

Ely St John's Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110773
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number	288766
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	John Messer

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Revie
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Hogben
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002
School address	St John's Road Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 3BW
Telephone number	01353 612780
Fax number	01353 612726

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a new, larger than average primary school which has been growing rapidly. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around a fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There is a small but increasing number of pupils who speak languages other than English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average overall but in some year groups it is high. The school has an award as a Health Promoting School, a Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People accreditation. Skills levels on entry are below average and a significant proportion of pupils have poorly developed communication, language and literacy skills. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school part way through this phase of their education is much higher than average. A significant proportion of pupils come from a nearby United States air force base. The headteacher was absent during the inspection and her deputy assumed the role of acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils' personal development is good, which makes a strong contribution to effective learning. Pupils have a particularly good understanding of how to eat sensibly, keep fit and lead healthy life styles. They are friendly and get on well with each other. The school has placed great emphasis on developing pupils' social skills and as a result pupils are courteous and sensitive to the feelings of others. Behaviour is excellent and a productive climate for learning has been established. The strategic leadership team has now turned its full attention to raising standards in English and mathematics and standards are rising. The team has introduced good procedures for establishing the amount of progress that pupils are expected to make from Reception to Year 6 and for measuring actual progress against these expectations. The system is still in its infancy and insufficient data has been collected to pinpoint exactly who is not making enough progress and precisely where extra support might be needed. Pupils enjoy accepting responsibility and the school council is active in supporting school improvement. Pupils develop a wide range of key skills to support their learning in the next phase of their education, especially in information and communication technology (ICT).

Teaching and learning are good and so pupils achieve well. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and a wealth of stimulating activities promote good learning. Given that many start from a low level on entry to the school, particularly in literacy, they do well to attain average standards in English and mathematics by Year 6. Targets to help pupils to understand what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning have been set. These targets are broad and do not always match the specific learning needs of all pupils, especially the faster learners who are not always sufficiently stretched by their targets.

The curriculum is good and is relevant to pupils' needs. Care, guidance and support are good with some outstanding features. There is an excellent programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and support learning well.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The school's self evaluation is largely accurate but it modestly rated its overall effectiveness as only satisfactory. This was because it did not recognise that the amount of progress pupils make is of greater significance than the results they attain in national tests. Parents speak highly of the headteacher's leadership. One comment was typical, 'She is a brilliant headteacher who is extremely approachable and friendly.' The acting headteacher is managing the school extremely well in her absence. The roles of subject leaders in raising standards are underdeveloped, however, and their action plans for improvement are imprecise. The governing body is very supportive and is becoming increasingly involved in school improvement. Finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money. The new building and the grounds are used to promote an especially good climate for learning. Resources to support teaching and learning are exceptionally good. Standards are rising and the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils have challenging targets for learning in English and mathematics, especially the faster learners, and review and discuss these frequently with pupils.
- Use the newly introduced system for measuring pupils' progress to identify where there is any underachievement and provide appropriate extra support where needed.

- Further develop the roles of subject leaders so that they have a greater influence over raising standards, especially in writing and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children settle happily in the Reception classes where they achieve well. Many, but not all, enter the school with poorly developed skills in communication, language and literacy and poor social skills. Although they make good progress many still do not attain the standards that are expected by the end of the Reception year. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move up through the school. As a result, by Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading and mathematics but still below average in writing. A number of factors have affected standards attained, especially in Years 3 to 6. A significant number of pupils enter the school part way through the year. Indications are that the change of school interrupts the continuity of learning for these pupils and they do not always reach the standards expected. Also there have been staffing difficulties and although these have now been fully resolved, turbulence in relation to staffing has had a negative impact on learning in the past. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement is good and they do well to attain average standards in English and mathematics by Year 6 and slightly below average standards in science. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good and they make especially good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and this is evident in their good attendance and regular participation in an impressive range of clubs and activities. Pupils are keen to please and relationships are excellent. As a result, pupils work hard and make good progress in lessons. They develop a good range of key skills, including the use of ICT, that provide a good platform for their future economic well-being. The school council helps pupils take an active part in contributing to the development of the school. Pupils feel very safe and know that adults will listen to their concerns. They exercise frequently and understand the importance of eating healthy food.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are eager to learn and keen to succeed. Their behaviour is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to think of others and understand the contribution they can make to communities less fortunate than their own. They successfully learn about different cultures in lessons and through events such as 'One World Week'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, and interesting lessons help pupils to make good progress. Interactive white boards and computers are used well and help to fire pupils' imaginations. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed watching an animated version of Macbeth and in Year 5 pupils read an illustrated version of 'The Lost Boy' on their laptops. In both cases the sound and pictures brought the text alive and added an extra dimension to pupils' learning. A significant feature of the teaching is the focus placed on encouraging pupils to work independently and creatively. Even the youngest are required to use their imagination and initiative. However, faster learners do not

