

Inspection of a good school: Elmwood Primary School

Guys Farm Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 5NB

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2023

Outcome

Elmwood Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They like learning about different subjects. They appreciate the extra-curricular opportunities available to them. They speak with excitement about residential trips. Pupils appreciate events such as sports day and visits from the library bus. Many attend one or more of the wide range of clubs the school provides.

The school is determined to ensure pupils learn to read well. They give reading a very high profile and make sure it permeates pupils' education. Even pupils who find reading harder show a true enjoyment of reading and love to read often.

This is a friendly place where it is fine to be yourself. Pupils learn to treat others with respect. This is exemplified in the way they behave. Pupils told the inspector, for example, that it was important to say please and thank you to staff who serve them lunch.

The school has raised its expectations of what pupils should achieve. Staff are committed to helping all pupils to learn. They largely do this well, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

The school recognises when aspects of the education of pupils need to improve. It takes decisive action to address this. Last academic year, for example, the school recognised a need to improve phonics outcomes. Leaders made this a priority and improved the consistency in how phonics is taught.

Staff teach the phonics programme largely well. The books pupils read match the sounds they have learned. Staff step in to ensure that those who fall behind catch up quickly. This has had a noticeable positive impact on how well pupils learn to read. There are still

occasions where the routines of the phonics programme are not followed as precisely as they should be. Pupils largely learn to read fluently, but some are able to do better. Even those who struggle, though, enjoy reading.

The school has made sure that what pupils will learn is carefully mapped out across the curriculum. This provides teachers with the information they need to ensure that what they teach helps pupils to learn in increasing depth over time. Teachers know, and can therefore build on, what pupils have learned in the past.

Teachers use this information to help pupils learn well over time. Where aspects of the curriculum do not work as well as leaders intend, leaders and staff work effectively to make improvements. For example, mathematics outcomes were not as good as they could have been in 2023, so the school has adjusted how it teaches the curriculum. The school has also introduced extra arithmetic sessions to ensure that pupils learn to complete mental arithmetic quickly and accurately. This is working. Pupils, including children in the early years, are learning subjects across the curriculum well.

While teachers follow the plans set out for them, they sometimes do not realise what pupils are capable of. This means that some teachers do not provide pupils with the opportunity to do as well as they might.

The school sets out clearly how the needs of pupils with SEND should be met. They review how well these pupils are achieving regularly. They adjust the support in place for them in light of the impact it is having. Teachers provide effective support to pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND learn well.

The school has an analytical and thorough approach to raising pupils' attendance. They look in detail at what the causes of absence are and are conscientious in addressing these. This has led to improvements in the rate of attendance.

The school supports pupils' personal development well. There is a carefully sequenced curriculum in place to teach pupils about personal, social and health education. Pupils learn important things, such as about how to behave safely and to treat others with respect. This supports the positive behaviour in the school.

Staff feel supported by leaders. They recognise the value of the work they are being asked to do and can see the benefits it is bringing.

There have been recent changes to the membership of the governing body. This means that many members of this group are new to role and have yet to develop the knowledge they need to hold leaders to account. This has not hindered the school because leaders make sure that they drive improvement well. However, governors are not in a position, at this moment, to secure standards if there were to be a change in leadership.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high as they should be. This includes in how well they expect pupils to follow the routines of the phonics programme. This means that sometimes they do not use the curriculum to help pupils achieve as highly as they could. The school should make sure all teachers know how capable pupils are and that they use the curriculum in place to its maximum effect.
- Many governors are very new to role. They do not, at this time, have the knowledge to hold leaders to account and drive improvement. This leaves the school vulnerable to decline if there were to be a change in leadership. The school should make sure governors are provided with the guidance and support they need to secure and build on the strengths of provision.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

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 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	115240
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10294949
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Adrian Ward
Headteacher	Nerys Maidment
Website	www.elmwood.school
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders, the acting chair of governors and another governor.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 pupils' work.

- The inspector also discussed curriculum provision in science and design technology with leaders of those areas.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record of recruitment checks; 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 inspector spoke with staff and pupils about their experiences of the school. He reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey of parents' views, Ofsted Parent View, including their free-text comments. He also considered the responses to Ofsted's survey of staff's views and Ofsted's survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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