

Inspection of Elmhurst School

Dunsham Lane, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 2DB

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The co-headteachers of this school are Rachel Lee and Kirsty Needham. This school is part of Great Learners Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Lorraine Greco, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Rosen.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their time at school because of the warm and respectful relationships between staff and pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe and cared for. The school expects pupils to behave well. This is reflected in pupils' positive conduct. Rewards, such as the 'Celebration Café' with its treats and certificates, motivate pupils. Staff model kind and positive language, which pupils reflect in their everyday conversations. One parent commented, 'There is a strong focus on developing pupils into good, caring individuals.'

The school has high expectations for what pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will learn. In early years, children achieve well. However, in the rest of the school, the school's ambition is inconsistently realised, as pupils' learning is variable across different subjects.

There is a wide range of opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences. For example, they enjoy learning to cycle safely, studying astronomy and performing a school production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. These experiences inspire pupils and broaden their horizons. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of additional clubs to help them develop interests and talents. Pupils are passionate about these experiences.

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

Children get off to a strong start in the early years. The curriculum in Nursery and Reception is well sequenced and planned. Staff focus strongly on promoting communication and language skills. They carefully check children's speech and vocabulary when they join the school and provide effective support for those who need it. The school swiftly identifies if pupils have other additional needs. Expert staff follow curriculum planning closely and adapt it to children's individual needs. They carefully check children's understanding. Consequently, children are motivated and are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

The curriculum in the rest of the school is coherent. The school has identified the precise knowledge and skills it intends pupils to learn. These include suggested adaptations for pupils with SEND. In English and mathematics, staff usually have expert knowledge and follow plans closely. They recap previous learning, which helps pupils to retain important knowledge over time. In other subjects, staff sometimes design tasks that do not match the planned curriculum. In addition, they do not check pupils' understanding with sufficient accuracy. Some pupils with SEND are given effective support, but this is not consistent. As a result, pupils' achievement across the curriculum is variable.

The school prioritises reading. Staff have received high-quality training. As a result, they usually teach phonics consistently well. Pupils are well supported if they fall behind in reading and this helps them to keep up with their peers. They develop fluency by reading books that contain sounds they have already learned. The school

provides effective support for parents to help pupils read at home, including through workshops. Pupils love reading and enjoy stories from different faiths and cultures. They develop into confident and accurate readers.

Pupils are respectful towards their peers and adults. Their attitudes to learning are positive and they are proud of their work. The school sets clear expectations of behaviour, and staff follow procedures well. This means that pupils behave positively in lessons and around the school. They play together kindly at playtimes. The school has established a provision called the 'learning lounge' for pupils who find large groups of pupils and noise overwhelming. This provision is effective in supporting vulnerable pupils to manage their emotions. Leaders have begun to improve attendance but recognise there is more to do to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

The provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Leaders promote an inclusive approach, ensuring pupils benefit from equal access to clubs and experiences. Pupils enjoy a wide range of trips and opportunities that support their learning, such as visitors from RAF Halton. Pupils are supported to understand how their decisions and actions affect others. They also learn to appreciate the viewpoints of others. This includes issues in the local community and further afield. Pupils relish pupil leadership opportunities, such as being a play leader or an anti-bullying ambassador. They develop a good understanding of what it means to be a good citizen. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and their next stage of education.

The school is making important changes to improve the provision for all pupils. Oversight of the curriculum is at an early stage of development, as not all subject leaders have a secure understanding of how well pupils are learning. The ambition for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to achieve well across the curriculum is not yet fully realised. Staff feel well supported by leaders, and many value being consulted prior to changes being made. As a result, staff are proud to work at Elmhurst School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- From Year 1 onwards, the implementation of the curriculum is inconsistent. As a result, pupils' learning is variable across different subjects. The school should ensure that staff design tasks that support pupils to learn the intended curriculum, check pupils' learning carefully and use this to inform future teaching.
- Pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they are missing important learning, which causes gaps in their understanding. The school should

ensure that staff continue to work with parents to increase attendance for all pupils.

- The school's oversight of the curriculum is at an early stage of development. This means that not all subject leaders know how well pupils are learning and remembering key content. The school should support subject leaders to review the implementation of the curriculum and ensure that pupils, including pupils with SEND, are securely learning the planned knowledge and skills.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147156
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10288087
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	483
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Rosen
CEO of the trust	Lorraine Greco (Interim)
Headteacher	Rachel Lee and Kirsty Needham (Co-headteachers)
Website	www.elmhurstschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has been part of the Great Learners Trust since June 2019.
- The school has a Nursery provision for two- and three-year-old children.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- Elmhurst School converted to become an academy in June 2019. When its predecessor school, Elmhurst School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the headteachers, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and also with members of the trust board and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupil's work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team observed behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They considered the views expressed on Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Clare Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Dyer	Ofsted Inspector

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