

Elmhurst School

Dunsham Lane, Aylesbury, HP20 2DB

Inspection dates 24–25 June 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
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, well supported by all other school leaders and governors, has improved pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Together, they are determined to raise standards further by giving all pupils rich educational experiences.
- Teaching is good across the school and supports the learning of all pupils.
- The school provides pupils with a wide and interesting range of subjects and topics so that they enjoy their learning.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They are well prepared for the next step in their education.
- Standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are improving. By the end of Year 6, pupils are now working at the levels expected of them.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make excellent progress because of very well-planned programmes of learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are proud of their school and show respect to staff and to each other. Pupils' positive attitudes help them to learn.
- Pupils feel safe in all parts of the school and understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of the school's effective provision.
- The school provides many opportunities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors are highly effective and show a very detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' understanding of new learning is not always sufficiently thorough because some teachers do not check it rigorously enough.
- Occasionally, pupils' work is not matched closely enough to their needs and some vulnerable pupils are expected to spend too long on tasks that do not engage them fully.
- The rates of progress that pupils make vary between classes. Although progress overall is good, it is more rapid in some classes than in others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 16 lessons. Of these, nine were made jointly with senior leaders. They also made a number of shorter visits to classes and visited an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work in their lessons and carried out two detailed scrutinies of their written work in several subjects. They listened to pupils read and talked with them about their reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils to hear their views on learning and behaviour in the school. They also spoke informally with pupils during their breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, several other staff with leadership responsibilities, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a variety of documents. These included records of current pupils’ progress, self-evaluation reports and improvement plans, and behaviour and attendance logs. Inspectors also examined a sample of minutes of meetings of the governing body, and other records relating to safeguarding and the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 160 responses to the school’s own recent parental questionnaire, and 33 questionnaires completed by members of staff. They also spoke informally with parents before the start of the school day. The lead inspector met with a representative of a group of parents to hear their views about the school.

Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Carr

Additional Inspector

Sue Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Elmhurst School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A large proportion of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups. Many pupils are British children of Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much larger than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average. These pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A very small number of pupils attend the Pathways Pupil Referral Unit for part of the week.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the year is well above average.
- The early years provision consists of two full-time Reception classes and two part-time Nursery classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes in the school's teaching staff and several new appointments to leadership roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all pupils make rapid progress, by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - check pupils' understanding of new learning rigorously to make sure that it is thorough
 - ensure that pupils' work is matched closely to their needs
 - make sure that vulnerable pupils are not expected to spend too long on tasks that do not engage them fully.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all pupils make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development. She is supported well in this ambition by all governors and all staff with leadership roles. They have taken strong actions that have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They are determined to raise standards further.
- The school's evaluation of its work is accurate and feeds appropriately into school improvement planning. Targets set for teachers to improve performance are linked closely to raising standards.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Leaders' robust checks on the work of teachers ensure good quality provision and identify any needs for further training. These evaluations show also that variations in the quality of teaching remain and that the rates of pupils' progress vary between classes.
- Leaders have been highly successful in improving pupils' behaviour. Agreed systems of behaviour management are followed by all staff, and pupils respond well to the high level of consistency.
- Middle leaders are effective. All staff with leadership roles have developed their skills so that they can accurately check the progress of pupils in their areas of responsibility. A strong feature of the school is that all these leaders work together as a cohesive team, for example in sharing the responsibility to improve pupils' reading levels.
- The school makes extremely effective use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Eligible pupils benefit from one-to-one and small-group teaching support, together with out-of-hours provision to improve the pupils' self-confidence and motivation for school. Funding is also used to ensure that these pupils can participate fully in all school activities, such as educational visits. A parental engagement worker has also been appointed, using this funding, to improve the school's links with parents.
- Elmhurst is a highly inclusive school where pupils of all abilities and races are welcomed and respected. The headteacher and the governing body ensure that the school rejects all forms of discrimination, successfully promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relationships with the local community. For example, when communicating with parents about Ramadan, letters are written in partnership with the imam from the local mosque.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is responsive to the needs of the school's pupils. Reading, writing and mathematics are central to the provision and promoted well across many subjects. Pupils experience a broad range of topics and activities so that pupils enjoy their learning. For example, they reach high standards in art, science, French and computing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well, both in the curriculum and through the general life of the school. Pupils respond positively to the school's core values, 'The essential Six', which include respect, thoughtfulness and collaboration. Assemblies are effective, addressing complex issues such as the current refugee crisis and celebrating the festivals of all major faiths. Pupils learn to appreciate different ways of life and the principles of democracy so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary sports funding is used well. School leaders have used professional coaches to train many members of staff so that they themselves now provide a high level of quality teaching across a broad range of sports and skills. Pupils enjoy participating in regular sports activities and this is enabling them to lead healthier lives.
- All arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.
- The quality of off-site provision is checked regularly to ensure that the progress, attendance and behaviour of this small number of pupils are good.
- The local authority has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has provided a large amount of support since the previous inspection. Local authority staff check the accuracy of the school's own assessments and provide detailed advice on strategies to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is highly effective. Since the previous inspection, governors have carried out an analysis of their own skills, attended a wide range of appropriate training and drawn up a detailed development plan for the governing body. Governors share, with all staff, the passion and commitment to ensure the best possible outcomes for all the school's pupils.
 - Governors have a detailed knowledge of the effectiveness of the school and the quality of teaching. This is because of the probing and challenging questions they ask and the quality of information they receive

from school leaders and the local authority. They have a good understanding of how well different groups of pupils are achieving and systematically compare their performance with that of pupils nationally. Governors visit the school regularly and use their own professional experiences to plan for the school's future as it increases in size.

- Governors are fully involved in developing the school's improvement plan and monitoring the impact of leaders' actions. This includes checking closely the use and impact of the school's finances. They know about the positive impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and the funding received to improve pupils' participation in sport and develop healthy lifestyles.
- The governing body ensure that the school's performance management systems are rigorous, effective and fair. This results in all staff, including the headteacher, being set challenging targets that are linked closely to achievement. Governors are very aware of the links between teachers' performance and pay, and have supported the headteacher in dealing with underperformance.
- Governors ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding, including ensuring the school has robust systems to check the credentials of all staff who work in the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enjoy coming to school and show courtesy to each other, to all staff and to visitors.
- Pupils move around all parts of the large school site in a calm but purposeful way. On the playgrounds, pupils play well together and show consideration to others. Around the school there is no litter or graffiti.
- Pupils show respect and tolerance for each other's views and a high level of care for those who experience any kind of difficulty. Pupils work and socialise well with each other, regardless of their ethnic origins.
- In almost all lessons, pupils concentrate well, showing positive attitudes and a readiness to learn. Occasionally, however, when teaching does not engage them, they participate less well.
- Pupils understand and support the school's behaviour code, and the system of rewards and sanctions. They report that behaviour is good and improving, and that any poor behaviour is dealt with quickly and fairly. This is supported by the school's very detailed records of any behavioural incidents.
- Pupils show respect for their school and its surroundings and resources. They are proud of their work, which is usually well presented in their books, and are particularly keen to talk about their topic work.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and learn about democracy through activities such as the school's learning council, where pupils work together with staff to improve the school.
- A small number of pupils show behavioural problems. They benefit from individual attention and interventions, including local authority support, so that their behaviour improves markedly as they move through the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school and the curriculum supports them well in learning how to stay safe in various situations. They have a good understanding of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites and how to use e-mails safely.
- During the inspection, pupils reported that bullying, including any prejudice-based bullying, is very rare and that if it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. They said that 'pupils get on well together'.
- Historically, attendance has been below average but is now improving because of the increasing impact of the school's work, including the appointment of dedicated staff to work closely with families in the local community. Despite this improving trend, attendance is still below the national average.
- The attendance, safety and behaviour of the small number of pupils who study at the alternative provision are checked regularly to ensure their well-being.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View and to the school's own parental questionnaire agreed that their children were happy and safe in school, and that the school manages pupils' behaviour well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching across the school is good and is leading to rising pupil achievement.
- Pupils learn well because teachers have high expectations of what they could and should achieve. Pupils rise to the challenges set for them and show that they want to succeed.

