

Elm Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110650
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	310376
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Edwards
Headteacher	Mr Graham Lockwood
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Elm Road Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE13 2TB
Telephone number	01945 584591
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves a socially diverse area in Wisbech, although about a quarter of the pupils come from further afield. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than in schools nationally. There has been a recent influx of pupils from Eastern European families and the school currently has nine pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Children's attainment on entry is generally below national expectations for four-year-olds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average for a school of this size. There has been a relatively high turnover of staff in recent years.

The school has Health Promoting School status and also has an award for initiatives in the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Elm Road Primary is a good school. Under the enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, the school has moved forward since its last inspection and is well placed to make further improvements. The school has the support and confidence of the majority of parents. One parent summed up the views of many when commenting: 'Mr Lockwood is a good head and should be proud of his school.'

Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well over time. By the time that they leave the school, almost all attain or exceed the expected standards for their age. Overall standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Standards also exceed national expectations in music and in art. Standards are rising because staff have improved their use of assessment information to identify and support any pupils who are falling behind. This has been a key factor in establishing good progress in Years 3 to 6, where until recently, progress in some classes has been slower than it should be.

Effective teaching and a good, stimulating curriculum also have a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the many exciting activities that the teachers provide. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and response and manage lessons well. Provision for pupils with different needs and abilities is good. Teachers and teaching assistants give effective support and challenge that ensures all pupils, including those who find learning difficult and those at an early stage of learning English, do equally well.

This exceptionally inclusive provision reflects the school's caring ethos. The quality of care, guidance and support is good overall. There are strengths in personal support and guidance, especially for vulnerable pupils and families, and arrangements for keeping pupils safe and secure meet current government requirements. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils know how to live safely and healthily. They make an extremely positive contribution to school and the wider community and their secure basic skills and positive attitudes prepare them well for their future lives. Academic guidance is satisfactory but the school has yet to introduce personal targets that involve pupils in assessing their own performance. Marking is sometimes inconsistent in showing pupils how to improve their work.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have introduced rigorous procedures for evaluating the work of the school that result in clear direction and challenging targets for improvement. They have fostered excellent links with other schools, support agencies and the local community that add significantly to the quality of education provided. The school is beginning to develop the roles of other staff with leadership responsibilities, but has not allocated sufficient time for them to monitor their subject areas effectively and plan for improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. An effective induction programme ensures that they quickly settle into the life of the school. Secure baseline assessments result in work that is well focused and provides effective challenges for the range of abilities. The curriculum meets the needs of all children and stimulates their interests successfully. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide an exciting environment, both inside and

outside, that encourages children to explore the world around them and to develop independent learning skills. As a result, children make good progress from below average starting points to attain nationally expected standards by the end of the Reception year.

The leadership in the Foundation Stage is good. The school has successfully resolved issues from the last inspection and now provides all children in their Reception year with equally good opportunities. This year, the Foundation Stage leader has been part of a project on developing early reading. Her work has already begun to improve the children's communication, language and literacy skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the guidance that pupils receive about their work by introducing personal targets and ensure teachers involve pupils in evaluating their work and identifying ways to improve it .
- Ensure subject leaders have sufficient time to check on standards and quality in their subjects and to plan for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils enter Year 1 attaining standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. They achieve well in Key Stage 1 so that, by the end of Year 2, standards are regularly above the national average. In the 2007 national tests, between a quarter and a third of all pupils exceeded the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards were also above average at the end of Year 6 in 2007, with the majority of pupils making at least satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. However, staff turnover and inconsistencies in teaching and learning adversely affected the progress of this year group. The school has taken effective action to stabilise staffing and to improve progress in Key Stage 2. Consequently, pupils currently in Year 6 are achieving well; almost all are on course to attain or exceed the school's challenging targets for them and standards are set to rise further. Pupils who find learning difficult progress at a similar rate to others. The school is particularly successful in promoting good progress on the part of pupils who join the school speaking little or no English or those from Traveller communities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Most follow the rules for maintaining good behaviour. However, a minority still need adult support to manage their behaviour and to maintain a satisfactory response in lessons. Pupils have good relationships with the staff and with each other. They gain a good understanding of their own and different cultures by celebrating the experiences of others within the school. Most pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning; they thoroughly enjoy school, are attentive and contribute their own ideas with confidence. Even the youngest children work well independently. Attendance is satisfactory, due to the effective support and challenge that families receive.

