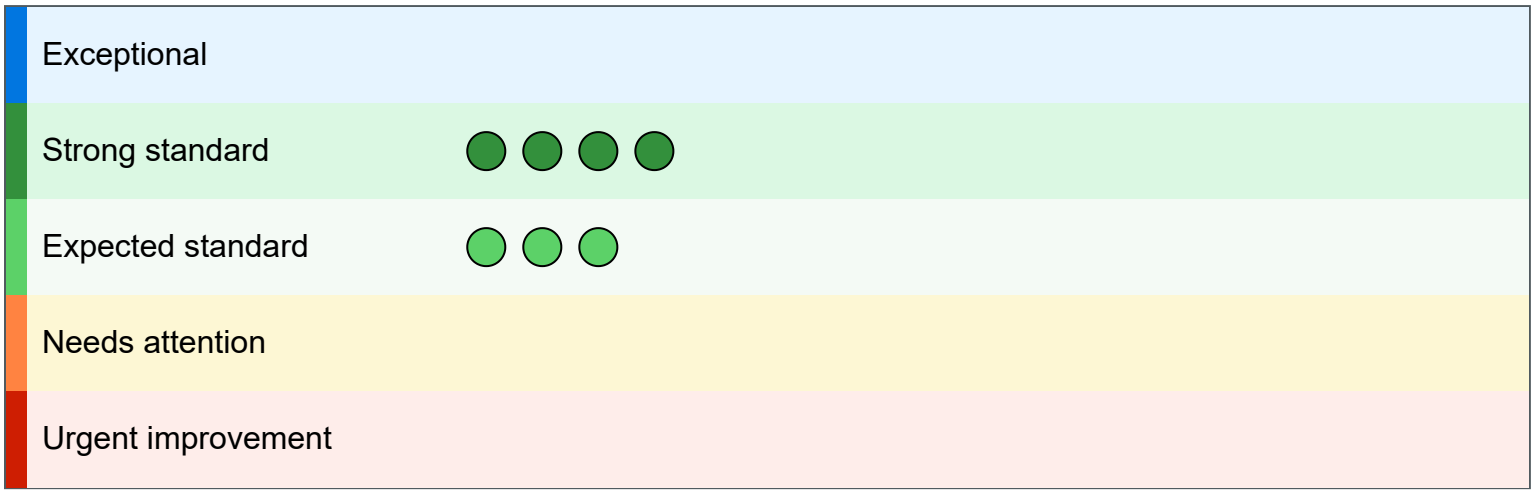
Elm CofE Primary School

Address: Main Road, Elm, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE14 0AG

Unique reference number (URN): 143835

Inspection report: 19 May 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders prioritise attendance through a systematic and diligent approach. They track attendance closely. Leaders follow up swiftly when attendance falls below an acceptable standard. They begin with supportive phone calls. Where required, they then use more formal approaches with parents and carers. This consistent approach, alongside positive relationships with parents, has led to sustained improvement. The proportion of pupils who miss large chunks of school has reduced significantly and is now very low. Leaders make appropriate adjustments to support pupils and their families. They address barriers to attendance sensitively and effectively. As a result, pupils attend regularly and are ready to learn.

Leaders have established consistent expectations for behaviour. Pupils understand these expectations and follow them. Teachers embed routines effectively. Pupils respond positively, engage readily in lessons and sustain concentration. Pupils listen carefully. They settle quickly to tasks and take pride in their work across the curriculum. Staff monitor behaviour closely. They adapt the personal, social and health education curriculum as needed to strengthen pupils' understanding. Pupils know what bullying is but report that it does not occur. They trust that staff would deal with any incidents effectively. Staff support pupils with additional behavioural needs well. They implement adaptations that enable pupils to manage their emotions successfully. Positive relationships between staff and pupils reinforce expectations. Older pupils demonstrate maturity and self-control. They understand their role as positive role models for younger pupils.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders oversee the curriculum and teaching with clarity and purpose. They provide staff with clear, subject-specific guidance. This ensures consistent and highly effective teaching across subjects. As a result, teachers implement the curriculum coherently, and pupils build knowledge securely over time. Leaders use assessment information carefully to identify pupils who may fall behind. They respond swiftly with targeted support. This helps most pupils keep up well with the curriculum.

Pupils develop secure foundations from the start. Staff teach phonics in a structured and systematic way. Consequently, pupils learn to read accurately and, in most cases, fluently by the end of Year 1. They build on this knowledge as they move through the school, strengthening spelling, extending vocabulary and writing with increasing confidence.