always make the progress that they should. This is partly because their targets are not always challenging enough and planning does not identify precisely what activities have been designed to stretch this group. In most classes marking is thorough but comments do not always provide learners, especially the more able, with suggestions of how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a wide range of stimulating activities. Art and design and ICT are particular strengths. Pupils produce work of high quality in ICT and there is some stunning art work on display around school and in the gallery. Invited visitors to the school help provide a range of interesting and developmental experiences for pupils. For example, a visiting group led Year 1 in a 'Toy Day' where pupils dressed up as their favourite toys and had great fun as they engaged in a range of exciting activities. The curriculum has been recently reviewed to further develop links between subjects and this has helped make learning more interesting and relevant. The variety of extra curricular activities is good and the school provides excellent opportunities for residential experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff know pupils very well and work hard to provide an outstanding level of care. They give pupils masses of encouragement and this helps all groups to become confident learners. One pupil summed this up, 'They make us proud of ourselves and proud of the work we do.' Assertiveness training, social skills' club and music therapy sessions contribute successfully to pupils' personal development. All legal requirements for safeguarding pupils' welfare are met. Pupils' academic progress is regularly and accurately assessed. Pupils have class targets but they are not sufficiently challenging for faster learners.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher was absent during the inspection but all sections of the community commented on her excellent leadership. The strategic leadership team is highly skilled and has developed a clear vision for school improvement. Recently, effort has been successfully focused on improving standards of behaviour. The senior leadership team is now fully engaged in raising standards in English and mathematics but the subject leaders are not yet fully involved in this process. New systems for assessment and measuring pupils' progress have been introduced and these are beginning to give the school a clearer idea about exactly where standards need to improve. The school has good systems for checking the views of parents and pupils and there is a strong commitment to including all pupils in all activities. Resources are well organised and used effectively so that the school gives good value for money. The governing body holds the school to account effectively. Governors are clear about the need to raise standards and are setting up good systems for monitoring progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ely St John's Primary School, St John's Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3BW

What a super school! We thoroughly enjoyed our short visit. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. The building looks so modern and colourful. The grounds have been developed well and the whole learning environment is so inviting that those of you that we spoke to agreed that they were very lucky to be able to go to such a lovely new school.

We were impressed by many things about the school. Your behaviour is excellent and you love learning new things. You work hard but also enjoy having fun. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and we agree. We saw, for example, a mathematics lesson in Year 4 where children were squeezing oranges to find out how many millilitres in each one and how many oranges would be needed to make a litre of juice. What a great way of learning about capacity! You always do your best and so you make good progress. You do well in learning to read and write. You are developing a wide range of skills in mathematics and science. You use computers confidently to help you with your learning. You are good at art, you sing well and you enjoy sport. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves. We were sorry not to be able to meet your headteacher but everyone says she gives excellent leadership. Miss Bryant is doing a great job in looking after the school while she is away. All the teachers and support staff are keen to make the school even better and to make your lessons even more exciting.

Some of you, particularly the faster learners, do not always reach standards that are high enough. To help you to reach even higher standards we have asked Miss Bryant and the school governors to think about setting each one of you clearer targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy. We have also asked them to measure your progress frequently just to make sure that everybody is learning as much as possible. We also think that teachers who are subject leaders could make more precise plans for improving standards. We know that you are keen to do well and we think that standards are steadily rising.

We wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead Inspector