- Lessons are well planned and start promptly. Teachers provide an interesting variety of activities to promote learning, which encourages pupils to try their best.
- The teaching of reading is good. Younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics, the sounds that letters represent, to help them read new words. Most older pupils read with confidence and understanding. The daily guided reading sessions have recently been redesigned and are now highly effective in promoting a range of reading skills.
- Writing is taught consistently across the school and equally high standards of written work are demanded in the work of all subjects, not just in English lessons. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils showed a good understanding of both adverbs and adjectives, and demonstrated their understanding of different types of verbs. Standards of handwriting are more variable but the school has identified this as an area for further improvement.
- Pupils make very good progress in mathematics because the tasks that are set not only strengthen their basic number skills but also present interesting and relevant problems to be solved. For example, Year 6 pupils developed a broad understanding of using percentages by tackling a problem about the proportion of pupils able to sit on benches around their school.
- In most lessons, teachers ensure that all groups of pupils learn rapidly by ensuring that tasks are at the right level of difficulty and take the right amount of pupils' time. They check that pupils understand new learning thoroughly, for example by using skilful questioning.
- In a small number of lessons, this good practice is less well developed. Some pupils do not then make as much progress as they could because the work provided is not matched closely enough to their specific needs. In particular, some vulnerable pupils are sometimes expected to spend too long on tasks which do not engage them enough.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and provide detailed advice on the next steps needed as well as praising what they have done well. Pupils value this advice and respond to it promptly, which helps them to improve their work.
- Pupils needing extra help, such as those with special educational needs, benefit from good teaching which responds to their individual needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those new to learning English receive appropriate support in and out of class, which enables them to make rapid progress.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Since the previous inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 have improved in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014, the standards reached by the end of Year 6 were below national averages. The school's records for 2015, which have been checked by the local authority, show that attainment has now risen and that pupils are now working at the levels expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportions of Year 6 pupils making expected progress are above the 2014 average figures in writing and mathematics and equal to the most recent national average in reading. All groups of pupils, from all ethnic groups, are now making good progress by the end of Key Stage 2. Detailed tracking of pupils' progress shows that pupils make particularly rapid progress in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils' good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, together with equally good progress in other subjects, means that they are well prepared for the next step in their education.
- Although pupils make good progress across the school, the progress that pupils make varies between classes. In a small number of classes, pupils do not make as much progress as in others because the strongest features of teaching are not as uniformly well developed.
- Many pupils join the school during the year. Their attainment is assessed immediately and teachers plan learning programmes that meet their needs so that they make good progress.
- The proportion of most-able pupils is below the national average. These pupils make good progress, more rapid than for this group of pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make good progress from their starting points. This is because the support and extra teaching they receive are well structured and focused on their particular needs.
- The large number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, including some who are new to English, are well supported. As a result, they make rapid progress in learning English and good progress from their starting points.
- The results of the national screening check at the end of Year 1 have improved considerably since 2013.

The results for 2015 have been moderated by the local authority and are now almost equal to the national expectation.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been below average. The school's unpublished results for 2015 show an upward trend but the proportions gaining the higher levels of attainment are still below national figures. However, there has been a very high level of pupil mobility for this cohort and the school's figures show that for all pupils who have been on roll throughout the key stage, progress is good. Analysis of achievement over time shows that most Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress from lower than average starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least as good as that of their classmates and more rapid than for pupils nationally. In 2014, the attainment of these pupils in reading and writing was equal to that of their peers but about one year behind that of other pupils nationally. In mathematics, their attainment was about one term lower than other pupils in the school and one year lower than other pupils nationally. The gaps in attainment in comparison to national figures are decreasing as whole-school attainment increases.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Leadership and management of the early years are outstanding. The early years leader, well supported by the headteacher, uses her skills to coach and develop her team to provide an excellent start to children's learning at the school. A strong transition programme ensures that children settle quickly into the school and grasp the basic school routines. Communication with parents is frequent so that they are involved fully in their children's learning, for example by sharing 'magic moments' that occur at home.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is outstanding. Teachers plan collaboratively and in detail, using their analysis of accurate assessments effectively to meet the needs of children of all abilities. This means that all additional adults are used well and children are provided with exciting and stimulating activities and experiences that help them learn quickly. Staff have high expectations of all children and they equip them with the skills they need to develop their learning and show initiative.
- A large proportion of children join the Nursery and Reception classes with knowledge, skills and understanding that are well below those typically expected for their ages. In particular, many have limited initial experience of speaking English. Well-planned activities focus on children's personal and social development as well as improving their communication and language skills.
- The school's phonics programme begins in the early years classes and is very effective in developing reading skills. Imaginative activities engage children in tasks that develop their basic number skills. For example, during the inspection, children in the Reception class worked with enthusiasm on subtracting numbers. From their starting points, children make rapid progress and reach high levels of achievement.
- Behaviour and safety in the early years are outstanding. From their first days in the school, children respond extremely well to the activities planned for them and sustain high levels of concentration on their tasks. Children move sensibly and safely between activities and have excellent manners, welcoming visitors to their part of the school.
- Children cooperate well with each other in all parts of the early years provision to share resources, take turns and help each other if they become stuck on a task. Parents are confident that their children are completely safe and secure in this part of the 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	110286
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	453740

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Gamble
Headteacher	Rachel Lee
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 July 2013
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