

# Elms Farm Community Primary School

Dorncliffe Avenue, Sheldon, Birmingham, B33 0PJ

**Inspection dates** 29–30 April 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Boys and less-able pupils achieve less well than others in writing and in mathematics. These pupils struggle in recalling basic number concepts, do not write at length in different subjects and make too many spelling errors in their writing.
- The most-able pupils do not make fast enough progress in mathematics because the questions teachers ask of them do not sufficiently extend their thinking.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough help to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Recently appointed leaders of mathematics and English have not yet had the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the extra support for pupils who are catching up with their learning.
- The quality of marking is too variable and does not always inform pupils of what they need to do to improve. Teachers do not ensure that pupils follow the advice they are given through marking.
- There are times when teachers do not expect enough of their pupils.
- There are still a few pupils who are not attending school regularly enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in the early years get off to a good start because they are taught through a wide range of well-planned activities both indoors and outdoors.
- Leaders have swiftly implemented systems to accelerate pupils' progress, resulting in all groups of pupils making good progress in reading.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and newly arrived pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teaching is improving because staff have benefited from well-focused training and because the interim executive board has made staff more accountable for pupils' progress.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the meaning of democracy, tolerance and the different cultures that make up modern Britain.
- The teaching of reading is good. As a result, pupils achieve well in reading.
- Pupils behave well and have a good knowledge of how to keep safe.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are improving teaching at a fast rate, implementing the good advice provided by the interim executive board and the two partner schools. This support has been instrumental in moving the school forward.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 32 lessons covering all year groups. Some of these were undertaken jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and heard several pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a questionnaire completed by 23 staff, along with the 10 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online parent survey, Parent View. They also held informal discussions with parents and looked at the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including minutes of the Monitoring Task Force and interim executive board, which replaced the governing body after the last inspection. They also looked at school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, behaviour records and documentation relating to safeguarding. Documents relating to the monitoring of teaching and subsequent management of staff performance were also examined.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.

## Inspection team

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Bogusia Matusiak-Varley, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Glen Goddard                            | Additional Inspector |
| Tracey Kneale                           | Additional Inspector |
| Suha Ahmad                              | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

*In accordance with the section 13 (5) of the Education Act, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.*

