

Elson Infant School

Elson Lane, Gosport, Hampshire, PO12 4EU

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- Teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and is now good. Very positive relationships with pupils ensure that they are attentive, eager to learn, and respond well to their teachers.
- Pupils make good progress across the school and attain above-average standards, particularly in reading, by the time they leave.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are welcoming and friendly. They feel safe, and their behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school.
- The highly effective partnership of the acting executive headteacher and the acting head of school has resulted in rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement. Pupils thrive in their learning and in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders in charge of subjects have taken a more active role in checking the school's performance. This has strengthened the school's capacity for improvement.
- The governing body has a good understanding of teaching, pupils' achievement, and of the performance of the school. The governors' rigorous challenge and keen support mean that the school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not typically outstanding so that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Occasionally, some pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged enough to make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- The teaching of handwriting skills is not yet effective enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by nine teachers, as well as one assembly. Nine lessons were jointly observed with the acting executive headteacher, acting head of school, or Key Stage 1 leader.
- Short visits were made to observe the teaching of numeracy and literacy to small groups of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break and lunchtimes.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress for the current school year and since the previous inspection, and pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at: the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement documentation; planning; assessment information; documentation on the management of teachers' performance; and school policies and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.
- Inspectors took account of 55 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 replies to the staff questionnaire. The views of parents and carers were sought at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

David Webster, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Anthony Green	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Elson Infant School is larger than the average-sized infant school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes three Reception classes. Pupils are taught throughout the school in single-age classes.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent or carer in the armed forces, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is just below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- A number of changes have taken place in the school's leadership, including that of the governing body, since the previous inspection. The present acting executive headteacher has led the school since April 2013 and the former deputy headteacher has been in post as acting head of school since September 2013. The new Chair of the Governing Body has been in post since September 2012.
- When the school was last inspected in May 2012, it was judged to require special measures. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors has visited on four occasions since then to check the progress it was making in dealing with areas of weakness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding levels in order to accelerate the progress of all pupils further by:
 - ensuring that work is always sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able
 - providing more systematic and effective teaching of handwriting skills
 - encouraging pupils to develop their responses more fully in class discussions in order to further their language skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The progress of all groups of pupils has accelerated rapidly throughout the school since the previous inspection due to improvements in teaching, and is now good. In discussion with inspectors, pupils said how much they enjoy their lessons and that they learn a lot. Most parents and carers agree their children are making good progress.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is now above the national average, particularly in reading. Progress seen in pupils' books and internal school data shows this positive trend in achievement is set to continue. However, achievement is not yet outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching in order for pupils, especially the most able, to make rapid progress in their learning.
- In mathematics, staff have worked successfully since the previous inspection to give pupils more chances to apply their basic mathematical skills in a wide variety of contexts. As a result, they now make similar progress in mathematics to that in reading and writing.
- In writing, progress has improved due to the increased opportunities provided for pupils to write in a range of subjects. However, their handwriting skills are not consistently promoted by teachers and the presentation of pupils' work is not always as neat as it could be.
- Pupils make rapid progress in reading because of the significant focus since the previous inspection on strengthening the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and the support given to pupils who find reading difficult. Recent improvements in communication with parents and carers through 'reading journey' files have strengthened the drive to continually improve standards in reading.
- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly in line with what is expected for their age. They progress well because teaching in Reception classes is now good. Strong care and support from adults ensure children settle quickly in their new environment, feel safe, and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide extra help in small groups and for individuals on a one-to-one basis. The attainment of pupils in Year 2 eligible for free school meals is now above that of their peers in the school, and because of the additional support, the attainment gap between these groups of pupils and their classmates is narrowing rapidly across the rest of the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual learning goals. They benefit from high-quality support by skilled staff and a dedicated manager of their provision.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Rapid improvements in teaching since the previous inspection, so that much is now good, and some is outstanding, have resulted in pupils' attainment continuing to rise.
- Teachers plan thoroughly to make sure that learning is interesting, that high-quality resources are available to pupils, and that their work is set at the right level of difficulty for most pupils.
- Precise, simple instructions, high expectations and clear questioning encourage pupils to think carefully about their learning and check their understanding effectively throughout lessons. As a result, they work at a good pace and with confidence. When learning is most effective, the teacher's strong subject knowledge is used imaginatively to ensure high levels of engagement and concentration.
- In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, pupils were retelling a story based on a fairy tale that they had read. The teacher's expert subject knowledge, high expectations, and use of questioning which continually encouraged careful thought about the use of similes and metaphors resulted in all pupils, especially the most able, working at an excellent pace. They were very eager to offer answers and highly focused on their learning.

- Marking strategies have improved since the previous inspection. The easily understood 'yippie yellow and green for growth' approach makes it clear to pupils how they are doing and how to improve.
- Pupils' work is assessed regularly so that teachers can help pupils improve further. Pointers for improvement are clearly displayed in classrooms so that pupils can refer to them easily.
- Classrooms are well resourced and provide a stimulating environment for learning. Their walls display many examples of pupils' work, and highlight important words and strategies which help them progress in their different subjects.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, lively teaching captures children's interest. A wide range of opportunities help them to learn through play and investigation, both inside and outside the classroom, and promote their confidence and their ability to work on their own. In one session, for example, some children responded to the teacher's skilful questions with interest and confidence as they created a picture of a policeman, others cooperated very well together as they painted their cardboard police car, and others were engrossed in writing their own stories.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well and consequently make good progress. Additional adults provide effective support for small groups, using a range of resources, and thoughtfully question pupils to promote good progress.
- Teaching is not outstanding because on a few occasions some activities do not challenge pupils enough, particularly the most able. Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to further their language skills by developing their responses fully in class discussions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are welcoming to visitors and proud of their school, and their relationships with one another and with adults are very positive. As a result, the school atmosphere is calm, purposeful and productive.
- Pupils are attentive, eager to learn, and enjoy their work in the vast majority of lessons. As one pupil said, 'I love school. We learn lots!' Pupils say that lessons are hardly ever disrupted by poor behaviour. School records and discussions with parents and carers, staff and pupils show that behaviour is typically good.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well and the school rejects discrimination in all its forms.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school is working closely with families to improve it and follows up absences rigorously.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, very occasionally when the challenge or pace of a lesson slows, a few pupils start to fidget and chat amongst themselves.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school. They have a clear understanding of risk, which is strongly reinforced by the school's input on personal safety, and particularly e-safety. Bullying is rare. Should it occur, pupils are confident that adults will deal with it quickly and effectively, as they do any instances of poor behaviour. They are aware of the different forms of bullying that can take place.
- Parents and carers appreciate the individual care and attention shown to their children. The strong pastoral system, skilled support staff and effective relationships with external agencies ensure that there is effective support for pupils with additional social or emotional needs.

The leadership and management are good

- The highly effective partnership of the acting executive headteacher and head of school, strongly supported by leadership at all levels, has moved the school forward rapidly since the previous inspection.
- The results of the staff questionnaire show morale is high. Staff are committed to the clear vision for improvement set out by leaders, and feel valued and supported.
- The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate. It is based on rigorous checks of

teaching and pupils' progress. Senior leaders use this information well to draw up very precise and pertinent plans for improvement. As a result, both teaching and pupils' achievement have been significantly strengthened since the previous inspection, indicating good capacity for improvement.

- Teaching is monitored well by leaders. They check on the work of teachers and other adults frequently through formal observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Lesson observations are accurate, with a good focus upon pupils' progress and learning, and identify points for each teacher to work on which are followed up in subsequent observations. The management of staff performance is robust. Leaders ensure that teachers receive support and training that is linked well to improving the skills they need to develop.
- The school's tracking of pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. Senior leaders use this information, together with that from the scrutiny and moderation of pupils' work, to gain an accurate picture of the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. They regularly discuss with teachers to agree the best approaches for pupils who are making slower progress.
- The effectiveness and impact of leaders in charge of subjects have improved. They focus well on improving teaching and learning through clear and detailed action plans which are reviewed regularly. Opportunities to monitor pupils' progress and teachers' planning, and to lead training for staff, have strengthened their leadership skills and contributed significantly to improvements in reading, writing and mathematical skills for all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. A strong team ensure that children make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Different subjects are taught well through topics and enriched by a range of clubs, by visits, for example to Arundel Castle, and by visitors. One visitor was a former pupil who returned as a MasterChef finalist and entertained the pupils by cooking food from around the world.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Many opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their work, relationships and behaviour are included in their learning. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is broadened by the study of other faiths.
- The school has effective plans to use the government's primary sports funding to improve staff skills by working alongside a sports specialist, offer a wider range of opportunities including dance, promote healthy lifestyles, and increase pupils' participation in sporting activities including competitions.
- Child protection and safeguarding have a high priority. Leaders ensure that all requirements are met and that the school site is a safe environment.
- The local authority has provided a wide range of effective and valued specialist support to the school following the previous inspection. This is now, appropriately, being phased out and is at a much lighter level.
- School leaders contribute their strengths of practice to meetings of the local community of schools, and the strong links which have been established with a partner infant school are of mutual benefit. Very positive relationships are enjoyed with most parents and carers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides strong support for the work of the school, and its challenge and commitment are exemplary. Governors have attended a range of training provided by the local authority and are well informed on how the school is doing in relation to other schools nationally because they have a clear understanding of data on pupils' achievement. They visit the school regularly and are accurately aware of its strengths and areas for improvement. They hold a clear overview of the quality of teaching and ensure that salary awards are closely linked to the progress of pupils. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor the performance of the acting executive headteacher. The governing body understands how pupil premium and sports funding is being used and the impact of this upon pupils' progress. It makes sure safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that finances are managed well.

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	116163
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	426346

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gordon Duff
Headteacher	Debra Marshall (Acting Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2012
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