

Elson Junior School

Exmouth Road, Gosport, Hampshire, PO12 4EX

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good. Determined and effective effort by the headteacher, ably supported by all other leaders and governors, has successfully improved teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Governors skilfully challenge and support the school in its bid to improve teaching and ensure more rapid progress for all groups of pupils.
- Good teaching effectively enables pupils to acquire good literacy and numeracy skills in preparation for secondary school.
- By Year 6, from below average starting points when joining the school, pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- All groups of pupils make good progress, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Well-planned provision has brought about this improvement since the previous inspection.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from well-organised support. They now reach similar standards to all other pupils.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy learning and demonstrate good attitudes to their work and towards one another. They are courteous and polite and get along well together both in the classroom and on the playground.
- The 'Ready to Learn' and Nurture groups effectively supports a very small minority of pupils with significant behavioural difficulties.
- The school keeps pupils safe and secure. All staff rigorously adhere to strict safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe in school. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in all that is offered to them. Pupils show this by their good attendance.
- The spirit of the school is embodied in its motto of 'Living Together Learning Together' through which it creates a harmonious whole school community. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly promotes and underpins these ideals.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers are not sufficiently expert in teaching problem solving in mathematics. This means that pupils do not develop their reasoning skills effectively to make the best possible progress they could.
- Teachers do not insist that pupils set out their mathematical work neatly and this impedes pupils' understanding and progress.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils respond to marking to help them improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at pupils’ learning in 24 lessons and observed 16 teachers. Teaching assistants were observed working with individual pupils and small groups. The headteacher and deputy headteacher accompanied inspectors for some lesson observations.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils’ work across a range of subjects and classes. They talked to pupils about their work and heard individual pupils from Years 3, 4 and 6 read.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school’s analysis of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Records of checks on the quality of teaching were examined along with records of visits to the school made by the local authority.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A meeting took place with a school adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed in 26 online responses from Parent View, a letter from a parent and informal meetings with parents at the school during the inspection.
- Inspectors also took account of the results of 19 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Elson Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below that found in most schools. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant staff changes in the past year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have the expertise to teach pupils the reasoning skills they need to enable them to solve problems effectively
 - insisting that pupils present their mathematical work neatly and logically.
- Ensure that pupils have dedicated time to respond to marking and correct errors to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Following the previous inspection, school leaders and governors developed a very clear vision of what needed to be done to raise standards. By rigorously implementing prioritised actions and using challenging targets in the school's 'going for good' plan leaders have secured rapid improvement in teaching and middle leadership.
- Senior leaders and governors successfully managed the significant loss of experienced teachers last year, sustaining pupils' rising achievement. The performance of all teachers and teaching assistants is regularly checked against the school's challenging targets. Teachers are in no doubt the rates of progress expected for pupils. Leaders quickly offer opportunities to develop teachers' skills where necessary. As a result, pupils' achievement is rising strongly, especially in reading and writing.
- Effective support from the local authority has helped subject leaders for mathematics and English to successfully develop their skills in checking the quality of teaching. The school realises there is still more to do. Less experienced teachers do not have all the skills they need to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in some aspects of mathematics.
- Last September pupils new to Year 3 did not settle well and some pupils' behaviour was not acceptable, threatening to disrupt learning. Senior leaders and governors took immediate action, introducing help entitled 'Ready to Learn'. This strategy successfully supports pupils who find it difficult to settle to tasks in class.
- The school fosters good relations. For the vast majority of pupils mutual respect and excellent relationships between themselves and their teachers create a positive atmosphere. This enables pupils' good attitudes to learning to thrive and reinforces their improving achievement.
- Substantial training for teaching assistants has provided a skilled workforce that ably assists teachers and supports all pupils well. Learning and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, some with very complex needs, is particularly strong. As a result, they make good progress and some make very good progress. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Additional funding to support the needs of disadvantaged pupils is correctly targeted, resulting in the gap in achievement closing between these and all other pupils.
- Equal opportunities abound for all groups of pupils to enjoy all that the school offers. None are discriminated against, ensuring that all pupils have the chance to flourish.
- The school's review of the new National Curriculum provides exciting learning experiences that draw on pupils' interests. It is well planned, broad and balanced and enriched by local visits and visitors, for example to Fort Brockhurst and a study of the Second World War. Pupils' personal and social development is well catered for through residential visits to Stubbington and Osmington. Links across subjects are strong and provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills when, for example, writing letters as evacuees.
- Music is a strength of the school. Many pupils learn to play an instrument and form part of the school orchestra which is open to other schools.
- Learning about democracy and British values is promoted well throughout the curriculum. Pupils followed the recent election on the television. They apply the principles of democracy through the pupils' school and eco councils, positions on which are voted for at class level.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the diverse cultures that exist in Britain today through, for example, their study of anti-racism. The 'Banana Assembly' based on an international football match where players were subject to racial abuse brought this issue alive for pupils, as do the principles involved in being a Rights Respecting School. This supports pupils in being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Well-planned use of extra physical education and sports funding provides pupils with a wide range of sports and the opportunity to learn new skills. It has also allowed all pupils to participate in a local sports festival. The school has a fine record of pupil involvement in competitive sports. Pupils talk positively about the effect sport has on their understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle.
- Strong partnerships with other local schools, external agencies and the local community make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and development. Exchanging ideas about managing behaviour, attendance and the leadership of the curriculum are among the important issues receiving careful attention. The school is proactive in securing an emerging and positive partnership with the adjacent infant school. This is allowing the junior school to minimise disruption and plan for more settled transition arrangements for Year 3 in the future.
- Safeguarding arrangements for pupils meet all requirements and are effective. All staff and governors carefully follow the school's well-developed systems for keeping pupils safe.