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Nursery attend part time; those in the Reception class attend full time.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with a third from a wide variety of ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of pupils of who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- A large number of pupils in each year group join and leave the school partway through the school year. Recently, the school has admitted an increasing number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary schools, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- After the last inspection of October 2013, where the school was evaluated as having serious weaknesses, an interim executive board was set up alongside a Monitoring Task Force, which replaced the governing body.
- The school receives support from St Mary's Teaching School and Greenholm School; one headteacher is a National Leader of Education while the other is a Local Leader of Education.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and writing so that pupils' rates of progress, especially those of boys, pupils who are less able and the most-able pupils are consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring that, in mathematics, pupils are helped to gain a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts
  - placing a greater emphasis on mastery of and proficiency in using the four rules of number, learning number bonds and times tables
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length using correct spelling and grammar
  - improving teachers' questioning skills in mathematics so that they consistently challenge the most-able pupils and ask questions that will enable them to think more deeply about their learning
  - ensuring that feedback clearly identifies what pupils need to do in order to improve and that pupils follow the advice they are given
  - ensuring that pupils consistently produce their best in lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that recently appointed leaders with responsibility for mathematics and English have a clear understanding of the impact of extra support offered to pupils so that they know what works well in improving pupils' rates of progress.
- Improve attendance by helping parents to understand the importance of regular attendance on their children's learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Good professional development, regular monitoring of teaching and the implementation of six-weekly pupil progress reviews have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved and pupils are now working much closer to the levels of which they are capable. However, these changes are recent and the achievement of boys, pupils who find learning difficult and some of the most-able pupils in writing and in mathematics is not yet consistently good across all year groups.
- Leaders of English and mathematics are new to their roles. While they know what needs to be done to accelerate the rates of pupils' progress, they have not yet analysed the various different support programmes that are provided for pupils in order to have a clear picture as to which ones are the most effective. This lack of strategic overview is preventing the school from having an even clearer picture of the effectiveness of the support it provides for pupils in small groups.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has worked relentlessly at creating a culture of high expectations. Pupils' achievements are improving, with the best rates of progress seen in reading, where this year standards are expected to be in line with national averages. The headteacher has insisted on high standards of behaviour and, as a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The good advice received from partner schools has brought about consistency and accuracy in teachers' assessments of how well pupils are doing. School data are used well to check where progress is not good enough. As a result, standards are rising, but pupils still have some ground to catch up on as a result of historical underachievement.
- Leadership of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and new arrivals learning English as an additional language is consistently good. As a result, these pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The headteacher presents to the interim executive board and Monitoring Task Force regular reports on the impact that teaching has on the achievement of all groups of pupils. These ensure that all staff are held to account for pupils' progress. Teachers know what they need to do to improve and are awarded with a pay increase only if their pupils make good progress.
- Strong links with local schools provide pupils with the opportunity to participate in sports. The effective use of sports funding has enabled pupils and teachers to work alongside sports coaches to develop their knowledge of competitive sport. More pupils now engage in physical activities and develop good skills of teamwork and knowledge of healthy lifestyles.
- Support for pupils who are eligible for pupil premium is well targeted and the progress of these pupils is reviewed monthly by the Monitoring Task Force. Additional adults work closely with teachers to ensure that these pupils get the help that they need to catch up. This year, these pupils are catching up with their peers, especially in reading, and the gap is narrowing.
- Leaders have reviewed and improved safeguarding arrangements in school. They make sure that the school is safe and secure and that policies and procedures are applied consistently. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriched by memorable learning experiences, such as visits to places of historical significance. Year 5 pupils partake in a residential visit and this helps them to develop their independence, as they are away from home and have to organise themselves.
- Pupils' personal development is enhanced by good learning opportunities aimed at developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The strong emphasis placed on British values and tolerance of diversity has created a harmonious school community where everyone is valued. Older pupils have a good appreciation of how Parliament works and all pupils learn about British values. They are respectful of one another's differences and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- A wide range of activities beyond the school day provides pupils with experiences that enhance learning. Pupils work well in groups. The behaviour log demonstrates that there are very few instances of pupils falling out, and if they do they settle their differences quickly.
- Although not all groups of pupils achieve equally well, the school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils and regular checks are carried out on the progress of different groups of pupils to identify any that may be falling behind. Discrimination is not tolerated and the school has worked closely with parents in alerting them to what constitutes unacceptable behaviour for pupils in the playground.
- The school has received good intensive support from the local authority, whose representative works with the school on a regular basis. This support has had a positive impact on building up the confidence of leaders in tackling any aspects of underperformance.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is effective. The interim executive board is led by a highly experienced executive headteacher and provides strong and purposeful support. A clear educational direction has been established, with the Monitoring Task Force keeping a watchful eye on ensuring that all agreed actions are implemented.
  - The interim executive board has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and knows which groups of pupils are not making sufficient progress in learning. It has set the headteacher rigorous performance management targets and it ensures that teachers do not get a pay rise unless they can demonstrate an increase in pupils' progress.
  - The interim executive board executes its duties well and ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements. Consistently pertinent questions are asked as to the progress of different groups and the headteacher has to give monthly updates on progress. Only teaching that enables pupils to make good progress is rewarded and any aspects of underperformance are rigorously challenged.
  - A firm check is kept on spending, especially the allocation of sports funding and pupil premium funding. The interim executive board keeps a close check on how the spending of pupil premium impacts on pupils' progress and performance. Individual cases are discussed and finances are allocated appropriately to ensure that these pupils are able to participate in all aspects of school life and that any barriers to learning are eradicated swiftly. Newly appointed leaders of English and mathematics have been asked to look more closely at the impact of interventions on the progress made by these pupils in an attempt to ensure that this money is spent wisely.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils demonstrate good learning habits. They are attentive and they work well in groups. Their exercise books are a testament to their good attitudes to learning; written work is neatly presented and pupils are proud of redrafting their work.
- Behaviour around the school is good. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. They offer help to one another in lessons and respect school property.
- Consistency among staff in applying the school rules and behaviour policy enables pupils to feel secure and behave well. Pupils know what the consequences are of their actions and this contributes to their growing awareness of being responsible for themselves.
- The good opportunities throughout the curriculum to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, together with the high emphasis placed on developing British values, contribute to a harmonious school community.
- Pupils told inspectors that, very rarely, there is some name-calling but these are isolated incidents. They are adamant that when they tell an adult this gets sorted out immediately.