Pupils take responsibility for aspects of school life and very much feel they have a voice. They make an outstanding contribution to the wider community. For example, older pupils are looking forward to attending the local council meeting and having tea with the mayor. Pupils understand

the importance of safe, healthy lifestyles and respond well to the school's drive to promote healthy eating and regular exercise. They feel safe in school and say that bullying is not a problem. Good basic skills and the ability to cooperate with others prepare them well for the future world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Much teaching is lively and engaging. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. This is particularly the case of those who support pupils for whom English is an additional language. The personal and academic support they give helps these pupils to settle quickly into school routines and to achieve well. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations. They use agreed procedures effectively to establish good working habits and set work, such as interpreting the emotions portrayed in a short film, that is both demanding and enjoyable. There are examples of highly effective marking that shows pupils how to improve their work, but this practice is not consistent in all classes. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning varies, because teachers do not make the best use of time or of the school's facilities. When pupils have too little time to reinforce their learning through independent work or their working space is confined, they do not make the best possible progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that fully meets national requirements. It also provides well for the development of basic skills, including the use of ICT. Staff have begun to make links between subjects that allow pupils to use and apply these basic skills. However, this is at an early stage of development and therefore not yet impacting fully on pupils' learning and achievement. Many aspects of the curriculum are exciting and reflect pupils' interests. The staff ensure that, where possible, pupils learn from first-hand experiences. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their lessons and the many educational visits. One Year 6 pupil said, 'Teachers make learning fun as well as educational'. These visits, along with visitors to the school, extend and enhance the learning. There is high quality provision for the arts. The quality of pupils' artwork is impressive. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn a musical instrument and they sing and play their instruments with great enthusiasm.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overall quality of care, guidance and support is good. Pupils thrive in a secure, supportive environment. The school is outstanding in the way it encourages pupils to express their views and act on their opinions, enabling them to influence many aspects of school life. Support for pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English and for those who find learning difficult is particularly effective. The school works exceptionally effectively with outside agencies and parents to promote the well-being of pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils safety and well-being are effective and meet current requirements.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. There are good systems for tracking individual pupils' progress, but teachers are not yet using them to set small-step targets that give pupils a clear understanding of how to improve their learning. At present, pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an effective leader. His boundless energy and vision for the school have built a culture of mutual support amongst the staff. He has been the driving force behind recent improvements to the school environment that now provides some excellent facilities for staff and pupils alike. He motivates staff by giving them a real part to play in improving the school. Consequently, senior leaders are effective. Together, they have brought rigour and accuracy to school self-evaluation. They use performance data effectively to set challenging targets and the direction they provide gives the school a good capacity to improve further. Their exceptional success in breaking down barriers to learning and in promoting equality of opportunity is a testament to the values that all staff share. The school has begun to build the leadership potential of subject leaders. However, they have not been allocated adequate time to monitor effectively which reduces their impact on standards and quality. Governors support the school unstintingly. They gather a wealth of first-hand information in order to hold the school to account for what it achieves.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

11 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elm Road Primary School, Wisbech, PE13 2TB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed watching you at work and at play and talking to you about all of the good things that you do there. I particularly enjoyed hearing the Year 5 band playing.

This is what we found out about your school.

- Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their time in school.
- Almost all of you behave well, work hard in your lessons and make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- All of the adults in school help you to learn and take really good care of you.
- You thoroughly enjoy all of the activities that there are for you, but especially music and art, where many of you do very well.
- Most of you are growing up to be active and healthy and your school provides lots of activities to help you to do this.
- Mr Lockwood, the staff and governors have worked hard to make the school

In order to help, we have asked Mr Lockwood and the other adults to do two things.

- We have asked them to make sure that you all have personal targets, and that they help you to understand how well you are doing and what are the next small steps you need to take with your work, in order to achieve them.
- We have also asked Mr Lockwood to give teachers who lead the different subjects, enough time to check on how well you are doing, so that they can help the school to improve even more.

Those of you who sometimes find it hard to behave as well as you should can help by making an extra effort to behave well at all times, and you can all help by taking notice of the advice that teachers give you and by doing your best to carry it out.

We hope that you all continue to work hard and do well.

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector