

Elm Park Primary School

Nicholls Lane, Winterbourne, Bristol BS36 1NF

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders at all levels are aspirational and highly effective. They have established a climate of learning which expects the best from pupils and teachers. As a result teaching has improved since the last inspection and pupils are now making good progress.
- Governors monitor the work of the school themselves so that they can challenge leaders to make the school even better.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they ask challenging questions. This is particularly the case in mathematics lessons.
- Pupils are now making good progress in reading and writing. They are enthusiastic readers because they are taught using books which stimulate their interest. Their writing skills are developing across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs are making good progress because their support is now consistent and well planned.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide range of sport and physical activities. Pupils participate enthusiastically in physical education (PE) lessons and after school.
- The behaviour of pupils is good and they attend school regularly.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years as a result of effective provision. More children are now acquiring the skills of reading and writing, which helps them in the next stage of their education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) screening check is rising but is still below national levels. Pupils going into Year 1 already falling behind do not have teaching which is precise enough to help them to catch up quickly.
- Teaching in science does not challenge pupils' thinking enough and so they do not develop scientific skills at the same rate as they develop factual scientific knowledge.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check by ensuring that pupils who enter Year 1 already at risk of falling behind have teaching which better takes account of their starting points

- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - planning lessons which develop pupils' scientific skills more consistently
 - giving pupils opportunities to apply their scientific knowledge more widely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders at all levels share a culture of aspiration and a commitment to improvement. Despite significant changes in the leadership team at the end of last year, leaders have continued to develop the quality of teaching and improve pupils' achievements. By systematically developing the leadership skills of successful teachers, the headteacher has been able to build a new, effective team who share her vision for the school.
- Leaders know the school well and have accurately identified what has brought about improvements as well as what still needs to be done. They are rigorous in their collection of information about the quality of teaching and swiftly act to challenge practice which is not supporting good outcomes for pupils. Regular coaching programmes and sharing of good practice is based on an understanding of what works well. Teachers, including those new to the profession, respect and value the support and guidance of leaders.
- A new system of assessment has been put in place which has developed teachers' understanding of the requirements of the new national curriculum. Leaders use the information from regular assessments to set targets and to evaluate how well groups of pupils are achieving, including those with disabilities or special educational needs. Programmes are set up to close gaps in knowledge and understanding and evaluations show that these pupils are now making good progress. School leaders strongly promote equality of opportunity and improved outcomes are contributing to this.
- The curriculum is comprehensively planned for all subjects and progression in knowledge and skills is evident. The curriculum for mathematics is consistently well taught and is giving pupils opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning and apply their skills. The use of a new scheme which introduces pupils to high-quality literature has had a positive impact on pupils' enthusiasm for reading as well as their progress. The new scheme for spelling has improved pupils' writing and pupils are given worthwhile opportunities to write at length. While the curriculum is well planned, currently the teaching of science skills is not as well developed as that of scientific knowledge. Consequently, pupils are not evidencing that they are making consistent gains in their skills in this subject.
- Leaders have developed new programmes for teaching phonics, both as regular lessons and for extra support for older pupils if they have fallen behind. There is clear impact from these programmes and standards of phonics are rising. However, for younger pupils who are falling behind, the phonics programme does not give them enough access to teaching at their assessed level and does not make allowances for their weaker speaking and social skills.
- Additional funding for the development of sport has been used well to increase the range of sports available in lessons and after school. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about fencing, cheerleading, yoga and basketball. Participation in lessons and clubs is high. There are many opportunities in the school environment to explore outdoors, such as the pond dipping area and the natural woodland edge.
- The curriculum as a whole, and the enriching activities which pupils value such as performing in plays and going on visits out of school, make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and help them to flourish. Pupils commit to the school's values and practise them at home. The values are emphasised on the 'Tree of Learning'.
- The school promotes British values effectively and pupils have voted in mock elections as well as for key positions in school. Pupils are taught to respect the law and they understand the importance of good behaviour. Leaders and governors are aware of their responsibility to protect pupils from radicalisation and are currently undergoing training for this purpose.
- The school has had 'light-touch' support from the local authority but leaders have valued opportunities for training and sharing good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been changes in the organisation and composition of the governing body and governors have had a positive impact on school improvements. Relationships are good between leaders and governors but governors are independent in collecting information about how well the school is doing and they challenge leaders if they think that more can be done to improve outcomes for pupils.
 - Governors are well trained and make decisions which accord with their statutory responsibilities. In particular, they plan well for the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and regularly evaluate the programmes of support which pupils are given. The impact of the clear plans can be seen in the progress which this group of pupils is now making.

