

Inspection of a good school: Elmley Castle CofE First School

Main Street, Elmley Castle, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3HS

Inspection date:

21 June 2022

Outcome

Elmley Castle CofE First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's aim to create 'a little piece of heaven on earth' is reflected through all aspects of school life. Pupils welcome visitors and treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils are happy and excited to be at school. They talk with great pride about their positive relationships with their friends and teachers.

Teachers have high expectations for every child. They are ambitious for pupils to succeed in their learning as well as their personal development. Pupils enjoy learning and are proud to show their work and explain how their teachers help them to learn. Pupils say that every lesson is their favourite. They participate enthusiastically in learning and live up to leaders' expectations by trying their best.

Staff know pupils well. They help pupils to grow in confidence. Pupils respect adults and one another. They behave well around school and in lessons. Pupils get on well together and say that bullying is not tolerated. This helps pupils to feel safe. They are confident to tell an adult or even to sort things out themselves if they have a problem. They learn about resilience and demonstrate this in their attitudes at school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher knows the school well. The improvement plans accurately identify what the school does well and where it needs to improve. The impact of the pandemic has delayed some of these plans from being fully implemented. For example, some of the checks leaders intend to make about the quality of the curriculum have not yet been completed. Leaders intend to continue this improvement work in the next academic year.

Children begin learning phonics as soon as they start school. Phonics teaching is proving successful and helps pupils to become better readers over time. However, some staff are not as expert in teaching phonics as leaders expect. There is some variation in how well phonics is taught across school. Leaders are aware of this and intend to further refine the school's approach to ensure that phonics is taught consistently well by all staff.

Leaders know the importance of reading and have carefully selected high quality books for staff to use in lessons. Pupils read every day and are confident when reading out loud. They enjoy taking part in school activities that promote reading at school, for example, world book day.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have individual targets that help them get better at the things they find difficult in their learning. Teachers are quick to recognise when pupils need additional support and this support is swiftly implemented.

Teachers are aware of what each pupil in their class should be taught, even though pupils are in mixed-age classes. This is because leaders have given much thought to the knowledge and skills they expect pupils to learn in each area of the curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils learn this information in a logical order. For instance, in science, pupils talk knowledgeably about the experiments they have carried out and the work in pupil's books demonstrates that they are learning the key scientific knowledge that is in the planned curriculum. Teachers deliver the curriculum through interesting topics that excite the pupils. However, some subjects are less well developed. Leaders have plans in place to develop the curriculum even further.

Leaders have developed a programme of learning for mathematics that is followed closely by all teachers. Pupils have lots of opportunities to practise their learning with practical equipment. Pupils demonstrate their mathematics learning through class discussion and answering questions. Additional support is given to pupils who are falling behind. Because of this, pupils achieve well and are able to solve problems.

The headteacher and her team lead the school well. There is limited disruption in class but when it does happen teachers deal with it quickly. Leaders are considerate of teachers' workload and promote staff well-being. Staff enjoy working at the school. They are positive about their experiences at work. Morale is high and staff support one another.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. They ensure that the school provides a broad and well-rounded education for all. Pupils benefit from experiences such as maypole dancing and sports events, including clubs such as yoga and Zumba. Pupils take part in regular outdoor learning activities. These activities promote pupils' independence. Pupils also learn about business and enterprise by producing and marketing apple juice which is sold at a local farmer's market. In addition, leaders encourage pupils to take part in charitable events. These events have raised pupils' awareness of the lives of children who live in disadvantaged countries.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils and their families well. The culture of safeguarding is strong. All staff are well trained. Leaders provide regular update meetings to ensure that all staff are aware of any changes to policy or procedures. The systems for checking that staff and

students are suitable to work with children are effective. Pupils say they feel safe at school. Staff teach pupils how to manage some of the risks they might face, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum identifies the knowledge and skills that pupils should know at each stage of the curriculum. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not as fully developed and does not provide the same level of detail as other subjects. Leaders should further develop the curriculum so that all subjects are of an equally-high quality in terms of detailing the essential knowledge they want pupils to know.
- Some staff are not as expert in teaching phonics as leaders expect. This means there is variation in how well phonics is taught. Leaders should continue their work to ensure that phonics is taught consistently well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	116808
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10211325
Type of school	CofE First School
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joe O'Sullivan
Headteacher	Nadia Underwood
Website	www.elmleycastle.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was not in post at the time of the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is within the diocese of Worcester. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2022. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next section 48 inspection will be within eight years of the most recent one.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, members of staff and a school improvement adviser. The inspector held discussions with representatives of the governing body.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, mathematics and science. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' work. The

inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and listened to pupils read to a staff member.

- A range of documents were scrutinised, including the leaders' self-evaluation of the school, improvement and curriculum plans, and the school website. Minutes of governors' meetings and the recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools report were also checked.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. They reviewed responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mel Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sara Arkle

Ofsted Inspector

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