- Very few parents completed the online parent questionnaire but the school's own recent questionnaire showed that the vast majority of parents are highly satisfied with the school. Discussions with parents before school and a complimentary letter from a parent support this view.

■ The governance of the school:

- Highly committed and effective governors attend copious training opportunities and are very knowledgeable about the school. Through regular visits, links with staff and meticulous reports they have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use this information, and their many skills, to rigorously and continually challenge and support the school in its drive for further improvement. This includes the constantly watchful eye they keep on the school's performance, especially the data about the achievement of different groups of pupils. They know how this information is used to tackle teacher underperformance and financially reward good teaching in relation to pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is well managed. School records show that fixed-term exclusions have reduced considerably due to the introduction of the 'Ready to Learn' nurture group for a very small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour. This initiative is successfully helping pupils to make 'managed moves' from other schools and to integrate positively into a new environment. The school carefully logs other very minor breaches in behaviour. Racist incidents and bullying are extremely rare.
- Pupils behave extremely well around the school. Despite the school's rather cramped indoor conditions, pupils walk carefully and safely in the corridors, politely hold open doors and sit attentively in assembly.
- Pupils really enjoy the more generous space outside and get on very well together on the playground. They take their play leader and other responsibilities seriously, looking after equipment carefully.
- During the inspection pupils were required to stay indoors all day because of heavy rain. Behaviour was impeccable throughout the lunchtime period. They played harmoniously together in classrooms because of the provision of appropriate activities such as board games.
- The vast majority of pupils concentrate well in lessons and when talking to inspectors gave behaviour 'nine out of ten!' They spoke seriously of their respect for their teachers and their understanding of the clear systems for recognising good and bad behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour is not outstanding because although there is no low-level disruption in class, a small minority of pupils occasionally become disengaged with their learning. This happens when tasks are too hard or too easy, particularly in some mathematics lessons.
- Pupils' attendance is above average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school.
- All pupils have the opportunity to learn to swim and take part in 'Bikeability'. This contributes well to their personal safety.
- Pupils were fully involved in producing and reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy during anti-bullying week, giving them the added opportunity of exploring difference and inclusion. This promotes their respect for all people exceptionally well.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that racist comments and homophobic language are extremely rare, but if they happen, they are taken very seriously and dealt with immediately.
- Pupils feel well supported by the 'worry box' where they write down worries or concerns. They know who to go to if they are anxious and that adults will deal with any problems very quickly.
- Pupils could discuss the school's rigorous e-safety routines for using computers safely. They spoke of these also being shared with parents.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good leading to pupils making good progress over time.

- Teaching is lively and engaging. Pupils say, 'Teachers have our best interests in mind... they make lessons as exciting as possible to grab your attention.' As a result, pupils settle quickly, pay attention, listen carefully and concentrate well.
- Teachers use assessment competently to plan the next steps for pupils' learning, so tasks are usually challenging enough for pupils. Teachers quickly modify learning activities in lessons where tasks are too easy or too difficult, especially in writing. This ensures pupils learn well and quickens pupils' progress.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge in reading and writing helps them to ask questions that check on pupils' prior knowledge and probe pupils' understanding. This prepares pupils well for their tasks. For example, before beginning to write a story, pupils were observed reading and carefully examining a challenging text with the teacher. This helped them to remember, and successfully use, the features of an effective opening in their own work.
- Reading skills are well taught. Pupils demonstrate this by the way they confidently tackle unfamiliar words, self-correct their mistakes and talk about the books they are reading. They really enjoy the quizzes that test their understanding at the end of each book they read. Pupils read age appropriate books fluently, with enjoyment and great expression.
- The teaching of mathematics is not always as strong as reading and writing. Some teachers do not have all the skills they need to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- In addition, teachers do not insist that pupils set out their mathematical work neatly. This affects progress, especially of the middle and lower attaining pupils.
- However, most pupils do acquire good number skills and these help them to attempt more complex number work. For example, pupils in Year 4 were observed confidently expressing fractions as decimals.
- Information to support learning is consistently displayed on classroom walls. This helps pupils to solve their own difficulties if they are stuck.
- Marking is consistent and effective in telling pupils how they can improve their work. However, some teachers do not give pupils time to respond to these comments so pupils do not learn quickly enough from their errors.
- Teachers and highly skilled teaching assistants meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils and include them in lessons.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Since the previous inspection, when pupils' progress was slow, attainment has risen and progress has improved significantly. In 2014 pupils reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The current Year 6 began Year 3 with standards that were well below average. However, school information and scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection show that despite their low start in Year 3, they have made good progress during their time at the school.
- The proportion of the most able pupils reaching a higher level than expected in all three subjects of reading, writing and mathematics has increased significantly this year. Some of the most able pupils are working at a level much higher than is expected.
- The teaching of reading, especially, is a strength of the school as shown by the above average standards they reach and the very good progress they make.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was one and a half terms behind other pupils in the school for mathematics, and one term behind for reading and writing. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school was closing. Compared with other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were two and half terms behind in mathematics and writing and one term behind in reading. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally was also closing. This year disadvantaged pupils, excluding those who also have complex learning needs, are reaching the same standards in all three subjects as other pupils in the school.
- School information and inspection evidence show that the gap is closing rapidly for these pupils across the school. This year the gap has closed in Year 6.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has improved. This is enabling these pupils to make at least good progress, and some make especially good progress through the school.
- The improvement in pupils' basic skills and the strong provision for their personal development prepare them well for secondary school.

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	116162
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	462429

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Gratton
Headteacher	Celia Rich
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 June 2013
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