

# Elm Tree Community Primary School

Ranworth Avenue, Lowestoft, NR33 9HN

**Inspection dates** 17–18 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Too many pupils throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 are not making enough progress in reading, writing and especially mathematics. Results in national tests were low in 2014 and show little sign of improvement this year.
- Teaching is inadequate. Teachers do not pitch work at the right level and so pupils are not always challenged to do their best.
- All groups of pupils underachieve, including the most able, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Senior leaders and governors do not use the pupil premium effectively to help disadvantaged pupils to achieve well enough.
- School leaders do not have the capacity to secure improvements as they do not have a realistic view of how well the school is performing.
- Pupils' work steadily rather than quickly because teachers' do not have high enough expectations of what they are capable of achieving.
- Governors are not holding senior leaders to account for improving the school. Governors have not done enough to tackle underachievement and do not fully understand where improvement is needed.
- Teachers are not held accountable for the achievement of pupils in their classes. Lessons and pupils' work are not adequately checked to identify what is working well and what needs improving.
- Marking is not effective in helping pupils to make faster progress.
- Weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and phonics have not been tackled swiftly enough.
- Teaching assistants are not deployed effectively to support pupils' learning.
- The school's early years provision requires improvement because children do not make as much progress as they could in the Reception year.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is a calm place to learn. The pupils say they are happy and that they feel safe. They are proud of their school. Overall attendance is above average.
- The school environment is rich, stimulating and welcoming, with many displays of pupils' work and high-quality art and design.
- The range of enrichment activities provided for pupils contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place because of concerns about falling standards and low achievement.
- Inspectors observed learning in 21 lessons in mainstream classes and the specialist units over the course of the inspection. Three were jointly observed with a senior member of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised books from all year groups evaluate the quality of the work and the progress that pupils make over time.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils to discuss behaviour and safety in the school.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read aloud.
- During the course of the inspection, the inspectors had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other leaders in the school. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 40 responses to Ofsted's on-line survey, Parent View. The 32 responses to a staff questionnaire were considered by the inspection team.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress, records of meetings with an external consultant on whole-school improvement, records of attendance, behaviour and exclusions, information about meetings of the governing body, curriculum planning, safeguarding, the website and target setting for teachers' performance.

## Inspection team

Kim Hall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Bartlett

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school that is growing in size. There are 373 pupils currently on roll, a significant increase from the last inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils that attend the school are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school includes specially resourced provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in two on-site units, known as the Speech and Language Unit (up to 15 places) and the Hearing Impaired Unit (up to nine places).
- There is pre-school provision on site. This is not run by the school and is subject to separate inspection.
- Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in the middle leadership and management at the school.
- Children in the Early Years attend full time.
- The school meets the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In September 2014, the local authority issued a warning notice because of falling standards and low achievement at the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - eradicating weak teaching that impedes pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics
  - planning interesting lessons that stimulate learning and make pupils think and persevere
  - making sure that the pitch of learning in lessons stretches pupils
  - effectively deploying teaching assistants so that pupils are supported with timely and targeted intervention
  - ensuring that the evidence in pupils' books illustrates that pupils make good progress over time, work hard, and apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways.
- Raise achievement by:
  - rapidly increasing the numbers of pupils who make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics, so pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally by the end of Key Stage 2
  - urgently raising the achievement of the disadvantaged and most vulnerable pupils in the school to close the gap with other pupils
  - ensuring that all staff provide precise support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so they can achieve the best they can
  - providing greater challenge for the most-able pupils so they can exceed national expectations in all subjects
  - consolidating the use of the newly reviewed procedures for teaching phonics, to enable more pupils

to achieve well in reading at Year 1

- improving the accuracy and use of school assessment data so that staff focus more sharply on how well pupils are learning and the progress they are making
- using teaching assistants more effectively when supporting pupils in lessons and teaching individual pupils to enable them to make good progress.

