand what is being taught.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' writing skills as well in topic work or in different subjects as they do in English.
- Sometimes pupils go over work they can already do instead of practising their skills and deepening their understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, eight of which were seen together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff and members of the governing body, including the Chair. A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 84 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and held informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own information on the pupils’ current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors listened to the reading of a sample of pupils in Year 2.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Richmond

Additional Inspector

Susan Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is above average in size.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for a below-average proportion of the pupils. This is extra government funding given to schools to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care, or with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The privately-run Elmwood Pre-School and Little Learners operate on the school site, as does the Woodykins Baby and Toddler Group. Both are inspected separately, as is Woody's Breakfast and After-school Club.
- 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?

- Make more teaching outstanding, by ensuring that teachers:
 - keep a close check on pupils' understanding in lessons, and adjust work or explain it as necessary
 - make the most of available lesson time, so all ability groups make good progress.
- Increase progress in writing by ensuring that pupils practise their writing skills in topics and other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress across the school, although it is most rapid in Years 5 and 6 where much of the teaching is outstanding. More-able pupils make at least similar progress to others and it is often more rapid, so increasing numbers are reaching levels higher than expected for their age.
- Children make good progress in Reception from skills on entry slightly below those typical for their age. All adults have high expectations of what the children can achieve. Children's good progress in writing has already enabled them to form letters and simple sentences in response to the sounds they learn in sessions on phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- Pupils' progress in reading is based on well-taught phonics sessions in Reception and Year 1, and regular opportunities to develop wider reading skills across the school. Pupils learn how to locate information and draw inferences from texts they read. The drive for improvement in mathematics has led to pupils having regular opportunities to apply their skills when solving problems, such as when Year 3 and 4 pupils planned a holiday to India on a limited budget.
- The school is working effectively to raise attainment in writing. Year 6 test results rose to above average in reading and mathematics in 2013, and rose slightly but were still broadly average in writing. Teachers use interesting texts and film clips to stimulate pupils' imagination. Pupils are also frequently encouraged to discuss their writing, and they have clear targets to aim for. This is all starting to lead to more creative and well-planned writing, and increasing pupils' progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to other pupils. This is because of a strong working relationship between teachers and support staff. This means that lessons and additional work link closely and support every step of each pupil's learning.
- The school uses the pupil premium effectively to increase the progress of eligible pupils. The gap in attainment in Year 6 tests in 2013 between eligible pupils and others amounted to two terms in mathematics and almost three in reading and writing, but it is narrowing in subsequent year groups, reflecting the good progress made by eligible pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lessons typically take place in well-managed classes where rarely a word is needed from teachers to gain the pupils' attention. This means that learning can flow without interruption. Displays support learning well by providing pupils with guidance and ideas. Pupils learn with and from each other through discussing and sharing ideas, and working in carefully planned groups. More-able pupils are made to think hard by being given work that challenges them.
- Teachers demonstrate high levels of subject expertise in the very best examples through confident teaching and incisive questions designed to make all pupils think. These teachers adapt lessons quickly by bringing groups together if they need help or further challenge. These features were seen in an outstandingly well-taught Year 6 lesson as pupils applied rules for calculating angles in shapes. Activities engaged the pupils in a high level of discussion, with a 'real-life' application helping them to develop the relevant mathematical skills quickly.
- Children in Reception learn well by working together, discussing their ideas and having access to

stimulating play areas such as 'The Queen of Hearts' house from *Alice in Wonderland*. Adults are skilled at recognising when to stand back and let learning evolve and when to move in and make suggestions to move learning forward so children get the most out of each activity.

- The skilled team of teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to the learning, particularly of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They are well briefed in lessons and skilfully lead sessions to help pupils to catch up if they have fallen behind in, for example, their reading.
- When teaching is less successful, in a small number of lessons, teachers do not make sure that pupils have fully understood the tasks set for them; for example, by asking probing questions skilfully. This can leave some pupils unsure about what they are aiming for in their work. At times, the explanations are not presented in a way that matches pupils' ability levels, so they spend time covering things they already know rather than getting on with activities to strengthen their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have high aspirations, want to do well and are proud of their achievements. They rarely lose focus, even when teaching is not the most exciting. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in rising attendance levels.
- Children in Reception are taught how to socialise and interact with others, creating the basis for the highly effective collaboration seen in lessons across the school. These attributes contribute very strongly to improvements in their learning and progress.
- Pupils move sensibly around the school and play happily together at break and lunch. Pupils are developing well the skills needed to interact with others in later life.
- Staff use highly effective systems to reward good behaviour and tackle inappropriate behaviour by helping pupils to take responsibility and make amends if they have fallen short of the school's high expectations.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and rigorously implemented.
- Pupils are taught how to recognise and deal with risk, including through visits from the fire brigade and the police. They say that any very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly by staff, who resolve any problems sensitively.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high ambitions for the pupils and is determined that these will be achieved. She is well supported by other senior leaders and the staff team in meeting the challenges she sets. Expectations have been raised since the last inspection and she has galvanised staff, who share the drive to raise achievement for all. The strong team of well-trained and experienced subject leaders are instrumental in pushing through improvements, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The school has embarked on a programme, with the assistance of external consultants, to drive up further the quality of teaching and learning. Each teacher's performance is carefully checked

and targets set are linked carefully to training that is adapted for each individual, including working alongside skilled practitioners. Teachers have to meet very challenging targets to gain pay rises and promotion. This is a strong incentive to improve the impact of their teaching on the progress of all pupils in their class.

- Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided effective challenge for the headteacher and an external view of the school's progress in tackling areas for improvement.
- Workshops give advice to parents in the correct way of teaching phonics and how to support their children's reading. The school's 'virtual learning environment' is a great asset in informing parents about how they can work with their children at home.
- The school's successful drive to achieve equality of opportunity is based on identifying barriers to learning for pupils, such as those with special educational needs, and tackling them on an individual basis. Close monitoring of the impact of additional support means that it can be adapted swiftly.
- Topics fire the pupils' imagination from their imaginative introductions and through the opportunity to suggest areas they would like to explore. Teachers are very imaginative in the way they introduce subjects. Year 5 pupils are particularly enjoying their work on Narnia, which includes wardrobe doors opening onto a corridor set up with scenes from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. They are also looking at the moral dilemma facing the characters by considering arguments for and against their actions. Links with a school in The Gambia and themed events such as 'Diwali Week' broaden considerably the pupils' global awareness and understanding of other cultures.
- Good use is being made of the new primary sports funding to extend the range of activities for pupils and support healthy lifestyles. This has led to greater participation in competitive sports against other schools. Training for staff and pupils as play-leaders is resulting in more pupils taking part in organised energetic activities at lunch-time.

■ The governance of the school:

- The new Chair of the Governing Body has instigated a review of the governing body's effectiveness. The changes made as a result mean governors are becoming increasingly active and challenging in their role. Governors have regular training to update their skills but recognise more is needed if they are to understand fully the implications of assessment data. Relevant further training is already planned. The newly introduced 'governor day' has given governors a much greater insight into the school. They recognise how the headteacher and staff have moved the school forward since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching. They check the impact of spending carefully and are getting to grips with the new pay policy and how it will be used to reward only good or better teaching. They have also reviewed and made adjustments to pupil premium spending which are having an impact on increasing progress for eligible 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	115240
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	430740

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Phelps-Knights
Headteacher	Helen Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2012
Telephone number	01245 321301
Fax number	01245 322498
Email address	admin@elmwood.essex.sch.uk

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