

Elmley Castle CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116808
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312410
Inspection date	7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Savage
Headteacher	Philip Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Main Street Elmley Castle Pershore WR10 3HS
Telephone number	01386 710279
Fax number	01386 710279

Age group	4-10
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils come to the school from the village of Elmley Castle and the surrounding area. Most children are working within or slightly above the levels expected for their age when they start in the Reception Year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school takes pupils up to the end of Year 5.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Strong leadership is ensuring that this good school continues to improve. Good teaching enables pupils to enjoy school and to achieve well. Children make a good start in the Reception Year, where sensitive support enables them to learn quickly, especially in personal development. Good progress continues throughout the school, especially in reading and mathematics, leading to well above average standards by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 5. Not all pupils, particularly the more able, do as well as they could in science and history, because teachers do not consistently set high enough expectations for their written work in these subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants support less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well and as a result, most learn quickly.

Members of staff are approachable and have good relationships with the pupils. Pupils respond positively to praise by behaving well, contributing to the school community and by helping each other. The school is developing the satisfactory curriculum to make it more interesting and purposeful. It includes many opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. A wide range of clubs and visits contributes especially well to the pupils' enjoyment of school.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are satisfactory. Some parents brought to the inspection team's attention concerns over supervision when pupils use the computers. The school has acknowledged that this aspect of care should be more rigorous. Good academic support is helping pupils to become more involved in evaluating their learning. For example, they have individual targets in literacy, and teachers' marking helps them know how to improve their work.

Overall, the school evaluates its work well and all members of staff and governors are keen to continue to improve pupils' progress. There are clear plans to develop relevant aspects of the school's work. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and outside agencies. Most parents are pleased that their children come to this school, although the inspection team found that a significant minority are not comfortable with the way the school tackles their concerns. Nevertheless, one parent spoke for many by describing the school as, 'A very happy environment, my children have thrived here.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children do well in the Foundation Stage and by the start of Year 1, most are comfortably meeting or exceeding the levels expected for their age. They make good progress because teaching is effective and the curriculum includes a good balance of interesting activities. Children do especially well in personal and social development because adults have particularly high expectations of how children should behave. There is a happy, purposeful atmosphere in lessons, with children developing good independence by choosing where they are going to work and by being able to explore their own ideas. For example, children used piping to make a 'gutter' and, through this activity, found out about different properties of water.

The children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 learn together in the same class. Whilst most work meets differing needs well and is suitably challenging, the pace of learning drops in some whole-class sessions when teaching is not focused enough on meeting the needs of both age groups. Adults make good use of the outdoor area, although it is very small, making it unsuitable

for some physical activities such as riding bikes. Members of staff use the 'forest school' well to teach children about the environment and about caring for living things.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are supervised more closely when they are using computers.
- Increase the challenge and interest in science and history, especially in the written work for the more able pupils.
- Establish a better partnership with the minority of parents who are not reassured over the way that their concerns are being tackled.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Good progress throughout the school leads to well above average standards overall by the end of Year 5. Pupils do best in reading and mathematics because these subjects have been recent whole-school priorities and teachers meet pupils' differing needs more consistently. By the end of Year 5, many pupils are already working within the level expected for pupils a year older. However, pupils do not always do their best in science and history and this is particularly evident when looking at the written work they produce in these subjects because teachers do not always expect pupils to demonstrate their skills and knowledge well enough. When this happens, the progress of more able pupils in particular slows. Teachers and teaching assistants support less able pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling most of them to make good progress. The school sets and reaches challenging targets for pupils' standards at the end of each year. These targets, together with a more thorough system for checking pupils' progress, are enabling the school to track progress more rigorously.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are justifiably proud of the way the school enables them to become responsible young citizens who are prepared well for later life. They learn good values and behave well. Pupils' good attendance reflects their thorough enjoyment of school. Pupils especially enjoy interesting practical activities. They generally work hard, and are keen to do their best, although they do not always listen well enough to each other or to the teacher when they are not fully involved in discussions. When this happens, the pace of learning slows.

