

Elm CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110800
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325224
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	195
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Rhodes
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Child
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Main Road Elm Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE14 0AG
Telephone number	01945 860295
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school in a rural Fenland area near the Cambridgeshire border. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and none speak English as an additional language. There is a small but significant number of pupils from Traveller families. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. The number of pupils with additional needs, including those with speech and language difficulties and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, is above average. The school holds an Activemark award.

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 school that fully includes all pupils and provides a good quality of education. Pupils say that they like coming to school and enjoy the range of activities available, particularly outdoors. Parents are generally pleased with the quality of care and education provided as illustrated by one comment that, 'The approach towards the children is caring, earnest, honest and has just the right amount of discipline'.

Children enter the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those typically seen for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage they make good progress. In the last five years, standards at the age of seven have been slightly above national averages but in some years boys have not done as well as girls and to a much greater degree than seen nationally. Inspection evidence confirms that in Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress although some boys do not do as well, especially in reading and writing. National tests at the age of eleven show a more varied picture with standards over several years being close to national averages. Temporary staffing arrangements have been resolved and the staffing situation is now secure. In Year 6 standards are currently average. Pupils make good overall progress and most achieve well, although not enough reach the higher levels, especially in English.

Personal development is good. Most pupils behave well, and like practical activities such as art and where they solve problems or carry out investigations. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy physical activities, although there is more to do to convince them of the benefits of a healthy diet. Most understand how to keep themselves and others safe. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities within the community including the developing role of the school council.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers expect pupils to behave well and try hard. Teachers and support staff work well together to provide a good level of help that has a positive impact on learning. The curriculum is good overall and enhanced by an attractive learning environment indoors and outside. There is a good range of enrichment activities in the arts and sport that has a positive impact on personal development and learning. The care, guidance and support of pupils are also good. Staff have good relationships with pupils and there are effective procedures to identify where additional support is needed. The school has built up the way in which staff check and track pupils' progress but the information is not used sufficiently to ensure pupils know how to improve their work, especially in their writing.

Leadership and management are good. The long-serving headteacher is well regarded by parents and plays a key role in school development planning and classroom monitoring. Inspection judgements largely match those of the school's own self-evaluation, which indicates a good capacity for further improvement. However, subject leaders are new to their roles and are developing their effectiveness in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in order to identify what needs to be improved further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching and positive attention to children's welfare ensure that they make good progress from a level below that expected for this age. Staff ensure that personal, social and emotional development is given high priority and rightly focus on developing children's speaking and

listening skills. They provide many opportunities to do this through role play, discussion with individuals and small groups and by providing good examples themselves. These strategies have a positive impact on the progress made. Children enjoy their learning because there is a mix of interesting activities both inside the classroom and outdoors. Staff work successfully to ensure that there is a good balance of adult-led and child-suggested activities and check and track progress carefully. Even so, several do not reach the level expected by the time they enter Year 1. Good leadership and management, together with strong teamwork, ensure that the needs of all children are met, particularly where some need additional support in their learning. Teaching in group activities is good and is well focused on the individual needs of children so that all are fully included and able to benefit equally. Language and counting skills are a major part of everyday learning and often involve children working together to solve problems, which has a positive impact on learning. Resources are imaginative and used well to support the good range of learning activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that staff use the information from the tracking of progress so that the pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve, especially in their writing.
- Extend the opportunities for staff to monitor and evaluate the quality of the work of the school more rigorously in order to identify what else needs to be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with skills that are slightly below the average for their age in some areas. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make good overall progress so that they do well in tests and assessments at the age of seven. This has been a similar picture over several years and is testament to the consistently effective work of teachers and support staff in Key Stage 1. Even so, data shows that in some year groups boys have not done as well as the girls. In Years 3 to 6 progress has until recently been more varied. The last inspection identified that pupils did not do well enough in their writing and this is, to some extent, still the case. With a stable staffing team now in place this situation is improving. Progress is currently good overall and standards in Year 6 are largely average. The majority of pupils achieve well. However, not as many pupils reach the higher levels as seen nationally. This is because there have been gaps in the learning and skills of some cohorts that staff have had to work hard to overcome. Pupils from Traveller backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. Assessment information indicates that standards are set to improve for the current Year 6 with an increasing proportion expected to do well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school where they feel happy and secure. They make good progress in their personal and social development and many have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They demonstrate this understanding through the good number who take up the various sporting opportunities provided. Behaviour is good for the vast majority although a small group of pupils have difficulty coping with school life. Pupils develop positive values, which lead to their good social and moral development. Spiritual and cultural awareness are less strong, and pupils appreciate the reasons why people have different traditions through events such as 'One World Day'. Pupils understand the local cultural influences and are beginning to appreciate wider cultural heritages. Attendance is satisfactory but a few

pupils do not come to school as regularly as they should. The school council is beginning to have a positive impact on school life through its charitable involvement and improvements, such as providing fruit for pupils at break times. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff explain things well to pupils so that they understand what they have to do in activities. There is often a very effective practical element to learning including in mathematics where; for instance, older pupils use egg trays to find out the number of different ways they can arrange the 'eggs' and younger ones divide 24 cubes into different groups. This ensures pupils learn how to search for patterns and solve problems. The level of challenge is good in most activities, often with linked but different tasks that make appropriate demands on groups of different abilities. Most staff manage pupils well, including the very small number with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Staff ask a good range of questions to check pupils' understanding but do not provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner. Teachers sometimes miss the opportunity to display samples of pupils' writing in order to encourage more care with content and presentation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities and is well matched to pupils' needs. The drive to raise standards in writing provides a good focus for planning and an increasing emphasis on linking different subjects within a common theme, such as 'Spring'. This helps pupils to use their writing skills across different subjects. The school's extra-curricular provision is good. A wide range of sporting and musical opportunities help pupils to extend their interests and develop social skills. The school is active in helping pupils develop Eco awareness through such projects as the recent addition of a wind turbine. A good range of visits helps to make learning more interesting. The use of information and communication technology plays a part in supporting learning, but occasionally activities lack 'sparkle' to ignite pupils' imagination and computers are not used regularly enough to support writing. The themed weeks are beginning to add richness to pupils' learning experiences. Curricular planning is good for those who find learning difficult and have a range of needs. It provides pupils with structured opportunities, which result in good learning because of the well-focused activities and good support from teaching assistants.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good pastoral support for pupils and has all the policies and procedures required to ensure their care and protection. Pupils who have additional learning needs are identified early and supported well. The school successfully helps pupils to feel included in school life. For example, pupils who join the school say that they feel happy and have several friends. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities to promote creative play in the midday breaks, which at times leads to behaviour that is a little too boisterous. Nevertheless, the quality of academic guidance for pupils is good. The school's systems for checking their progress in

learning are comprehensive. This information is used to set clear targets for improvement, although pupils are not always sure about the steps they need to take to reach those targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the staff team effectively in a calm and reflective manner. Staff cooperate well together and readily support each other, which has a positive impact on the quality of care and education provided. There has been a recent re-allocation of subject leadership roles involving staff in Key Stages 1 and 2 working closely together to share responsibilities. Staff are starting to develop these roles by monitoring planning and scrutinising samples of pupils' work, although subject leaders have not yet monitored the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. Staff are working to extend the pupils' involvement with the local and wider community including through greater global awareness and an understanding of different faiths. Governors hold regular meetings and are well informed of the main areas for improvement through their work in school development planning. Governors have been active in working with parents to address their concerns about behaviour. The recent development of a curriculum committee is also a positive venture designed to assist governors develop their role as a critical friend of the school even further.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	3
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Elm CofE Primary School, Wisbech PE14 0AG

Thank you very much for looking after us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed speaking to several of you and meeting you in lessons, at lunchtime, in assembly and when we spoke to the school council.

These are some of the best things we found.

- You are happy in school and enjoy playtimes and practical activities such as in art and sport.
- The school buildings and grounds are attractive and well looked after and provide a nice place for you to be.
- There is an interesting range of things for you to do outside lessons that helps you learn more.
- The staff look after you well and help to make sure things run smoothly and safely for you.
- The teachers and support staff work well together and give you extra help when you need it.

Yours is a good school. To help things to improve further we have asked that:

- teachers make sure they use all the information they have to help improve your work, especially in writing
- staff check what happens in school a little more carefully so that they know what else needs to be improved.

To help your school become even better, please try to improve your handwriting, remember to always behave well and encourage your parents to help you make healthy choices in packed lunches.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector