

Elsenham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street, Elsenham, Bishop's Stortford, CM22 6DD

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Elsenham Primary School is a safe and secure place with a friendly atmosphere. Pupils enjoy coming to school, where they feel well cared for and valued.
- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. The standards they reach in these subjects is rising.
- Most teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding further.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle in quickly and gain in self-confidence. They have good opportunities to develop their communication skills.
- Pupils behave well. They have good attitudes to school, readily settle to work and play together harmoniously.
- The headteacher has high expectations of teachers and of what pupils can achieve and checks teaching effectively. Senior leaders have an accurate picture of their school and well-considered plans for continual improvement.
- The strong governing body supports the school effectively. Appropriate questions are asked of senior leaders to make sure the school's initiatives are well-focused on improving pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their work. Sometimes, pupils spend too long on activities they can already do or are moved on too quickly to harder tasks.
- Pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in mathematics and reading. They do not have enough opportunities to practise writing in a range of subjects and for different purposes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, including seven which were observed jointly with the headteacher. They also looked at pupils’ written work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and the vice chair, the headteacher and other school leaders, a representative of the local authority and the school’s improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils, and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils reading and talked to them about their reading habits.
- School documents examined included: the school’s own evaluation of its performance and its development plan; 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 about behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed by parents as they arrived to drop off their children.
- An inspector analysed 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Piers Ranger

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Elsenham Church of England School is smaller than an average-sized primary school. There is one class in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is around the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is 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?

- Improve teaching by ensuring all teachers:
 - ensure that written guidance results in pupils improving their work
 - make sure pupils are not delayed from new learning when they show they are ready, or hurried onto new topics too quickly.
- Speed up pupils' progress in writing by extending writing opportunities to different subjects and a wider variety of styles.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave school. In 2013, standards in reading and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling were above average. School information shows that pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress, although standards in reading and particularly in writing are lower this year. In contrast, in this unusually small class, pupils' achievement in mathematics has risen.
- Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. They make good progress and a higher proportion than nationally reach a good level of development by the time they start in Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. They learn phonics (the sounds letters in words make) well and they perform better than the national average in the annual phonics check. The standards they reach by the end of Year 2, although still broadly similar to the national averages, have been rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School information about pupils' performance and work seen in their books show that their good progress continues in Key Stage 2 in all subjects. Generally, progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to work on extended pieces of writing for different purposes and in different styles.
- Pupils have good opportunities to read with an adult at school and parents of younger readers are effectively encouraged to listen to them read. Year 6 pupils, acting as 'buddies,' enjoy reading with children in Reception. As well as the library, books are prominent in every classroom and pupils borrow and read books regularly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their classmates. Specialists are used to identify the support they need and they receive effective extra help from well-trained teaching assistants.
- The most-able pupils are expected to tackle harder work and have extra teaching sessions, for example, in small groups from specialist subject teachers. They are making good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils benefiting from the pupil premium are given suitable extra support, for example, through one-to-one teaching, support from 'learning mentors' and help to cover the cost of trips. The very few eligible pupils in each year group are generally making better progress than their classmates. No statistically meaningful comment can be made about their attainment relative to others because of the small numbers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good strategies to explain to pupils what they want them to do and to learn. Pupils in Year 4 quickly understood what was expected of them when they watched one of their classmates mime an action while the teacher worked out what the 'secret' adverb was. Pupils made good progress in understanding the meaning of a range of adverbs and how to use them

appropriately.

- Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour and work ethic. Teachers make good use of skilful questioning to make pupils think harder about the explanations they give and promote better understanding. For example, pupils in Year 6 working on metaphors thought carefully about the appropriateness of their chosen metaphor and its intended meaning through the teacher's searching, open questions.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, bright displays, with numbers, letters and words, and an attractive outside area, encourage children to read, write and count. A good balance of teacher-led activities and well planned opportunities for them to play and explore retains children's interest and engagement.
- Teachers plan activities that interest pupils and build upon their previous learning. They deploy their well-trained teaching assistants effectively so that identified pupils get the extra help they need. Sometimes time is not managed well enough and pupils spend too long on activities they have already mastered or move too quickly on to harder work.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly but the quality of the marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent. Teachers usually comment on what pupils can do well, in English and mathematics. However, they do not give enough guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their work or enough opportunities for pupils to act upon the advice that is given. Marking in other subjects is not as detailed as in English and mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions and behave well in lessons. Around the school, they move about with consideration for others and get along harmoniously during play times. Pupils take on extra responsibilities willingly, such as play leaders or 'buddies' for children in the Reception class.
- Pupils are eager to learn and have good attitudes to their work. They settle down to work quickly. Written exercises are completed properly and pupils are eager to answer teachers' questions. Occasionally, pupils do not try their hardest, for example, if the activity is not interesting enough.
- Pupils understand that their behaviour will affect their progress. They know and follow the school rules and are aware of the sanctions and rewards available. They are keen to stay in the 'green' zone for behaviour and to earn points for their house team. There are few incidents of misbehaviour and there have been no permanent or fixed term exclusions for several years.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Pupils say they feel valued and everyone has a teacher they can turn to if they ever feel unhappy. They have learned how to stay safe, for example, when crossing the roads or when using electrical items
- Pupils have learned about bullying, the different forms it can take and what to do about it. They say that bullying is rarely seen and teachers help settle any disagreements quickly. Name-calling of any kind is not tolerated.
- Pupils attend regularly and are punctual to school. Reasons for absences are followed up promptly. Attendance has been maintained above average in recent years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher models a professional approach to teaching and leadership well. The school operates smoothly and a warm, welcoming atmosphere is maintained. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to improve. Sharp, well-focused plans are being implemented to address shortcomings and to secure continual improvement.
- School leaders check the quality of teaching regularly through direct observations of teaching and the quality of pupils' work and the progress they make. Teachers are set challenging targets, including ones to speed up pupils' progress and to improve their own teaching. Necessary training opportunities are made available for teachers and teaching assistants, both within school and through external courses.
- Teachers new to the profession are well supported through an induction programme, overseen by the local authority, and by using experienced teachers as mentors. They have visited other schools and observed specialist teachers to improve their own practice. Subject leaders have good opportunities to develop their leadership skills, including through checking how well their subjects are taught and contributing to training of their colleagues.
- Teachers and senior leaders check pupils' progress at regular intervals so that plans to give timely extra help to pupils who are in danger of falling behind can be implemented. The school has received good support from the local authority in ensuring that teachers make accurate assessments of the quality of pupils' work.
- The school provides a good variety of subjects with a suitable emphasis on English and mathematics. Topics are well planned to combine a number of subjects and make learning and activities meaningful for pupils and to promote their enthusiasm
- Pupils' experiences at school are further enhanced by a wide range of events outside the classroom that support learning, such as trips to study ecology, to museums and to an activity centre. Clubs for sports and arts and other activities that promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are abundant.
- The extra funding available helps pupils eligible for the pupil premium to achieve well, demonstrating the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The primary school sports funding is spent effectively, improving pupils' health and their enjoyment of sport. More pupils are now engaged in regular physical activity in a wider range of sports. Teachers' expertise in coaching sport has been improved by working alongside sports specialists.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors have a relevant range of skills, understand school performance information and regularly update their training through the local authority. They receive regular and thorough reports from the headteacher and make their own focused visits, including checks on school initiatives.
- Governors ensure school leaders are held to account for their actions and that any underperformance is tackled promptly. Together with the school's improvement partner, they set challenging targets for the headteacher and ensure suitable targets are in place for all staff.
- Governors make sure that the school's finances are prudently spent for the benefit of pupils, including pay awards for teachers, the primary sports funding and the pupil premium.
- Governors make sure safeguarding requirements are fully in place.

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	115129
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	444176

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Lucas
Headteacher	Linda Reid
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2011
Telephone number	01279 813198
Email address	admin@elsenham.essex.sch.uk

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