

Inspection of Elm Hall Primary School

Conrad Road, Witham, Essex CM8 2SD

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Michael Wood. The school is part of Attain Academy Partnership, which means that other people in the trust also have a responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Susannah Edom-Baker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Bruce Doy.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Elm Hall Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend this school are happy. They enjoy coming to school because their teachers make learning fun. Pupils appreciate the learning opportunities that their teachers provide. Pupils work hard and, in most subjects, meet the high expectations that staff have of them.

The school is a calm environment in which pupils thrive. Pupils have positive reminders to support them making the right choices. The school values are an important learning opportunity for pupils. Pupils and adults have strong relationships throughout the school. Every pupil has someone that they can go to if needed. Pupils feel safe and supported in school.

Pupils enjoy the variety of roles and responsibilities that they have on offer. Subject Ambassadors work with pupils and teachers and put forward their own ideas to help make each subject enjoyable, interesting and relevant. Some older pupils represent the school at trust-led events. The pupils share ideas about projects they have completed in their school so that they can learn from each other and gain new ideas for projects at their own school. Pupils develop their confidence and independence through these roles.

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

The school ensures pupils learn a wide range of subjects. In each subject, the important knowledge and vocabulary are clearly identified. The school sets out how pupils develop year by year, starting in the early years. However, in a few subjects, staff do not check that pupils have a secure knowledge of what they have learned before they move pupils on to new learning. This means pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all subjects.

Reading is well taught throughout the school. The school has chosen a phonics scheme, which staff follow precisely and consistently. Staff constantly check that pupils are remembering what they have learned. If pupils need extra help to keep up, support is put in place swiftly. The books that pupils read are well matched to their stage of learning to read. Consequently, most pupils learn to read well.

Pupils develop a love of reading due to the exposure they have to rich texts. The school provides opportunities for pupils to enjoy texts, such as sharing a class novel, visiting the school library, being quizzed on books and sharing their favourite authors. As a result, pupils aspire to read a million words and attend the millionaire's tea party.

In early years, the children get off to a flying start due to the preparation that takes place before they begin. Adults provide carefully chosen activities that motivate and engage children. As a result, children remember what they are learning and extend this knowledge even further.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are extremely well supported. Staff identify pupils' needs quickly so that they can get the right support. The school works well with external agencies and ensures that pupils get the support they need. Pupils with SEND can access the curriculum and make progress due to the adaptations that staff make for them.

Pupils respond well to staff's high expectations of behaviour. Staff ensure that pupils know and understand the rules and routines of the school, and this starts in the early years. Consequently, pupils behave well in and out of lessons. Pupils who find it harder to manage their behaviour are well supported by the school with effective strategies.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is a particular strength. The school uses enrichment days to develop the attitudes of believing, growing, owning, respecting and collaborating every half term. A recent example of this was based around 'collaboration'. Pupils were able to successfully work together, talking positively about what they achieved and being respectful to each other. The inspiration project ensures every class has a prominent person's name. Pupils have detailed knowledge of these people and what they achieved. This inspires pupils to believe that they can achieve great things too.

The school is a calm and positive environment for staff to work in. Staff are very well supported, particularly with their professional development, which has ensured a more consistent approach throughout the school. The school is an integral part of the trust. Support networks are set up between schools to work together and share ideas.

Parents value the community feel that the school has and how they are supported with their children's learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not ensure pupils are secure in understanding important subject knowledge before they move on to learning something new. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all curriculum areas. The school should ensure that teachers check what pupils know before they move pupils on, so pupils achieve well in all subject areas.

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	146695
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10267862
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Jan Marshall
CEO of the trust	Susannah Edom-Baker
Headteacher	Michael Wood
Website	www.elmhall.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Attain Academy Partnership, which it joined in January 2019.
- The predecessor school was inspected in May 2020 and was graded outstanding.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school operates its own breakfast and after-school club.

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 lead inspector spoke with governors from the governing body and trustees from Attain Academy Partnership.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of Attain Academy Partnership.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in science.
- 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.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils by speaking to them during lessons, at lunchtime and at breaktimes. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of staff to gather their views of the school. 21 responses to Ofsted's staff survey were also considered.
- The inspectors considered 72 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Katie Devenport, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Shadbolt

Ofsted Inspector

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