

# Elton Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	111225
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325318
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Angela Westington

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alex Jones
Headteacher	Mrs S Moorcroft
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	School Lane Elton Chester CH2 4LT
Telephone number	01244 981170
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 12 lessons including some extended observations, four registration periods, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of pupils' books and the school's system for tracking pupils' progress. They examined the files of two vulnerable pupils, to see how well the school works in partnership with other agencies, and a wide range of the school's documentation, including: the governing body minutes; the headteacher's reports to the governing body; reports by the local authority and other external observers; policy documents for safeguarding and other statutory requirements and documents and plans relating to the school's curriculum and teaching. In addition, inspectors scrutinised 53 parental questionnaires.

The inspection of Elton Before and After School Club and Elton Pre School were carried out at the same time by one of Ofsted's Childcare Inspectors. These are reported on separately and are available on the Ofsted website.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The quality of the leadership and management's monitoring and evaluation to lead to improvements in standards.
- Whether the standards reached, and the progress made, by all groups of pupils are good enough.
- The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1, specifically in reading and in writing.
- To confirm the good and outstanding practice identified by the school.

## Information about the school

Elton Primary School serves the village of Elton from where it draws most of its pupils. Almost all are White British. There are currently 17 traveller children registered with the school. There are also two looked after children and four pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. There are 40 pupils on the special needs register of whom 12 are at school action plus stage and three have statements of special educational need. The school is resourced to provide for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, each of whom also has a statement of special educational need, and who may come from within or outside the school's locality. At the time of this inspection, there were seven pupils in the resourced provision. The pupils are integrated with the main school classes.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced some major staffing changes, notably within the senior management team, with key teachers being promoted to posts elsewhere, and a number of temporary, maternity appointments made, mainly in Key Stage 1.

The school has gained several awards including: the Cheshire and National Healthy Schools status; National and Cheshire Inclusion Quality Mark; Artsmark Silver Award; Sportsmark Award and the Healthy Snacks Gold Award.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

## Main findings

Elton Primary School is a happy and very caring school, which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has many strengths including some outstanding features. Its strengths lie in its commitment to, and inclusion of, pupils needing additional support, minority groups and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for these groups is highly effective and their outcomes are good. The Early Years Foundation Stage is good in all areas of its work and children here make good progress and achieve well. Most pupils reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6 and this represents satisfactory progress from their starting points in Year 1. Their outcomes in other respects are good, and the extent to which they adopt healthy lifestyles and make a positive contribution to their school and community are outstanding.

The school's commitment to supporting the emotional and social needs of pupils is a major strength and contributes to pupils' good behaviour and the highly positive relationships within the school.

The school has effectively tackled some aspects of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Where it has focused its resources and energies it has seen demonstrable improvements, for example, in the system for tracking pupils' progress; in the teaching of mathematics; and in the support given to the pre-school. Pupils are now more knowledgeable about their targets and assessment is improving. However, there are still some shortcomings in the teaching of English, which have led to some pupils not making the progress in reading and writing of which they are capable. The school has already identified these areas of relative underperformance, but not the specific action that is needed to raise pupils' achievement. Senior managers have not observed enough English lessons to judge the quality of the teaching of reading and writing generally and to assess whether all pupils are learning as much as they should be and progressing at a fast enough rate. The school's provision for the teaching of English includes many positive elements, such as a strong focus on drama, speaking and listening and the use of audiovisual resources and information and communication technology (ICT). However, it lacks a suitably coherent structure for teaching reading and core writing skills from the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading across the school by:
  - improving the organisation and structure of the teaching of reading
  - ensuring pupils read more frequently, for longer periods and that they read more challenging and varied texts
  - ensuring that pupils' progress in reading is monitored regularly by qualified teaching staff.
- Raise standards in writing across the school by:
  - developing a whole school approach to the teaching of, and pupils' acquisition of, writing skills: handwriting, punctuation, spelling, presentation and layout, drafting and editing
  - ensuring that marking of pupils' writing includes the correction of errors in skills and does not just focus on the content.
- Improve the monitoring of pupils' learning, for example, through more frequent lesson observations, to ensure that all pupils make good and better progress.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Evidence from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' books shows that the standards reached by pupils, by the end of Year 6, are broadly average. However, they are variable across year groups and subjects. Pupils enter Key Stage 1 well prepared but, although their progress is satisfactory overall, not enough pupils make the progress of which they are capable in aspects of writing and in reading. Most pupils leave Reception able to construct simple sentences with a capital letter and a full stop. They have acquired a wide range of letter sound knowledge to enable them to attempt to write simple words. For too many pupils in Key Stage 1 though, their day-to-day written work does not reflect sufficient progress from the level of skill gained by the end of Reception. Although pupils write more, they do not gain the necessary skills to improve the quality and content of their writing. Handwriting, letter formation, spelling, punctuation and lay out of work are all weak. This is because the teaching of writing does not focus sufficiently on these aspects. As a result errors in pupils' work persist over time and become habituated. In Key Stage 1, pupils gain an appropriate level of letter sound knowledge, have a weekly group reading session with the class teacher and are heard to read once a week by a teaching assistant. Parents provide the bulk of the reading practice through the regular exchange of books. However, there is no systematic record of progress kept for pupils. As a result, although pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, not enough pupils are making the progress of which they are capable and the more able pupils especially are not reading suitably challenging and varied books.

