

Inspection of a good school: Elm Road Primary School

Elm Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2TB

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Outcome

Elm Road Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Chris Venables. This school is part of The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Hugh Greenway, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tim Coulson. There is also a regional director, Caroline Oliver, who is responsible for this school and others in the trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

Elm Road is a nurturing and inclusive school. Pupils come through the gates happily each day. The school community is diverse. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They value the differences between them.

Adults have high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. Pupils work hard to meet these. They thrive on praise and appreciate it when there is recognition of their efforts in the weekly celebration assembly. Pupils try to demonstrate the school's values, for example, compassion and determination.

Relationships throughout the school are warm and respectful. Pupils behave well. They know the school's expectations of 'ready, respectful, safe'. A small number of pupils struggle to meet these. The school supports these pupils effectively to manage their feelings and behaviour choices. Pupils trust the adults to deal with any instances of unkind or poor behaviour.

Pupils pursue existing interests or learn new skills at a range of extra-curricular clubs. A carefully planned programme of experiences enhances their learning. These include a residential trip for older pupils, a day at a Victorian school or a memorable encounter with Boudicca on a visit to an archaeology park.

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

The school has designed a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum breaks down learning into small, manageable steps. These are carefully sequenced, so that pupils build on what they already know and secure their learning over time.

In the early years, the curriculum teaches children the important knowledge they need for key stage 1. There is a strong focus on language development. In mathematics, for example, children learn mathematical language such as 'add', 'equals' and 'one more than', when working with numbers up to ten.

Teachers explain new learning well. They revisit previous learning often to help pupils remember it. Teachers ensure pupils learn the subject-specific vocabulary they need. Pupils in Year 6, for example, learn about plantations, and the movement of goods and ammunition in a history lesson about the slave trade.

Teachers check how well pupils are learning through questioning, quizzes and end-of-unit tests. They adjust their teaching in response to any gaps they find. However, in some subjects, the curriculum does not set out precisely what they expect pupils to know by the end of a topic. This means that teachers' checks may not always target the most important knowledge.

Reading is a high priority. The school library and class book corners are well stocked. Teachers promote a love of books by reading high-quality stories by a range of authors to their classes. Pupils learn early reading skills in daily phonics lessons in the Reception Year and key stage 1. Well-trained adults deliver these lessons. Any pupils who struggle in phonics get the targeted support they need to help them catch up.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They know what the routines and expectations of the classroom are and follow these well. Attendance at school is high. The school takes a sensitive but firm approach to any pupils whose attendance causes concern.

In the past, some pupils did not achieve as well as they should. With support from the trust, the school has acted decisively to improve standards of attainment in the core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. There have been significant improvements, for example, in the quality of pupils' writing in English lessons. However, there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils' written work in other subjects. The quality of pupils' work is variable. It does not always reflect how well pupils are learning.

The school has refined its systems for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Skilled teaching staff adapt their lessons to enable pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers. With clear targets and appropriate support pupils with SEND progress well.

The school provides pupils with a range of wider opportunities. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument. They sing at local and regional events. Pupils enjoy trips to the theatre, including one to the Royal Opera House. Pupils learn about faith and different

religious beliefs, as well as important values such as resilience and perseverance. This prepares pupils well for their future lives.

Trust leaders have a strong grasp of the school's priorities. They know where improvements are needed and put support in place to enable these. Staff appreciate the networking and development opportunities provided by the school and trust. They feel valued and describe a supportive culture that looks after their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not set out with enough precision what it wants pupils to learn by the end of a unit of work. This means that teachers' checks of pupils' learning are not focused on the most important knowledge. The school should ensure that the curriculum sets out precisely what pupils are expected to learn at the end of each unit or topic, so that checks of pupils' learning are effective and any gaps are clearly identified.
- There are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils' written work. In some subjects and year groups, the quality of pupils' work does not always reflect how well they are learning or the ambition of the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers' expectations of pupils' written work are consistently high across all subjects and throughout the school.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 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 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	142424
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10323758
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	206
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tim Coulson
CEO of trust	Hugh Greenway
Headteacher	Chris Venables
Website	www.elmroad.org
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- The leadership of the school has changed since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- The school runs its own breakfast club, providing childcare before school.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.

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 her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with a range of leaders, including the regional director, headteacher and deputy headteacher, who is also the SENCo. The inspector met with trust leaders, including the CEO and chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning. The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. She also looked at samples of pupils' work in English and writing.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school and trust development plans, reviews of the school's provision and minutes of trust board meetings.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires. She also spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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