- Governors’ own skills support the school with financial planning and in fulfilling statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. They use performance management strategically and reward good performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school’s procedures for protecting children from harm are robust and the headteacher is tenacious in following up any concerns with the appropriate authorities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is effective and pupils are now making good progress from their different starting points. Leaders ensure that good practice is shared and that teachers new to the school are given guidance on the school’s expectations for good-quality teaching.
- Learning is well planned and new systems of assessment are giving teachers precise information about what pupils need to learn next. There are frequent checks made on pupils’ understanding in lessons and mental mathematics strategies are systematically taught. This knowledge equips pupils with the basic skills they need to be able to solve problems and explain their mathematical reasoning.
- In a mathematics lesson for older pupils about prisms, the teacher used challenging questioning and insisted on correct mathematical language in pupils’ explanations. Pupils rose to the challenge and were not afraid to make mistakes. The use of challenging questioning has been a focus for teacher development and it is now used consistently with good effect.
- The use of strategies to engage pupils in lessons supports their concentration. Pupils are able to record their thinking through talking to a partner or jotting things down on their small whiteboards. These strategies also help teachers to gauge the level of pupils’ understanding and to decide whether to move on.
- Teachers’ subject knowledge is strong and they are able to pitch work at different levels. However, pupils are not limited in their access to harder work and are expected to ‘razzle-dazzle and shine’ by challenging themselves.
- Pupils take a real pride in their work, particularly their writing, and, without exception, books in all year groups are well kept.
- Adults work well together in classrooms and where pupils are following individual programmes or need additional support, it is regularly and sensitively delivered. Nonetheless, pupils with disabilities or special educational needs are still expected to be independent and to try hard.
- Reading is very well taught and pupils are introduced to high-quality stories which fire their imagination and develop their vocabulary. Younger readers are taught letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) and this enables them to tackle new words accurately, even when the vocabulary is unfamiliar. However, for children who enter Year 1 with weak reading, writing and speaking skills, much of the phonics teaching they receive is too challenging for them and this slows their progress.
- Although pupils are taught scientific knowledge systematically, their workbooks show that they do not have such systematic and consistent teaching of scientific skills, nor are they given wider opportunities to apply their scientific knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show a pride in their work and their writing books, in particular, are well presented and cared for. In lessons, pupils can work collaboratively and listen to each other’s contributions thoughtfully.
- Peer mentors help pupils with their friendships and help to make playtime enjoyable. House captain roles are respected and prized. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility in many aspects of school life. Looking after the school chickens is a popular responsibility and all pupils treat the school animals with great respect.
- Pupils are rewarded for persistence and progress and value the celebration assemblies where they can be ‘an Elm Park star’.
- Log books show that incidents of bullying are rare and what pupils report is that in most cases it is ‘friends falling out’. They have trusted adults they can go to and most feel that teachers sort things out promptly.