A similar picture exists in Key Stage 2, although in Years 4 and 6, more attention is paid to the improvement of core writing skills. Pupils in Key Stage 2 who have worked their way through the reading book band scheme are no longer monitored in

their reading, or directed to read suitably demanding books. Consequently, their progress is limited.

The picture described is reflected in the results of national tests in both key stages where results are broadly average over time, although fluctuating from year-to-year.

The strongest subjects in Key Stage 2 are science and ICT. As a result of the school's recent focus on mathematics, pupils' work in mathematics, as seen in their books, is improving. They produce a good volume of work, covering the full range of subjects required, at suitably challenging levels for most pupils.

In all other respects, pupils' outcomes are good and in some instances they are outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of how to be physically healthy and are beginning to understand how to maintain a positive emotional outlook. This is the result of the school's commitment to providing a range of activities and support to promote pupils' well-being. Pupils feel safe in school and know there is always someone to turn to should they have any worries. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school, whether as lunchtime PALs or peer counsellors, and to the wider community, through the links with a school in South Africa, and participate in fundraising events, or as members of the school council making decisions about improving aspects of school life. Their attendance is above average, the result of concerted efforts by the school to reduce the number of holidays taken in term time, and their behaviour is also good. Pupils are courteous, friendly, caring towards each other and respectful towards the adults around them.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, Traveller pupils and others in minority groups make at least satisfactory and often good academic progress. They make good progress in other aspects too, such as in their levels of attendance. This reflects the high level of commitment shown by the school to potentially vulnerable groups.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The strongest teaching and learning was observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Elsewhere in the school, the strengths in the teaching included:

- the high levels of pupils' enjoyment in their learning
- the focus on speaking and listening and the use of drama
- the relationships between pupils and teachers
- the range, quality and use of resources, especially the audiovisual resources
- the teachers' good class management skills.

There was much in the teaching observed that was positive. However, there were also some shortcomings which hinder the teaching from being consistently better and which impacts on pupils' progress. Pupils spend too long listening to teachers talking and not enough time working on sufficiently challenging activities.

The curriculum is satisfactory: all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. A particular strength is the way in which the programme to develop pupils' social and emotional aspects to learning is well embedded and permeates all areas of the school's work. Pupils respond positively to this programme and have a good understanding of how it helps them develop their personal qualities.

The school provides good levels of care, guidance and support for its pupils, especially for vulnerable groups. Its targeted support for individuals with specific additional needs has led to improvement in academic results and other aspects, such as attendance and punctuality.

### *These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's vision for Elton Primary School to be an embracing, inclusive community shines out, and that vision is realised. All pupils demonstrate they have learned about difference and toleration. All pupils are valued and cared for. This aspect of the school's work is strong: it is well communicated and is so well organised that it is embedded in all aspects of the school's work. As a result the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well and it promotes community cohesion well too. The school has a good strategy for engaging with various community groups and the impact is evident in pupils' outcomes.

