

# Elsenham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street, Elsenham, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 6DD

## Inspection dates

13–14 March 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders' and governors' high expectations are shared by all staff and lead to a collective vision for excellence. Leaders' carefully considered actions have ensured that pupils leave the school as well-rounded individuals, with most having made exceptional progress in English and mathematics.
- Leaders provide precise training and support for all staff and hold them strictly to account for the quality of their work.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that inspires and enthuses pupils. Pupils demonstrate secure knowledge in what they have learned in a range of subjects. Pupils are suitably prepared for their next steps in education
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from precise support from the adults who work with them. As a result, these pupils make excellent progress from their individual starting points.
- Excellent leadership of the early years provision has ensured that children make very strong progress from their varying starting points.
- Pupils are well looked after. They are enthusiastic learners, behave well and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders provide a curriculum that supports the school's strongly held values and promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development admirably. Pupils are demonstrably caring, thoughtful, reflective and ambitious. They develop the attributes to become exemplary citizens.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good overall and improving. However, some teachers do not always take account of pupils' starting points. Where this is the case, learning is too slow, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Pupils make good or improving progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. However, in some classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils' can do is not high enough. The quality of pupils' work is not always of a high enough standard.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - all teachers make sure that they plan activities that consider pupils' starting points, particularly for the pupils with the potential to be high achievers
  - all teachers have high expectations of the quality of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Leadership at all levels is highly effective. School has experienced recent and significant, but unavoidable, changes in staffing and school expansion. Nevertheless, the headteacher, well supported by her senior leadership team, has maintained good and strong outcomes across the school.
- The headteacher's undeniable commitment to ensuring that staff have the relevant skills to provide pupils with the best education is evident in the comprehensive training programme staff receive. Leaders provide staff with high-quality training which helps them to improve their practice. Newly qualified teachers are enthusiastic and wholly committed to the teaching profession. They value the specific support they receive from senior leaders to help them to be the best teacher they can be.
- Teachers and teaching assistants readily choose to complete courses to further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers continually look for ways to develop their skills in a range of subjects closely linked to school improvement priorities that help them to raise the achievement of all pupils.
- The well-structured curriculum enables pupils to learn a wide range of subjects and prepares them well for their next steps in education. Pupils across the school talk confidently and enthusiastically about their learning in subjects such as history, geography, science and art. A group of pupils in Year 4 demonstrated secure learning through their study of Vikings, Anglo-Saxons and the Great Barrier Reef.
- Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as art and drama workshops and after-school clubs. A variety of visitors come to the school to talk to pupils in assemblies and share their work.
- Pupils successfully demonstrate how core values such as compassion, resilience and responsibility link to British values and successfully develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning. For example, pupils recognise and celebrate equality of diversity in their school through the study of different religions. They have a good awareness of the wider world and of what threatens the longevity of our planet.
- Leaders monitor the impact of their work rigorously. Highly effective systems ensure that pupils are making the strong progress they should and they identify pupils who need extra support and challenge. In addition, systems identify any additional staff training required to best meet the needs of the pupils. This is put into place in a timely fashion.
- School leaders have developed highly effective partnerships with other schools. This enables them to share best practice and check the accuracy of their judgements of pupils' work. This has led to leaders holding high expectations for all pupils in what they can achieve.
- Leaders use the sport premium very effectively to develop pupils' physical education (PE) skills. Once a term, specialist external teachers deliver high-quality training to help staff deliver lessons that meet the needs of pupils with a range of abilities and needs. The PE leader monitors pupils' progress and helps direct the support to where it is

most needed. PE provision ignites pupils' passion and enthusiasm for sport as they compete in a wide range of sporting events and enjoy a diverse collection of sporting clubs.

- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and comment on teachers' approachability and support. They widely comment on the many enrichment activities that the school offers. One parent's response was typical of many: 'I am very happy with the way the school cares for and educates my child. The teaching staff are available and committed to the ethos of the school and the head offers strong leadership.' Almost all the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, reported that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Subject leaders are keen and knowledgeable about their subjects. They have clear action plans to support school improvement. Leaders of English and mathematics demonstrate strong practice. They routinely evaluate and adapt the quality of education in their subject area across the school. This is clearly demonstrated in writing and mathematics, where strong improvements can be seen over time. A few subject leaders are new to post and have not yet had a similar impact.
- Leaders use funding effectively to support the most vulnerable pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. These pupils make very good progress in line with those pupils nationally, particularly in reading and mathematics. Leaders recognise that attendance for disadvantaged pupils is not as good as it should be and have put in place a range of strategies to improve attendance further.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points because funding is used precisely by leaders to ensure that pupils get the right support to meet their needs.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body passionately shares school leaders' vision towards ensuring that all pupils get the best opportunity to make strong progress. This is evidenced in the way governors allocate and review the impact of pupil premium funding so that the most vulnerable pupils get the support they need to attain in line with and, in some cases, above pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and know where improvement is needed. Minutes of governors' meetings show that they use this information to provide effective challenge and support to leaders.
- Governors carry out their responsibilities thoroughly, particularly in relation to safeguarding. They are continually looking at ways to develop and improve their own practice. Governors undergo essential training and routinely take part in strategic dialogue with school leaders to make sure they are supporting them in the best way they can. This includes being mindful of staff well-being. All staff spoken with value the support they receive from leaders at all levels.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety and well-being are given a high priority by all staff. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that adults will look after them. All parents who responded to Parent View stated that the school keeps their children safe.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to gain an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet.
- The school's single central record and employee files are suitably maintained and contain all statutory information. All adults have undergone the necessary checks to establish if they are suitable to work with children.
- All staff receive mandatory safeguarding training and updates from school leaders. Leaders' records demonstrate that they take effective action when a pupil needs additional support. Concerns are followed up in a timely fashion.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across the school. In all year groups, most pupils make good progress, and in some cases, they make better than good progress. Any variance is mostly due to significant staff changes. However, the headteacher and her senior leaders have put into place an effective structure of guidance and support for teachers. These actions have ensured that teaching and learning are good and improving for current pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in many subjects across the curriculum. They use this knowledge to plan well-structured activities that build on pupils' prior learning and enable pupils to make good progress in most subjects. For example, in a key stage 2 art lesson, pupils were guided with small steps to complete a sketch using the vanishing point. Although some pupils found this challenging, they completed the task well and commented that the guided sequence of instructions helped them to complete the activity.
- The leader of mathematics supports staff very effectively to further develop their knowledge and understanding of problem solving and reasoning. As a result, teachers are becoming more confident and skilled in the teaching of mathematics. Pupils' work shows that they are applying their skills to more complex problems and, in lessons, they are routinely justifying their answers.
- Writing is taught well across the school. Pupils have a good understanding of grammar, spelling and punctuation, as borne out in the end of Year 6 national tests. They write at length and confidently edit and improve their own work. As they move through the school, they begin to assess their own work and the work of their peers. In upper key stage 2, pupils accurately identify their own next steps in learning. Evidence in pupils' English books shows that most teachers are consistent in their expectations and that pupils make strong progress.
- In line with leaders' expectations, teachers use a three-level approach to provide challenge and support to pupils. Pupils respond well and are excited if they are able to

get on to the third challenge. In most lessons, pupils accurately judge the level that they feel will effectively challenge them and make them think. However, in some lessons, pupils do not choose appropriately, and teachers do not ensure that pupils are working at a level that matches their ability. Where this is the case, this slows pupils' progress.

- Teachers and teaching assistants create positive working relationships in all classrooms. Pupils value the support they receive and become increasingly self-confident and resilient in their learning.
- Subjects such as geography and history are taught well. This was demonstrated in the way pupils are able to clearly articulate their learning. Pupils speak about topics in depth and demonstrate an unequivocal passion and enthusiasm for what they have learned. For example, in Year 4, pupils' knowledge of the ocean is detailed, particularly in relation to the five zones that are layered beneath the surface. Their learning extended to environmental issues, such as global warming, plastic pollution and the latest developments to counteract the damage.
- Teachers plan very effective links across a range of contexts that give pupils a broad picture of what they are learning. For example, Year 5 pupils spoken with talked about their space topic covering the Soviet Union's launch of the Sputnik. They discussed the Space Race, the Cold War, President Kennedy and Khrushchev and Yuri Gagarin. They have a clear understanding of chronology in line with other topics they have been studying.
- The impressive knowledge and learning often demonstrated by pupils through discussion was not seen in the pupils' books for subjects other than English and mathematics. Many books do not represent what has been learned. In some classes, teachers' expectations of quality and presentation in these subjects are too variable. For example, pupils' work lacked detail and presentation was not of the same high standards seen in English and mathematics.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The ethos 'Learning for Life' is demonstrated in the way pupils are deeply reflective about their own work and can articulate what it is they need to do to improve further. They talk positively about their future and share their aspirations, examples of which include: becoming a doctor; working in their own business; becoming a pilot; training to become a football coach; and becoming a film director.
- Pupils are sensitive to each other's feelings and are very supportive of one another. They demonstrate a real sense of belonging within their school community. Pupils speak maturely about their work and engage in sensible discussion with each other and with adults. For example, speaking with pupils about their work on Charles Darwin, pupils expressed their views about theory and fact and how they align with their own religious beliefs.
- Pupils recognise and embrace the diversity within their own community as well as in

