

Elmstead Primary School

Holly Way, Elmstead Market, Colchester, CO7 7YQ

Inspection dates

19–20 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment is consistently above average and across the school they make at least the expected progress.
- The school successfully promotes a very supportive and nurturing ethos where pupils feel happy, safe and secure.
- Almost all teaching is at least good and some is outstanding.
- Early years provision is good. Relationships with parents are strong. All adults know children well and provide a caring and supportive environment.
- Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning. They know how to keep themselves safe online and in the wider world.
- Senior leaders have a clear focus on raising attainment and accelerating the progress of all pupils. Governors know the school well. They make good use of school self-evaluation and improvement plans to provide effective support and challenge. The school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not of the highest quality in all subjects all of the time.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics have not had enough opportunities to develop their role. They have not been able to make a full contribution to raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching.
- The partnership with parents is not sufficiently strong. Many say that communication is not good enough, and that they would like to play a more active part in their children's education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all seven classes at least twice. Three observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors met with the school council and the pupil’s health and safety committee and eco-committee and spoke informally with pupils in lessons and around the school.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plan and data on the progress of pupils. Documents relating to pupils’ behaviour, child protection and safeguarding and a range of policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding and complaints, were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to the online questionnaire, (Parent View), and those expressed by parents as they arrived at school to drop off their children. They also looked at the school’s own survey of parental views and the small number of responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Robert Lovett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Elizabeth Hackett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is 2.3%, which is much lower than the national average for primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is 15.5%, which is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be in receipt of free school meals and those looked after by the local authority. These groups of disadvantaged pupils underachieve nationally.
- Over 90% of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Pupils attend from Reception to Year 6. Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- There is an on-site nursery but this is not managed by the governing body and was not part of the inspection.
- The school exceeds the current government floor standards, which set minimum national expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher will retire at the end of the current academic year. The governing body hope to appoint his successor next year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make greater use of the skills and expertise of middle leaders, such as the subject leaders for English and mathematics, to:
 - review the effectiveness of the new curriculum
 - model good practice, and work closely with teachers, so that all become outstanding practitioners
 - monitor pupils' achievement in the subjects for which they are responsible.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers are clear about exactly what they want pupils to learn, share this information with pupils, and use it as a focus for marking
 - making sure that the work set is pitched at the right level to challenge all pupils
 - building on pupils' rapidly improving skills in phonics (letters and their sounds), to accelerate their progress in reading.
- Strengthen the partnership with parents by:
 - improving communication with parents so that they are better informed about what is happening in school and in their child's class
 - making parents more aware of how the school encourages good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning
 - providing more opportunities for parents to support their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been very successful in sustaining a school culture which values the importance of individual pupils. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic, well behaved, confident learners who are eager to do well and readily support one another.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Because the whole school community models qualities such as consideration for others, and respect very effectively, pupils get along well with one another and with adults. Pupils know about different religions and cultures and how to be a good member of the school community. The school is robust in its attitude to discrimination of any kind and quick to challenge inappropriate attitudes or language, such as the use of 'gay' as a derogatory term.
- Self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. It results in a school improvement plan which links appropriate actions to what it hopes to achieve. Where these actions are intended to improve pupils' achievement, they are not always sufficiently explicit about exactly what their impact will be on pupils' attainment and progress.
- The newly appointed subject leaders for English and mathematics are knowledgeable and full of enthusiasm. What they currently lack is the time to discharge their responsibilities properly and fulfil their potential to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards further. Both are very effective teachers. Their strategic positioning in Reception and Year 6 enhances their overview of provision and achievement across the school.
- The leadership of special educational needs is strong. The coordinator has detailed knowledge of how well individual pupils are doing and what they are capable of. As a result, support is carefully planned and effective. It ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do as well as their classmates. The school promotes equality of opportunity and achievement for all very effectively.
- The school teaches a broad curriculum which promotes core communication skills, mathematics, science, computing and the arts. There is a particular focus on developing pupils' confidence and life skills through drama. This broad curriculum, together with the range of responsibilities pupils are able to take on, prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of recent changes to the curriculum, including targets setting for pupils, are still being finalised.
- This has been a successful school for many years and has received an appropriate level of local authority support. The recent local authority review of the school's work is detailed and accurate. The governing body has valued the advice and support it has received in respect of its training needs and in beginning the process of appointing a new headteacher.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are effective in keeping pupils safe. All staff safeguarding training is up to date.
- The pupil premium is carefully managed and used to good effect. Additional resources are astutely targeted to ensure that this group of nationally underachieving pupils make at least the same good progress as their classmates and attain as well.
- Additional funding intended to improve primary school physical education and sport is being used well to promote pupils' well-being, physical fitness and enjoyment of sport. This strategy is well led and monitored by the deputy headteacher. The impact of the additional funding on the professional development of teachers and teaching assistants is carefully recorded.
- While most parents are very supportive and admire much about the school, many say that communication is not good enough, and that they would like to know more about what their children are learning. They would like to be more actively engaged in their children's education.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors know the school well. They recognise what the school is successful at and where it needs to improve. They contribute to the process of self-evaluation and use the school improvement plan to hold the school to account. Governors would be better able to do this if some of the success criteria in the action plan were more easily measured and the link between planned actions and pupils' achievement was more explicit. They know which year groups are doing best and in which subjects. They also recognise where further improvement is required. They are well informed about how well potentially underachieving groups of pupils are doing.
- The school's performance management systems are robust and have a good focus on the quality of teaching and how this impacts on pupils' achievement. Targets for teachers are linked to pupils' progress and teachers are rewarded according to their success in meeting them.
- Governors have a strong commitment to the safeguarding of pupils and to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils through high expectations of how well all pupils will achieve.
- The governing body is eager to improve communication and further strengthen the school's relationship with parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are industrious, polite, friendly and welcoming. They willingly hold the door open for visitors and for each other. Pupils are eager to talk about their work and favourite authors and have positive attitudes to learning. They play well together and the playground is an active but harmonious place.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school through their involvement in responsible roles such as elected school councillors, and as members of the health and safety and eco- committees. Such responsibilities prepare pupils well for active citizenship.
- The school carefully tracks pupils' attendance and punctuality. Attendance is in line with the national average.
- Pupils say that the warm and nurturing ethos of the school are important to them and that they value the strong sense of community.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Checks on adults who work in the school are thorough and all staff training is up to date.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and secure. They say that bullying is rare but that should it occur they are confident about reporting it and equally confident that problems would be resolved. They know about different forms of bullying and how to deal with them. Pupils know about staying safe online and about the potential dangers of mobile phones and social networks. They speak positively about the e-safety sessions, which are a frequent feature of their work in computing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Where teaching is most effective teachers make good use of a range of questions to keep the interest of all pupils and assess how well they are doing. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, moving around between individuals and groups to check that pupils know what they are doing.