Leaders have designed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. In mathematics, learning is broken into carefully ordered steps so that pupils build on prior knowledge securely. In writing, clear structures and modelling help pupils produce sustained and increasingly sophisticated work.

Teachers check pupils' learning regularly and adjust their teaching so that most pupils stay on track. They provide swift and precise support where needed. Staff understand what pupils know and what they need to learn next. Adaptations enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the same curriculum and make progress

from their starting points. Pupils thrive because teachers have consistently high expectations. Improvements to the quality of the curriculum and how it is taught are not yet reflected by pupils' outcomes in national tests and assessments.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders and staff maintain high expectations for all pupils. They meet a broad range of needs effectively. Pupils' needs are identified early, sometimes before they enter school. Leaders achieve this by carefully assessing needs and working closely with families and external professionals. Ongoing checks identify barriers to learning and inform precise, responsive support. Leaders make sure that all pupils benefit from high-quality teaching that meets their needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) experience consistent approaches and well-planned adaptations that enable them to access a broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers check pupils' understanding routinely. They make timely, and often immediate, adjustments to secure learning. Daily keep-up sessions and longer-term catch-up support enable pupils to consolidate their knowledge and close gaps in understanding.

Provision for pupils with SEND is well coordinated. Leaders ensure that the support provided matches the specific needs of each pupil. Staff receive relevant training. They adapt practice skilfully so that pupils make progress and develop independence over time. Leaders use pupil premium funding strategically to reduce disadvantage and remove barriers. As a result, disadvantaged pupils achieve increasingly well and in line with their peers. Attentive pastoral care and effective multi-agency working strengthen support for pupils known, or previously known, to social care, sustaining their engagement and wellbeing. Inclusive practice across the school enables pupils to achieve well.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders have a highly accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They demonstrate a clear vision, strong commitment and a culture of high expectations that is shared by all. Leaders use information about the school's work and pupils' progress in a detailed and insightful way. This enables them to identify priorities and take effective action. They adapt provision in response to emerging need. Leaders at all levels contribute strongly to school improvement. They have time and training to carry out their roles effectively. This has led to sustained improvements, including in attendance. Pupils are ready and eager to learn. There is a well-established culture of high expectations, evident in classrooms, in pupils' work and in discussions with pupils. Those responsible for governance provide effective support and challenge. They fulfil their statutory duties. The trust's hub model strengthens collaboration and provides expertise and support when needed. Trust and school leaders evaluate impact carefully. They respond swiftly to emerging patterns and need.

Leaders prioritise staff wellbeing and workload while maintaining a clear focus on high-quality provision. Staff feel highly valued. They speak positively about the support they receive. They value leaders' open-door culture and thoughtful consideration of individual circumstances. Professional learning is highly effective. A well-planned programme of ongoing training and coaching enables staff to develop expertise. This secures consistent,

high-quality practice across the school. Leaders provide strong induction and sustained support. This ensures that changes in staffing have minimal impact on the quality of education. Subject leadership is highly effective. Leaders engage positively with parents and carers and the wider community. Parents value the school's work and report high levels of satisfaction.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. This is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the quality of their work. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make secure progress from their starting points across the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively, and gaps between their attainment and that of their peers are diminishing. Within school, current pupils' work demonstrates that progress is strengthening over time.

Pupils' outcomes in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics have generally been broadly in line with national averages. While this indicates that pupils achieve expected standards, it does not yet fully reflect the strength of the curriculum and the consistency of teaching now in place. Outcomes are improving as recent curriculum developments, particularly in mathematics, begin to have a more sustained impact. Pupils leave the school with secure knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, both academically and in terms of their confidence as learners.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders have established a curriculum that supports children to develop securely across all areas of learning. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on communication and language. This includes regular opportunities for children to engage in meaningful speech. Adults encourage children to speak about their learning. In most cases, they use questioning effectively to extend thinking. In Reception Year, staff teach phonics regularly and with precision. Children apply their knowledge of phonics to read and write simple sentences. Staff support children to form letters accurately. As a result, children develop the early reading and writing skills they need for future learning. Teaching supports children to recall recent learning, including subject-specific vocabulary. Most adults build effectively on children's understanding. Where practice is less consistent, leaders take appropriate action. They ensure that all adults benefit from ongoing professional development so that expectations are securely embedded.