Britain. They show a mature understanding of differences, particularly in relation to culture, religions and families. They understand how families can be different and speak openly about how they may include single-parent, adoptive, grandparents or families with two mums and dads. They happily share their individual connections with different cultures and countries and their family make up. Pupils express an undeniable acceptance that everyone is different but equal.

- Exercise and fitness are given a high priority by leaders, as evidenced by the design of the PE curriculum which is enjoyed by pupils. In addition, a strong focus on pupils' healthy eating has ensured that the school has once again achieved the Enhanced Healthy School Status award.
- Adults know pupils well and develop strong working relationships with them. Pupils told inspectors that they value the work of teachers and the teaching assistants who support them very well in class.
- Pupils embrace the opportunities to take on responsibility, for example demonstrated through the roles of 'Leaders in Learning'. Pupils across all year groups are selected to work with subject leaders to plan and deliver group sessions for younger pupils. They are required to demonstrate skills in patience, consideration, encouragement and a thirst for lifelong learning. A particular success has been the writing workshop where older pupils give support and advice to younger pupils about the importance of planning a story well before starting to write.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are confident, enthusiastic learners. In lessons, they demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Teachers instil a strong love of learning that makes pupils curious learners, aware of their own progress and keen to improve.
- Pupils work and interact safely with each other in and out of lessons. They move around the school sensibly, hold doors open and greet adults with a smile and a cheery 'hello'. They are proud of their school and supportive of each other's achievement. They are respectful during assembly times; they listen well and respond appropriately.
- There are very few incidents of poor behaviour and no serious incidents recorded. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and say that bullying does not happen at the school. All parents who responded to Parent View agree that pupils are safe. An overwhelming majority say that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. Leaders carry out analysis and are taking effective action to improve attendance further.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils in 2018 made very strong progress in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. In addition, pupils made progress in line with national expectations in writing. Attainment was impressive, with pupils exceeding other pupils nationally in their attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling at both the expected and at the higher standards. In 2018, almost all pupils

achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined, with a greater proportion than that seen nationally achieving at the higher standards. This demonstrates that pupils leave Elsenham exceptionally well prepared for their next stage in education.

- In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard was above that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018. Pupils achieved in line with other pupils nationally at greater depth. A significant number of pupils enter the school with skills below those typical for their age. Pupils therefore are making very strong progress from their starting points.
- The most vulnerable pupils are closely monitored, and precise support is put in place to accurately meet their needs. They make at least good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in phonics. Most pupils meet the requirements of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 and have done so for the past three years.
- Although end of key stage results indicate that pupils are not making such strong progress in writing as they are in reading and mathematics, leaders' actions are having a positive impact and pupils' work shows that current pupils across the school are making improved and better progress in writing.
- Overall, current pupils are making at least good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are ensuring that more effective teaching practice support is being focused in areas where teaching is not as strong.
- Most pupils are making strong progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. However, not all books accurately reflect the knowledge and understanding that pupils are able to demonstrate in subjects such as history, geography and science.

### Early years provision

### Outstanding

- Leaders of the early years provision have very high expectations of staff and children. On entry, children are accurately assessed so that adults have a precise understanding of the children's needs from the start of their time in Reception. Consequently, children settle very well and make excellent progress.
- Reception classes are carefully organised so that children can access resources confidently and independently. Classrooms are bright, displaying children's well-presented work that they are keen to point out to visitors. Children are happy, sociable and love to share what they know with each other and adults. They move freely and safely between outdoor and indoor activities with a purpose. In most areas of learning they sustain interest for long periods of time.
- Adults develop children's social skills very effectively. Children play and learn together and share resources happily. For example, children were observed taking turns playing schools, one child took on the role of a teacher, handing out books to her classmates and listening to them read.
- Leaders ensure that planning of activities in both classes is consistent and accurately



meets the needs of the children. Activities are effectively organised so that children have opportunities to develop skills in all areas of learning. Adults closely monitor children's progress and use this information to plan precise and appealing activities that are best suited to children's interests and needs.