- Attendance is too low. The school works at ensuring that all groups of pupils attend school but there are still some parents who do not appreciate the value of sending their children to school on a regular basis.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that a trusted adult is always at hand to help them. All pupils spoken to during the inspection knew about the dangers of cyber-bullying and risks in using the internet. They could say what they would do if they felt under pressure to join a gang or if they were approached to belong to any group with extremist views.
- The school provides pupils with plenty of opportunities to learn about dangers in the neighbourhood. Visits by the police and fire officers teach pupils about safety on the street and what to do if they encounter any potential hazards.
- Risk assessments and policies in relation to keeping children safe are up to date and reviewed regularly. All staff have been trained in identifying any symptoms of radicalisation in vulnerable pupils and all have completed training in child protection.
- Records show that staff deal with bullying effectively. The vast majority of parents say that their children are safe and well looked after.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good throughout the school. In mathematics, teachers do not challenge the most-able pupils to think more deeply about their learning. For example, when undertaking mathematical problems, pupils find it difficult to explain how to break down the steps necessary for effective resolution.
- Not enough emphasis is placed on ensuring that boys and some less-able pupils develop fluency in recalling number bonds and times tables before they move on to new learning. Occasionally, not enough is expected of boys and those pupils who find learning difficult because they are not pushed enough to overcome some of their gaps in learning. Too often, teachers accept work that is clearly not the best that these pupils can produce.
- Due to rigorous monitoring by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, coaching of staff and the support brokered by the interim executive board, teaching is improving and is now good in guided reading, where pupils are attaining average standards and are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. The teaching of writing has improved in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are now using extended sentences in their writing. However, lower down the school, teachers' marking does not always pick up on errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always point out to pupils what they need to do next in order to improve. Work in pupils' exercise books demonstrates that teachers are not making sure that pupils act on the advice when they are given it. This results, for example, in pupils continuing to make the same spelling errors.
- Since the last inspection, the use of literacy and mathematics in other subjects has improved and teachers are now creating more opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learnt in lessons.
- Teachers are using assessment well to ensure that pupils have work that they can cope with. In guided reading, detailed assessments are kept of what each pupil can do. 'Learning ladders', which demonstrate pupils' achievements, are charting pupils' progress and this information is now used in planning to ensure that any misconceptions are gone over in lessons.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support learning, especially in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the youngest classes.

- Teachers ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Their progress is regularly checked and the right support is given to them in lessons.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given the most important words needed for learning about a particular topic and adult help to ensure that they can understand what they are being taught. They swiftly catch up with their peers due to effective deployment of adults who ensure that any barriers to learning are quickly acted upon.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils join the early years with attainment that is typical for their age but is slightly below in early reading, writing and knowledge of mathematics. They make good progress and the proportion attaining a good level of development for their age is average.
- Historically, standards at the end of Year 6 have been too low in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year, they improved in writing but grammar, punctuation and spelling remained a weakness. Due to high levels of pupils joining and leaving the school during the academic year nearly a third of pupils who were entered for the national tests had only been at school for a year. Furthermore, half of the cohort was disabled or had special educational needs, and this depressed overall test scores.
- In 2014, pupils were just below the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This year, data are more favourable due to improved teaching and pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in all but writing, which was below average in 2014. This year, pupils have made at least the progress they should, but there are still too many boys and lower attaining pupils who are not spelling correctly and are not writing enough in lessons.
- The school's data show that there have been recent improvements and the majority of pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are now making at least the progress they should in writing. The exception is for boys, less-able pupils and the most-able pupils who do not all make enough progress in writing. In reading all groups of pupils are achieving well. However, in mathematics, the achievement of boys and less-able pupils, some of whom are eligible for pupil premium funding, still require improvement.
- While the most-able pupils attain high standards in reading and writing they are not yet skilled enough in explaining their thinking in mathematics. Teachers do not push them enough to deepen their thinking about finding alternative ways to solve mathematical problems. Nevertheless, the most-able pupils are making good progress in most classes. The school's recent data indicate an increase in the proportion of pupils who are expected to attain the higher levels in their end of Year 6 national tests in reading and writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in lessons and over time because their needs are quickly identified and the correct support is given to them in lessons. The headteacher monitors their progress regularly and any slip in achievement is immediately rectified.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported in lessons and they quickly catch up with their peers because of the emphasis placed on developing their vocabulary and the precise explanations that are given in lessons.
- In 2014, pupils for whom the school received pupil premium funding were four terms behind other pupils nationally in mathematics, two terms behind in their reading and a term behind in writing. The gap with classmates was similar. Among the disadvantaged pupils were several who joined the school with very low attainment in Year 5. Attainment for disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing improved from 2013. Current school data show that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress.
- The improvements in pupils' achievements owe much to the well-targeted support from the two schools commissioned by the local authority, and are due to a renewed sense of urgency brought about by the

headteacher and deputy headteacher in ensuring that all action points are implemented immediately.

### The early years provision

is good

- Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained its good early years provision. Provision in the early years is led and managed well. There are good systems for identifying children's starting points and building on them through exciting learning opportunities, both indoors and outdoors. There is an upward trend in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development and children are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Teaching is consistently good because of systematic monitoring of progress and the strong emphasis that is placed on developing basic skills through play. Adults take every opportunity to extend children's language. For example, when children play outdoors, adults model the language of mathematics and encourage children to reflect on their learning.
- Children have good listening skills and this prepares them well for learning the sounds that letters make.
- Children behave well. Trusting relationships, together with well-thought-out routines, permeate all aspects of provision, resulting in children feeling safe and paying attention in lessons.
- Parents say that staff are approachable, caring and supportive, and that they have helped their children develop an interest in learning.

## 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> | 103381     |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Birmingham |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 462666     |

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

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                 |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community               |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11                    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 420                     |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Interim executive board |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Jane Edgerton           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Elizabeth Gallagher     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 10-11 October 2013      |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0121 464 4634           |
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