- Pupils know how to stay safe online and posters in the computer room remind them of steps to take if they are concerned about the internet in school or at home.
- Breakfast club is popular and gives pupils a good start to the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils understand the systems that support good behaviour and believe that they are fair. They know that falling down the 'golden time ladders' can mean a loss of playtime and this reminds them to behave well.
- Pupils who have had difficulty with behaviour have been given good support, including help sought from outside agencies. They have made good progress and their behaviour has improved.
- Parents believe that behaviour is good and that their children are safe in school. Pupils are polite to visitors and are positive about the school and the other children: 'Our school is one of the best around.'
- Generally, pupils play harmoniously in the playground and work well together. There is rarely disruption to learning in lessons, although pupils can become restless and quickly lose focus if the quality of teaching dips.
- Attendance is above the national average and very few pupils are absent when they do not need to be. The school follows up any such incidents promptly and rigorously.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Leaders have developed good training for teachers and shared expertise across classes. This has reduced the variability in rates of progress seen at the last inspection. Pupils demonstrate through their explanations and reasoning in their workbooks that they now understand their mathematics lessons better and can tackle problems independently.
- The progress pupils are making in their writing has risen since the last inspection, and in 2015 a high percentage of Year 6 pupils made more than the expected progress from their Key Stage 1 starting points. Good progress in writing is evident from the pupils' workbooks, their responses in lessons and from the school's assessment information. Pupils write frequently and at length. Their good handwriting and spelling support them to explain their ideas clearly.
- The progress pupils make in reading is strong and their enthusiasm for reading is stimulated by books which make links for them with their other learning. For pupils learning about the Second World War, *Goodnight Mr Tom* has helped them to empathise with the characters in the story and better understand the plight of evacuees. In 2015, the percentage of pupils reading at the higher levels was significantly higher than the national percentage.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils in the school to identify trends, but their progress is rigorously tracked individually. The help they are given is also planned at an individual level. The good impact of the use of additional funding is reflected in the quality of work in their workbooks and the school's assessment information shows that they are making progress in line with other pupils. Generally, the standards they reach prepare them well to tackle the next stage of their education.
- Disabled pupils and those who have a special educational need are making good progress from their starting points. Improvements to the regularity of the support they are given means that not only are they making progress in their special programmes, but they are also achieving well in class.
- Pupils have developed good skills in physical education and can apply these across the range of new opportunities they are being given such as fencing and yoga. In gymnastics, they show control of their movements and good balance.
- In science and history, pupils acquire secure knowledge of the topics they are taught and explain the new concepts well in their writing. They are not acquiring scientific skills as consistently as knowledge. This is because they are not practising skills of enquiry as frequently in their lessons or being given opportunities to apply their knowledge.
- Standards are rising in the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check but were still not at national levels in 2015. However, now, within lessons, pupils in Year 1 and 2 can use the sounds that letters make to read words on sight and spell accurately.
- Pupils are acquiring these skills earlier in the Reception class. However, some pupils are finding it difficult to catch up because when they first move into Year 1 they are not ready to take on the school's phonics

programme because of weaker skills in speaking and listening. Teaching is not moving this group of pupils on quickly enough to enable them to reach the expected standard.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress from their different starting points in Reception and the proportion that reach a good level of development has improved and is now above national levels.
- Teaching is good in the Reception classes and children learn in a stimulating and inviting environment. There is a rich menu of activities to engage and enthuse children. The whole curriculum is well planned. Children's enthusiasm for working outdoors is encouraged through activities such as planting bulbs. Good opportunities for children to explore beyond their classroom help them to gain confidence and independence.
- Children's skills on entry to Reception vary significantly. Over recent years, assessments have shown that more children than in the past have physical and communication skills below those typical for their age.
- Teachers assess children's skills and knowledge regularly and accurately. They use their assessments to intervene when children have particular difficulties and devise programmes which support specific skills. For instance, some children have difficulty in learning to hold a pencil correctly and so teachers have responded by having 'Funky Fingers Friday', where children have exercises which strengthen their muscles.
- Leaders have put an increasing emphasis on developing early reading, writing and mathematical skills. At this point in the year, children can use cubes and dice to count and can carry out and record simple calculations. Writing books show particularly good progress. Children can, with guidance, write words and simple sentences using full stops and capital letters when prompted. Children are given good opportunities to practise their new skills in their play.
- Children behave well in the Reception classes and their personal development and well-being are promoted well. Relationships are good as they play and learn well together. In yoga class, children were seen to follow instructions sensibly and were able to listen and concentrate. They showed that they could organise themselves well with their yoga mats and control their movements.
- Leaders and teachers support parents and help children to make a good start in Reception, by setting up visits to the home and to the nurseries and centres where children have begun their education. Parents have opportunities to be involved in workshops which help them understand how their children are learning. Parents are given good opportunities to contribute to the assessment of what children know and can do through an online assessment system.

School details

Unique reference number	109117
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10002420

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melanie Griffith-Williams
Headteacher	Debbie Williams
Telephone number	01454 866750
Website	www.elmparkprimary.com
Email address	elmparkprimary@sgmail.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is a little larger than the average-sized primary school. The classes are organised as a mixture of single-aged and mixed-age groups.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have a special educational need is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons, one with the headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks for English and mathematics with school leaders. Inspectors also looked at science workbooks.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks for English, mathematics and science with school leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils to gather their views of the school and also talked more informally to pupils in the playground and lunch hall.
- The inspectors took account of the views of parents through the 93 responses to Parent View and talked to some parents at the start of the day.
- Inspectors reviewed documents provided by the school and from the school website, including the school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching and leaders' plans for improvement. Documents about how the school keeps children safe were also reviewed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers new to the school. Staff views were also gathered through a questionnaire.
- During the two days the inspectors met a representative of the local authority and the local authority's external evaluation of the school was taken into consideration. Meetings were also held with members of the governing body.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Madeleine Kent	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bragg	Ofsted Inspector

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