- Pupils in all classes work together very well. They display those good collaborative working skills that many employers say they value. They sensibly discuss their work in order to help one another improve.
- Because teachers are supportive and encouraging, pupils are confident, eager learners. Teachers' marking is very good at telling pupils how well they are doing and offering encouragement, but even where pupils are told what they need to do to improve not all teachers make sure this happens. Marking and verbal feedback does not always refer to what pupils have been asked to learn.
- The recently introduced handwriting style is beginning to improve pupils' presentation, particularly in their handwriting books. Improving pupils' handwriting in other books is proving a tougher nut to crack.
- The teaching of reading is improving. Pupils across the school are enthusiastic readers. They speak confidently about their favourite authors and genre and are able to read a wide range of words. Younger pupils are increasingly adept at applying their phonics skills to read difficult and unfamiliar words.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because teaching provides opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical understanding across a range of subjects, often in problem-solving and practical contexts that make their mathematical learning fun.
- Most teaching is good but not enough is outstanding. Where it is not yet outstanding, explanations of what pupils are to do and what they are expected to learn are not clear enough. When this happens they get off to a slow start and have to be reminded. Sometimes work does not challenge all pupils, particularly the most able, because they are asked to do the same thing too many times instead of moving on to more difficult work.
- The relatively new standardised range of interactive white boards are generally used well to support and enliven learning, although even the newest technology can malfunction and leave teachers drawing fractions of circles freehand.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with broadly the expected levels of skills and knowledge. The current intake is particularly strong in a broad range of areas. Children make good progress.
- By the end of Year 6, almost all pupils have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge required for the next stage of their education. The proportion who reach the higher Level 5 or above in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average. Attainment has been higher than national in reading, writing and mathematics in each of the last three years. In 2014 Year 6 pupils did better than last year in the new national tests in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and better than pupils nationally.
- During their time in the school, pupils make at least the expected progress in reading. The proportion making better than expected progress is similar to that found nationally. The proportions making the expected and better than expected progress in writing and mathematics are above average. Pupils make the best progress in mathematics.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils do really well in the Year 1 national phonics screening check. A much higher proportion of pupils than is found nationally reach, or exceed, the expected standard. All pupils have reached or exceeded the expected standard by the end of Year 2. In 2014, Year 2 pupils also did well in the national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, although too few pupils built quickly enough on their good phonics knowledge and went on to reach the higher Level 3 in reading. Pupils' overall attainment improved significantly in 2014.

- Disadvantaged pupils do at least as well as their classmates. In the 2014 national tests the small number of pupils supported through the pupil premium did much better than similar pupils nationally and at least as well as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils supported through the pupil premium make similar progress to their classmates in reading and better than their classmates in writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils make good progress as they move through the school. All of those who left Year 2 with above average levels of attainment made at least the expected progress and maintained those standards by the end of Year 6. The proportion of the most able pupils making better than expected progress in mathematics was almost twice that found nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their classmates.

The early years provision

is good

- In most years, children enter the Reception class with broadly the expected levels of communication and number skills. They are able to play and learn well with other children. This year the intake is particularly strong.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. Children achieve well because adults quickly identify their starting points and plan activities which develop their skills and knowledge well. There is particularly good team working in the early years so that children benefit from effective teaching whichever adult they are working with.
- Activities engage children's interest very well and there is a good sense of excitement and fun, as when children enthusiastically helped make a birthday cake whose chief ingredients were milk, cornflakes and tomato ketchup. This practical activity followed the sharing of a story and some highly effective links between letters and the sounds they make. The teaching of phonics is strength in the Reception class.
- Because expectations and routines are well established, children are confident and behaviour is good. Children really enjoy learning.
- Staff quickly forge good relationships with parents who rightly value the caring, inclusive environment where all adults help children to learn through their own infectious enthusiasm. Parents say they feel fully involved in their children's learning.
- The nurturing, friendly and well organised learning environment, inside and out, results in children making good progress. They are well prepared for Year 1.

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	115260
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	452843

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Polly Lewis
Headteacher	Clive Middleditch
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2006
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