- Leaders check and measure children's progress meticulously. Excellent relationships between staff and continuous professional dialogue mean that all adults working with the children know them very well. They are fully aware of what children can do, cannot do and need to do to make excellent progress.
- Adults are very skilled at asking questions to deepen children's understanding. Adults interact with children very effectively, probing them to extend their thinking and language. For example, boys playing with the pirate ship in the sand were encouraged to think of ways they could protect the sailors from the dinosaur fish. Children offered their solutions enthusiastically by saying, 'We can get the sharks to eat them' and, 'We could get the penguin to bite their tails'.
- Some children enter Reception with skills and knowledge, in some areas of learning, below those typical for their age. Leaders take incisive action to ensure that children catch up in the areas they need to. Leaders' careful identification of individual need, matched with precise support, has an impressive impact on improving children's development in speech and language.
- The school's chosen method for teaching writing supports the whole-school priority of developing children's communication and language skills. The carefully designed writing process enables children to develop their understanding of story writing through talk and story maps. Children confidently complete a storyboard – drawing a sequence of pictures before they write.
- Children engage fully with the writing process and told inspectors that story maps help them write. 'Chatter time' also gives valuable opportunities for children to practise their communication skills. In addition, adults model and set high expectations and children respond well by writing carefully constructed sentences with increased accuracy at forming letters. Many choose to write daily and many write at length.
- Children learn to read with increasing confidence. They are able to use their phonics knowledge to attempt to read unfamiliar words. Children are starting to read with expression and some recognise punctuation, such as exclamation marks, in their reading.
- Phonics is taught well. Children choose activities that will develop their knowledge further. For example, two children were keen to practice their learning of 'igh' and diligently worked through an activity independently on the computer, sounding out the words correctly.
- Children make very strong progress from their starting points and most achieve a good level of development by the time they leave Reception. The early years leader provides effective support to make sure that their move to key stage 1 is smooth. As a result, good and better progress is maintained into Year 1.
- Leaders provide staff with the training they require to support children with additional needs. This includes working with external agencies to ensure that staff are trained to a high level and develop the skills to support children with a range of needs. Leaders'

close monitoring and reviewing of small-group work demonstrate that these children make strong progress from their starting points.

- Adults develop strong and very effective relationships with parents. Parents value the support the school provides and the opportunity to share their children's progress from home by using the school's electronic learning system. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'Staff consistently go out of their way to fully engage children and parents in their learning.' This partnership is having a noticeable impact on children's learning and strong progress. Adults continually review what children can do and their next steps in conjunction with evidence provided by parents.
- Children are encouraged to challenge themselves in the outdoor area and to take part in a wide range of activities designed to develop their academic and physical skills. Children are taught how to keep themselves safe when moving around the school. All of the statutory welfare requirements are met and the school's safeguarding practices and procedures are strictly followed.

## School details

Unique reference number	115129
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10083937

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Yeadon and Simon Bird
Headteacher	Linda Reid
Telephone number	01279 813198
Website	<a href="http://www.elsenham.essex.sch.uk">www.elsenham.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@elsenham.essex.sch.uk">headteacher@elsenham.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2018

## Information about this school

- Elsenham Church of England School is smaller than an average-sized primary school. It has two Year 4 classes and has expanded to have two Reception classes since the previous inspection. The rest of the school has one class in each year group.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportions of pupils with SEND support and those with an education, health and care plan are above the national averages.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning across all year groups.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors and school staff. An inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the school's external consultant.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' written work, information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum planning, and records of behaviour and safety. They also looked at the minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents, including mandatory checks made on the recruitment of new staff, and the school's website.
- Discussions were held with pupils from 'Leaders of Learning', a group of Year 4 and Year 5 pupils, and informal conversations took place during lesson times.
- The inspectors took account of the 83 responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, Parent View, and the 34 comments on the free-text service. An inspector also spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 29 pupil and 29 staff responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

## Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nick Rudman

Ofsted Inspector

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