■ Improve leadership and management by:

- rigorously checking and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and taking prompt action when it is not good enough
- undertaking a thorough and rigorous self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- robustly hold all staff to account for raising the achievement of all pupils
- providing high-quality training for all staff and managers so they can undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively
- ensuring that leaders are in place to drive improvements in all key stages and subjects
- analysing and using accurate assessment data effectively to raise the achievement of all groups of pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- There is no thorough self-evaluation of the school so school leaders and governors do not have a secure view of all the strengths and weaknesses. As a result, plans to bring about improvements are weak and ineffective.
- School leaders have failed to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. They have not set high enough standards in order for pupils to achieve in line with their capabilities, resulting in pupils falling significantly behind their peers nationally by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is inaccurate. School leaders rely too heavily on the information they receive from teachers without checking it. As a result, the school has too generous a view of the achievement of its pupils. Work seen in pupils' books does not reflect the rate of progress suggested in the school's data.
- The school does not effectively promote equality of opportunity. Leaders do not use the information about how different groups achieve or provide pupils with adequate support or intervention to reduce gaps in their learning.
- Information on pupils' achievement is not used effectively to monitor and improve pupils' learning. External support brokered by the local authority is beginning to help staff understand how to set more challenging targets for pupils, but it is too soon to assess the full impact of this work.
- Staff absence, particularly in the leadership of some subjects, has led to senior leaders regularly teaching at the expense of improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. The low number of middle leaders currently in the school means that more management responsibilities have fallen to the headteacher and deputy headteacher. This has severely limited their capacity to lead and drive the urgent improvements needed in the school.
- School leaders do not manage the performance of staff well enough. There is little evidence of the impact senior leaders have on raising pupils' achievement or tackling underperformance in teaching swiftly and with rigour. Staff are positive about working at the school but training and development are not systematic.
- A new curriculum has been introduced to meet the new requirements of the National Curriculum, but its quality and its impact on teaching have not been checked.
- Additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport is not used well enough. Most of it is spent employing external coaches to provide weekly PE lessons and sports coaching after school. This is not effective because the quality of the coaching is variable and it is not routinely checked to ensure that it is of good quality. There are also no opportunities for teachers and other staff to learn regularly from coaches so that they can improve their own teaching of PE.
- Pupil premium funding is not used well to provide effective support for the pupils it should help. As a result they do not make adequate progress in their learning.
- School leaders create a warm and inviting school environment. The use of the large spaces between classrooms is creative and of good quality. This has resulted in pupils feeling proud of their school, respecting and taking care of communal areas. The headteacher models positive relationships, promoting a strong sense of community.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors do not have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They do not ensure that the school's checks on teaching and learning are robust enough.
  - Self-evaluation of the school is weak. Governors do not ensure that school leaders are sharply focused

on raising the achievement of pupils in core subjects, so improvements are not targeted and their impact is limited.

- Governors have not spent sufficient time ensuring the achievement of all pupils, especially those who are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Governors do not hold the school to account for the performance management of its staff. As a result, underperformance in teaching is not adequately tackled.
- The governing body has ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

**requires improvement**

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered and want to do well. They are interested and enthused when given the opportunity. However, in many of the lessons pupils lose concentration and begin chatting because they are not required to think or work hard enough. Adults are slow to intervene and, as a result, many pupils do not complete enough work in lessons and they do not show positive attitudes to learning.
- A few older pupils commented on not feeling ready for the next stage of their education because they recognised that they had not covered enough work.
- There is a strong sense of a caring community within the school. The start of the school day is calm, with pupils keen to begin learning.
- There are positive relationships between adults and pupils. In the vast majority of classes this is a strength, resulting in happy pupils who are proud to wear the Elm Tree uniform and be part of the 'Elm Tree family'.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils are tolerant and supportive of each other. Through the school's nurturing ethos, pupils are also taught the importance of being respectful to the views of people who have different values, including those with different faiths and beliefs.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school because they know that adults will help them if they have a problem. They get along well together and the older pupils speak about helping the younger pupils so they can all be friends.
- Most of the parents who responded on Parent View agreed that their child feels safe at school and is happy there. One parent commented that, 'my children took no time to settle and they were made to feel so welcome'.
- Safeguarding and child protection are priorities for the school. Partnerships with local support agencies is effective in ensuring pupils receive the appropriate intervention.
- All the statutory elements of safeguarding are in place. All staff ensure that school policies are adhered to on a daily basis to keep pupils safe.

