



Elm Hall Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114983
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290095
Inspection dates 14–15 December 2006
Reporting inspector Sheelagh Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Conrad Road
School category	Community		Witham
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex CM8 2SD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01376516025
Number on roll (school)	93	Fax number	01376500297
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Collis
		Headteacher	Mrs Rosie Mirecki
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Elm Hall is a smaller than average school. Virtually all of the pupils speak English as a first language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Just over half of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is far higher than nationally. The proportion of pupils who have transferred into the school from other schools is also far higher than average. The school has recently been awarded with Healthy School accreditation. There have been significant staff changes in recent times. The headteacher has been in post for nearly four terms and the school has had intensive support from the local authority during this time. Additionally, two of the four class teachers are at the start of their career and have been in post less than a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Elm Hall Primary School provides a good quality of education and standards are rising rapidly. Virtually all pupils enjoy school and are keen to come. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils say that they enjoy school and in questionnaires their parents confirm this. Children in the Reception class settle quickly and easily into school because of the caring staff. They make good progress in personal and social development and steady, satisfactory progress in other areas of learning. The school has accurately identified the need to develop the Reception curriculum to include more outdoor and child initiated activities. Across the school, provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and helps them to make good progress towards their targets.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards in past years have been below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, as the result of a concerted effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning, led by the new headteacher and supported by the local authority, all pupils attained at least the expected level 2 in tests at the end of Year 2 in 2006. Progress and achievement from Year 3 to Year 6 is also now good, particularly in reading. This is a significant improvement. The main reason for such improvement is the focus on putting new, effective teaching strategies in place. Pupils in the past have not done as well in mathematics and writing. However, test results at the end of Year 6 in 2006 were higher than the targets the school had set. Results in mathematics were average but in English they were still well below average. Test results in science were above average due to the intensive coaching in this subject. Currently, pupils in Year 6 are in line to attain average results in reading. However, standards in mathematics and writing are below average, and tracking indicates that fewer than average pupils are likely to attain the higher level 5.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan each lesson well to build steadily on previous lessons. Marking is good. It celebrates achievement and helps pupils to correct their mistakes. Targets for individual lessons and for improvement are explained to pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Personal development is good. As a result, pupils in all year groups behave well and are happy. Information to parents is good and the school takes good regard of parents' opinions. Parents are supportive of the school and very impressed with the recent changes. As one wrote, 'my child is much happier since coming to this school,' and another, 'our little boy has stepped out of the shadows and into the sunshine'. The provision that the school makes for pupils to learn to take responsibility for their actions is excellent. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Their contribution to the community is good. The curriculum is good and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to choose. All pupils learn French and this also helps to develop links with the local senior school which provides training for this. Partnerships the school has developed are effective. The care, guidance and support that the school provides for its pupils are good.

Resources are used well and finances managed efficiently to provide good value for money. Subjects are well led, although at present the headteacher has a disproportionately high number of areas of responsibility. This is as a result of recent staff changes and is due to be resolved in the coming year. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve further. This is due to the good quality of leadership and management, the accurate evaluation of its performance, and the determination of the headteacher, supported by all staff and governors, to aim for high standards. Governors challenge the school effectively but have identified training in the analysis of data as an area for their further development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school and mathematics for the current Year 6.
- Further develop the curriculum for Reception children to include more child initiated and outdoor work.
- Delegate responsibility for subject leadership within a suitable timescale and provide training for all staff and governors to become more confident in the analysis of data to support the monitoring standards of different groups across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry varies year-on-year due to the small size of some year groups, but overall it is well below average. Children settle well into the Reception class and make good gains in their learning in personal and social development. Progress in other areas of learning is satisfactory and children have a sound start to their school career. Current standards in most areas are still below those expected for pupils' ages when they start in Year 1. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2, and by the end of their time in Key Stage 1, standards are average and pupils' achievement is good. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good and pupils are now making good gains in their learning. Standards in reading are generally in line with those expected by the end of Year 6 but in mathematics and writing they are below average. Nevertheless, pupils from all groups, including those with learning difficulties, are achieving well and now attaining the challenging targets the school sets them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They behave well in lessons and around the school, work hard and maintain high levels of concentration. The provision the school makes for pupils to learn to face up to the consequences of their choices of behaviour is outstanding. This has resulted in a significant improvement in behaviour and in minor disputes being resolved amicably. This, combined with the current good progress in academic skills is preparing pupils well for the future. Attendance is satisfactory overall.

While the attendance of the large majority of pupils is good, overall it is depressed by the poor attendance of a very few pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and as a result boys and girls of all abilities achieve well. Teachers plan lessons well, taking good account of what pupils already know and can do. However, on occasion, lessons are planned more towards the needs of the oldest pupils in the class. Pupils find lessons enjoyable because teachers make good use of interesting methods, such as pupils interviewing each other about their views in an art lesson. Pupils know what the learning targets are for each lesson and also what skills each one of them needs to practise next to improve further. Assessment is good and the school has effective systems to monitor pupils' progress. Marking is regular and accurate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Planning of individual lessons ensures that pupils of all abilities do work that is at the right level for them. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school has identified the need to develop the curriculum for Reception children to include more use of the outdoor area and more child initiated activities. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in relation to its size. Pupils' health and social development benefit from a good range of sporting and other activities. This includes the opportunity to learn French, due to effective links with the local senior school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school was awarded with The Healthy School accreditation in July 2006. Health is promoted well and as a result pupils learn to make good choices, such as in their diet. Good care is also taken to ensure that pupils know who to turn to if they need help with a problem or to resolve a disagreement, and this makes them confident and happy. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The new system to monitor pupils' academic progress is rigorous and older pupils in particular are very aware of their targets for improvement. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils to improve their work and share the information with them regularly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear view of the school, based on rigorous and accurate monitoring. However, due to the very small size of the school and the recent staff changes, the leadership of many subjects rests on few shoulders, with a disproportionate amount currently being undertaken by the headteacher. The school has highlighted delegation of some areas as an area for development in the near future. Governors do a good job. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide good levels of support and challenge.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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.

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	2
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

15 December 2006

Dear Children

Elm Hall Primary School, Conrad Road, Witham, Essex, CM8 2SD

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited recently and for being so polite and friendly. I really enjoyed meeting you all and talking to you. The things that particularly impressed me were:

- Your headteacher works very hard and knows a lot about just how well each one of you is getting on.
- You are all making good progress in your learning.
- Teachers do a good job and help you all.
- You are given good opportunities to learn how to get along with each other and your behaviour is good.
- The opportunities you are given to take responsibility for your actions are excellent.

The things I have asked your school to do next are:

- To help you all to improve your writing and to help Year 6 to do even better with their mathematics as well.
- For more of the teachers to take responsibility for leading subjects next year.
- For children in the Reception class to have more opportunities to work outside and to plan their own activities.

I really enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Barnes

Lead Inspector