In contrast, some other aspects of its work are less well defined and less well organised, such as the structure for teaching reading across the whole school. The headteacher and senior managers have identified where standards are not as high as they should be and have begun to take action. For example, in the case of



mathematics, they have put in place a new teaching programme which is bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching and is beginning to raise standards. Governors are highly committed, are very knowledgeable about the school's policies and procedures and support it well. However, their knowledge of the school's academic work is less secure. The lack of a curriculum committee to scrutinise the standards pupils reach and the progress they make is a weakness.

The school's safeguarding systems are robust. The school integrates issues about safety into its curriculum so that pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school works well with other agencies to protect potentially vulnerable pupils.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

## Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start in the Reception class their skills are overall typically in line with those expected for four-year-olds but slightly below in writing and calculation. Good teaching ensures children make good progress so that by the end of the year the majority reach the learning goals set for them and some exceed these. Relationships between adults and children are very good and help to make the children settle, feel secure and gain confidence. The welcoming and stimulating environment provides varied and imaginative activities that meet children's needs very well. Children achieve well because staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn. The well organised approach to developing children's early reading and writing skills prepares children well for the next stage of their development in Year 1. Children enjoy the range of interesting opportunities to read, write and work with numbers and develop a good range of basic skills. Skilful questioning during the teacher-selected activities successfully challenges children to think and talk. Children develop good levels of concentration and independence. Their behaviour is good but there are times when some children find it difficult to share resources and take turns. This can happen when children select their own activities and the adult does not intervene at the right time to sustain their interest and help them get the most out of their learning. Frequent observations of children's progress are made and used effectively to plan the next steps in learning for groups and individuals. Staff make the most of children's own interests when planning new topics and activities. The records of children's work indicate clearly how well they are progressing and achieving. Staff pay close attention to all aspects of children's welfare and safety. Teamwork is

strong and in the absence of the Early Years Foundation Stage manager the teacher and teaching assistant are leading children's learning and development well. Staff have developed productive links with parents and they are seeking ways to develop these further.

Relationships with the pre-school provider are positive and productive. Staff from the school's Foundation Stage 2 work well with colleagues in the pre-school setting to ensure that the youngest children are made to feel welcome and secure in the main school. As a result the arrangements for the formal move into the Reception class are good. Increasingly, the links between the two settings have involved work on curriculum development for the pre-school and the professional development of staff. These strong links contribute to the good outcomes achieved by the children at the end of Foundation Stage 2.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Of the 53 questionnaires returned, six had written comments that were positive and 15 that raised issues of concern. The positive comments were about how much their child enjoyed school and how grateful parents were for specific support given to their child. The areas of concern were, broadly:

- the progress the children were making
- communication from the school to parents about their children's progress
- the behaviour displayed by some pupils and the school's response to this.

A small number of parents felt that standards were declining.

Inspectors agree, to some extent, with some aspects of the concerns raised by parents. The inspection has revealed that although pupils gain good levels of skills and knowledge in some aspects of their work, they could reach higher standards and make better progress in aspects of reading and writing. Inspectors investigated the concern about communication and found that the school provides similar levels of information about pupils' progress as other schools. During this inspection, pupils' behaviour was good.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elton Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 53 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 171 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	15	4	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



26 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Elton Primary School, Chester, CH2 4LT

As you know, Mrs McIntosh and I visited your school recently. Thank you ever so much for being so friendly and helpful to us, for showing us your work, taking us round the school and chatting with us and telling us what you like to do. We could see that you are really happy at Elton Primary and are really proud of it.

We think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education overall but that some aspects of your development are good and some are even outstanding!

These are some of the things we most liked about your school.

- The adults all work very hard to look after you, care for you and keep you safe.
- Your knowledge about how to be healthy, keep well and be happy is outstanding.
- You work extremely hard together for your school and for the community you live in.
- You are learning to work well with children who may be different to you.
- Your attendance at school is good. Well done! Keep it up! And try to persuade your families not to take you out of school to go on holiday! ☺
- Your work in mathematics is getting better.
- Your science is pretty good. Well done.

We have asked Mrs Moorcroft and the teachers and adults in the school to look again at the way they organise the teaching of reading and writing because we think that more of you could become better readers and writers sooner. You may see some changes in your lessons, and the teachers visiting your rooms to see how you are getting on. We are sure you will help by listening carefully to your teachers and working hard.

Good luck. It was a pleasure to meet you all. You were delightful.

Angela Westington  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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