## **The quality of teaching**

**is inadequate**

- Teachers expect too little of the pupils and, as a result, do not plan learning that makes pupils think or persevere with their learning. In many of the lessons seen, tasks were too easy. Pupils quickly completed the activity at the start of the lesson and no new learning or challenges were added.
- Many lessons are uninspiring. As a consequence, pupils often lose interest and behaviour deteriorates. Pupils often find the work they are given unchallenging because teachers do not adapt their teaching to extend and stretch pupils in line with their abilities, or to support the less able.
- Teachers do not plan pupils' work effectively. For example, the work in books showed that some pupils in Key Stage 2 completed the same worksheet in science in September last year and again in January this year.
- The work of the teaching assistants is not effective. They are not used well enough during lessons and their time is not organised sufficiently well to have the maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- Teachers mark books and some provide guidance on pupils' next steps in learning, although this is not consistent. Pupils ignore this feedback and so do not know how to improve their work further.
- Teachers do not provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Older pupils informed inspectors that they rarely experience the creative aspects of the curriculum such as music, art and cookery. There was a poor range of subjects covered in books.
- Teachers do not create enough opportunities for pupils to read in depth or produce extended pieces of writing, either in English or in other subjects.
- In mathematics, teachers do not always clearly explain what pupils need to learn. They do not provide sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils to extend their mathematical knowledge and skills. As a consequence the more-able mathematicians do not make the accelerated progress of which they are capable.

### The achievement of pupils

**is inadequate**

- Standards have declined since the last inspection. The school compares unfavourably with other schools nationally for achievement in reading; grammar, punctuation and spelling; and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Most pupils in Key Stage 1 reach the levels expected in reading, writing and mathematics, but too few of the most able reach the higher levels of attainment. These children make inadequate progress over time.
- School leaders have a too optimistic a picture of pupils' progress in school. The assessment data collected by teachers, particularly in Key Stage 2, is inaccurate.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve less well than their classmates. Leaders do not effectively plan or use the pupil premium funding available and do not rigorously monitor each child's progress routinely. As a result the gap widens as pupils move through the school. This has been the case since the last inspection. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were three terms behind their peers by the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, and four terms behind in writing and mathematics. Compared with other pupils nationally in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were four terms behind in reading and writing, and nearly six terms behind in mathematics, where the gap is widening considerably.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not achieve as well as they should. This is because teachers and teaching assistants do not expect enough of these pupils in lessons, and their learning activities are not adapted to meet their individual needs.
- Progress in mathematics has been significantly below national expectations since the last inspection.

From the evidence from pupils' books, together with quality of teaching seen over the inspection, this is not improving with sufficient urgency.

- Results of the check on phonics (the sounds that letters make) for pupils in Year 1 are low. The school has taken action to review the teaching scheme to tackle the inadequacies in pupils' acquiring early reading skills. It is too early to tell if this will have an impact on the Year 1 results.

### **The early years provision**

### **requires improvement**

- Most children start the school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. In 2014, the percentage of children leaving the Reception year with a good level of development was average, showing that they had made little additional progress since they started school.
- The early years leader knows the children well. However, the school's data on children's achievement is not well enough understood or used to identify where they could make more rapid progress. This reduces the confidence of staff in using data in planning teaching. For example, adults do not always plan appropriate opportunities to extend the most-able children.
- In some lessons teachers are making sure that children make good progress. In one lesson, for example, the teacher helped children to make good progress in mathematics and also focused on improving their reading skills. Children in this lesson developed their reading skills and were praised for their efforts.
- The children have a positive attitude to their learning and want to share their ideas. They especially enjoyed an imaginative lesson where they were finding mistakes in written work. One boy proudly informed the class that, 'there's a full stop missing'.
- There are secure relationships in the early years between adults and children. Adults are kind with high expectations about behaviour and conduct, resulting in all children working well and helping one another. Children behave well and participate fully in activities. Good attention is paid to children's safety.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124642
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	463082

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	373
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Justin Coote
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hilary Day
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01502 562930
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