From starting school in the Reception Year, pupils quickly learn to care for each other. Pupils help to write classroom rules and they follow them sensibly. They take responsibility well and make a good contribution to the community. For example, pupils invite the local community to a 'mince pie and tea' party at Christmas. School councillors play a prominent role in school life and they are pleased that adults respect their views. Pupils show good concern for the needs of others by raising funds for charities, although they have a relatively limited awareness of cultures other than their own. The promotion of healthy lifestyles has a high priority in school life. As a result, pupils are conscientious about eating fruit and drinking milk at playtime and they are keen to participate in sport. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe. For example, they explain clearly the rules for avoiding danger while building work is taking place on the school site.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Positive, supportive relationships are a key feature in motivating and engaging pupils. Lessons are well organised and teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to illustrate and enliven learning. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, especially in the Reception Year where they often work with large groups of children. Teachers mostly plan work that matches pupils' individual needs well, particularly in English and mathematics. However, in subjects such as science and history, pupils sometimes complete the same piece of written work whatever their ability and this means that they are not all challenged well enough. Teachers regularly mark work and often add helpful written comments to show pupils how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school emphasises the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills well and this has a good effect on pupils' progress. Provision for other subjects is satisfactory because whilst teachers allocate an appropriate amount of time, some topics in science and history are not adapted well enough to reflect pupils' different starting points. The school is beginning to link work in different subjects in order to make learning more purposeful and interesting. There is good provision for pupils' personal development and pupils enjoy taking part in activities that teach them about friendship.

Pupils greatly appreciate the good variety of clubs, visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum. They especially enjoy the opportunities for developing creativity through special themed weeks on topics such as 'looking after the environment'. A good number of sports' clubs help to teach pupils the importance of exercise.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Members of staff know pupils well and ensure that they feel happy and enjoy school. Good induction procedures help children to settle quickly when they start school in the Reception Year. Throughout the school, pupils are confident that adults will deal with any worries quickly. However, procedures for supervising pupils when they are working on the computers are not secure enough. All other procedures to ensure pupils' safety are fully in place.

Academic support is good overall. There are thorough systems for assessing pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Pupils understand how to improve in English because teachers share individual targets with them. Pupils say they would like teachers to share targets with them in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are set clear targets for improvement in individual education plans.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, subject leaders and governors are working together successfully to improve provision and pupils' progress. The school's self-evaluation is good overall. Systems for checking the school's effectiveness have improved with the new assessment information, although trends in progress are not yet fully analysed in detail. Governors and members of staff know the school's strengths and they have identified the main areas for development correctly.

The success of action taken since the last inspection to improve assessment arrangements and the curriculum demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further. The school's monitoring of learning is developing well, enabling subject leaders to become more fully involved in the process.

Governance is good. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They are starting to question the school about its effectiveness more rigorously. There are good quality financial plans. The friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the school supports the pupils' personal development well and ensures that the school runs well. Whilst there are good relationships between the school and most parents, a significant minority of parents are dissatisfied with the school's response to concerns. The school is aware that it does not do enough to reassure all parents that their concerns are dealt with effectively.

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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
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?	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	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 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Elmley Castle C of E First School, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3HS

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your work with us. Your school provides you with a good education.

- Here are some things about you and your school:
- you make good progress and reach well above average standards but some of you could do better work in science and history
- children in the Reception Year settle quickly and soon become independent
- you are polite and take responsibility well
- the school council is helping to improve the school
- teaching is good and members of staff help you to behave sensibly
- you study a suitable range of things in lessons and clubs
- the environmental work that you do sounds fun and clearly helps you gain a good knowledge about how to look after our planet
- the adults in the school check your progress well
- your headteacher, other teachers and governors are working hard to make your school even better.

- What we have asked your school to do now:
- make sure that you are fully supervised when you are using the computers
- increase the challenge and interest in science and history, especially for those of you who find the work easy
- make sure that teachers work closely with all parents to tackle any concerns.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your work and watching you learn. We are glad that you enjoy coming to this friendly school and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge Lead inspector

8 November 2007

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