

Inspection of a good school: Elham Church of England Primary School

Vicarage Lane, Elham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6TT

Inspection date:

19 July 2022

Outcome

Elham Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, staff, parents and governors all praise Elham for its strong, positive 'family feel'. As one parent said, 'The school maintains a real family feel where all the children know each other and look out for each other.' The school is a happy, caring community. Pupils live up to teachers' high expectations and uphold the vision of 'Respect, Support, Inspire'. Pupils enjoy their learning. They know that teachers always help and encourage them and expect them to do their best.

Pupils feel very safe in school because their safety and well-being are top priorities. Staff know each pupil as an individual and there are strong, positive relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils behave well. Any unkindness is rare. Pupils are confident to talk to staff if they have any worries or problems. Staff help pupils to resolve any conflicts quickly. This includes any bullying, which most pupils say does not happen very often.

Pupils and parents appreciate the wide range of opportunities provided to broaden pupils' experiences and skills. Pupils say that they particularly love learning out of doors, looking after the chickens and going on theatre trips, as well as the after-school clubs, including sports, art, dance and gardening.

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

Leaders have designed a vibrant curriculum that is ambitious and broad. Across subjects, the curriculum is coherently planned and well sequenced so that teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. It sets out the knowledge and skills for pupils to learn at each stage. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They particularly enjoy practical activities, for example conducting science experiments. Staff are quick to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. Appropriate plans are put in place to support their learning and achievement, including support from external agencies when needed. Leaders have plans underway, with support from the local authority, to review the curriculum for the increasing number

of pupils coming to the school who do not speak English so that they are able to achieve well.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and are supported effectively by subject leaders. They use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They work hard to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving them on to new learning. Several initiatives, such as the mathematics scheme and phonics programme, have been introduced, and more are planned. Not enough time has elapsed for leaders to check how effective some of the changes are in helping pupils to achieve as well as they can over time. Subject leaders are further enhancing their skills to carefully check how effectively the curriculum is being taught and the achievement of all groups of pupils.

Leaders ensure the teaching of reading is given priority throughout the school. Teachers encourage pupils to develop a love of reading from the start. Older pupils develop as confident, fluent readers who enjoy a varied range of fiction and poetry. Teachers have worked diligently to stick to the new structure and rigour of the phonics programme. They make sure that pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Pupils know how to use their phonics to help them read unfamiliar words. Their phonics learning has a positive impact on their developing writing. Anyone who is falling behind is provided with extra support to help them catch up.

Early mathematical skills are developed through practical and stimulating activities that deepen pupils' understanding. For example, children in Reception were confidently learning about patterns and repeating patterns. Pupils use a good variety of resources to help their mathematical understanding.

Pupils are very friendly and polite and are happy to share their views. They live up to the school's and Christian values of 'kindness, humility, forgiveness, perseverance, wisdom and faithfulness', which underpin all that the school does. Pupils show this through their conduct, attitudes and behaviour. These attributes were particularly and stunningly evident during the inspection. This took place during the last week of the school year. The usual timetable was not in place, there was a rehearsal for the whole school for the end-of-term performance and there was an unprecedented heatwave where temperatures were so high that pupils could not go outside.

Staff work very effectively together as a strong team. They feel well supported by leaders regarding their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' well-being and safety are priorities for everyone. Staff know their pupils very well. Leaders, staff and governors are fully trained and understand their responsibilities. As a result, everyone is alert to any causes for concern and quickly identifies pupils who may need help and protection. Adults respond swiftly should any pupils require extra help. Leaders seek support from specialist services where appropriate. Leaders make sure pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders are vigilant about pupils' safety

when they attend the forest school. The appropriate checks are carried out on adults who work in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some aspects of the curriculum have been introduced relatively recently. Leaders do not yet know definitively the impact on pupils' learning. They need to monitor the implementation of the curriculum carefully and rigorously, making adjustments as necessary, to assure themselves that all groups of pupils are achieving as well as they can.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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	118741
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10227865
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Trevor Gasson
Headteacher	Dan File
Website	http://www.elhamprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided primary school within the Diocese of Canterbury. It had its most recent section 48 inspection on 19 January 2016.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and other staff.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors also looked at curriculum documents in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding leader and looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils and to Ofsted Parent View, including written responses.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hogarth Ofsted Inspector

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