Children are settled and confident and understand routines well. They show resilience and remain focused on activities for sustained periods. Children's achievement is positive overall. Clear routines and strong, positive relationships between adults and children promote wellbeing and welfare. Inclusive practice ensures that all children take part in activities and receive the support they need to develop their language and learning. Leaders

continue to strengthen provision so that all children experience consistently high-quality interactions.

Personal development and wellbeing **Expected standard**

The personal, social and health education curriculum is carefully planned and supported by a structured scheme. It aligns with other curriculum subjects and revisits key themes. This enables pupils to build knowledge securely over time. Staff receive appropriate training and support to teach sensitive topics with care. As a result, pupils treat each other with respect. They understand the importance of respecting themselves and others. Pupils develop their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of life through this programme and wider school experiences. They learn about relationships and health in an age-appropriate way. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils also develop a clear understanding of fundamental British values. Opportunities to take on leadership roles, such as acting as play leaders, enable pupils to contribute positively to school life.

The school promotes an inclusive approach to personal development and wellbeing. Staff consider pupils' different experiences and adapt provision so that all pupils can take part fully. Pastoral support is effective and underpinned by positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils speak positively about opportunities available, including lunchtime activities and clubs. These strengthen pupils' social development and wellbeing. Opportunities to discover talents and widen interests beyond the classroom are less extensive. In music and the arts, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to participate in clubs or develop their interests further. Leaders are taking steps to strengthen this aspect of provision to enable pupils to extend their interests more widely.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are immensely proud to be part of their school community. They feel safe, valued and well supported. Pupils experience a strong sense of belonging and trust in adults across the school. They know that if they need help or are struggling with an aspect of learning or wellbeing there is always an adult who will respond and provide guidance.

Pupils consistently meet staff's high expectations for attendance and behaviour. They attend well. Pupils benefit from consistent routines that lead to calm and purposeful classrooms. This helps them focus, concentrate and learn effectively. Pupils approach learning with confidence. As they progress through the school, they develop high expectations of themselves. Pupils are able to consider and suggest how they can improve further and take increasing ownership of their learning. They apply themselves fully and learn from mistakes without fear.

Pupils experience a coherent and well-planned curriculum that helps them make sense of their learning. Pupils study a curriculum adapted to their needs. It is relevant and meaningful to pupils. The curriculum is ambitious and encourages pupils to achieve well. Teachers meticulously check that pupils have grasped new learning, so pupils know what they understand and what they need to practice. Pupils who need to secure or consolidate their

understanding receive help swiftly. This prevents them from falling behind. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in all aspects of school life. They receive appropriate support that enables them to learn alongside their peers and experience success.

Pupils understand and value the school's ethos. They know the school values and can explain how they connect with fundamental British values. They understand that mutual respect and tolerance matter in school and beyond. Pupils understand what it means to belong to a team and contribute to the wider school community. They support one another and work together positively.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed the curriculum and teaching approaches to ensure that pupils' achievements are reflected in above average outcomes over time.
- Leaders should increase opportunities beyond the classroom to enable pupils to further develop their talents and interests.
- Leaders should continue to provide support and training so that staff, particularly those in early years, employ consistently high-quality interactions to support language and communication.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Grace Schools Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO) Adrian Ball and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Jackson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school and trust leaders during the inspection. They also spoke to the CEO and the chair of the trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Ely. Its last section 48 inspection was in November 2024.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Jackie Mills

Lead inspector:
Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Mark Sim, Ofsted Inspector
Lucy Roberts, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

228
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

244
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

31.34%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.51%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.16%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	61%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	65%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	68%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	68%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	74%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	84%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	60%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	81%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	36%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	70%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	45%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	70%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	45%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	94%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	55%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	62%	68%	-5 pp
2024/25 (final)	60%	69%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	81%	67%	14 pp
2022/23 (final)	36%	66%	-30 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	68%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (final)	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	81%	80%	2 pp
2022/23 (final)	45%	78%	-33 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	68%	78%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	70%	78%	-8 pp
2023/24 (final)	81%	78%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	45%	77%	-32 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	73%	80%	-7 pp
2024/25 (final)	60%	81%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	94%	79%	14 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	55%	79%	-25 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.5%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.1%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	10.5%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.0%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	12.8%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional 🔵

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard 🟢

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard 🟢

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention 🟠

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement 🔴

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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