

Elmwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115240
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326159
Inspection date	7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	307
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	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Phelps
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Guys Farm Road South Woodham Ferrers Chelmsford Essex CM3 5NB
Telephone number	01245321301
Fax number	01245322498

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

- How well the school was improving pupils' performance in mathematics.
- How well the school was improving provision and pupils' performance in writing.
- The extent that teachers use assessment effectively to match tasks to pupils' needs.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Elmwood Primary is a larger than average primary school. Most of the pupils come from a White British background. Pupil numbers have steadily fallen since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. These difficulties lie mainly in the areas of speech, language, communication and behaviour. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for children in Reception. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007 and the deputy headteacher in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Soon after the last inspection, the school went through a difficult period. The headteacher left and there were numerous staff changes. This unsettled time hindered the school's development and some pupils' progress. With secure leadership by the current headteacher and deputy headteacher and a more settled staff, the school is improving. The overall effectiveness of Elmwood is satisfactory. There are good aspects to its work. Across the school, pupils' personal development and well-being are good because of effective pastoral care and a positive school atmosphere. Achievement is satisfactory although pupils tend to make slightly better progress in Years 3 to 6 where the teaching is stronger.

Most parents hold positive views about the school and the majority are pleased with both the care and education provided. However, a significant minority are concerned about mixed-age class arrangements and pupils' behaviour. Relationships in the mixed aged lessons are good and the teaching is at least satisfactory. Across the school, most pupils are well behaved. The few with challenging behaviour are well managed and supported by staff. The school makes good, extended provision through clubs held before and after school.

The headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff. She has formed a good working partnership with the deputy. There are effective systems for reviewing the school's performance and positive action is being taken to bring about improvements. Assessment, teaching and pupils' progress are currently inconsistent across the school. The headteacher, deputy and staff are aware that there is more to do in these areas. Good use is made of local authority support in the school's drive for improvement. A number of leaders are new to their post and their roles are developing satisfactorily. Governors are supportive and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are protected and safeguarded at school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In assembly, they reflect thoughtfully on values such as honesty. Pupils are courteous, friendly and considerate to others. They really enjoy school and this is shown by their keen participation in activities. Attendance is satisfactory. Clear expectations by staff and good relationships lead to positive behaviour. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping safe. The school satisfactorily promotes community cohesion. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example by raising funds for well-known charities. The choir performs in the local community. Pupils thrive on the responsibilities given. Those on the school council take their responsibilities seriously and represent their fellow pupils well. At Elmwood, pupils are adequately prepared for the future. They have sound literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Their personal and social skills are well developed.

Standards by the end of Year 2 are average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Year 1 and 2. The national tests for Year 6 in 2007 indicate that standards were above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Most pupils make satisfactory, but uneven progress through Years 3 to 6 because of inconsistencies in the teaching. Indications are that the provisional test results for 2008 are not as high as the previous year. However, the school has taken effective action to improve pupils' performance in mathematics. Many pupils have made good progress in mathematics from their Year 2 starting points. The

school is extending the range of activities designed to raise achievement in writing. Steps to improve writing have not had the impact seen in mathematics so far.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching but there are inconsistencies in practice. The monitoring and development of teaching by senior staff, working with the local authority, are having a positive impact. Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. There are numerous examples of good teaching in Years 3 to 6. In these lessons, interesting and varied activities are provided. Pupils are challenged effectively because work is well matched to pupils' needs. The lesson maintains a brisk pace and pupils make good gains in their learning. However, this good practice is not consistent in all lessons. At times, pupils are not challenged enough and the pace of learning declines. Teaching assistants are well directed and contribute positively to pupils' learning, particularly those who need additional help with literacy, numeracy or their behaviour. In some lessons, pupils have clear individual learning targets in literacy and numeracy so they know what to do to improve. However, good practice in assessment and target-setting is not consistent across the school. As a result, not all pupils know what they have to do to improve.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development and enables them to make satisfactory progress. The school is strengthening links between subjects, which add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. For example, in Years 5 and 6, art, ICT, writing and history are all effectively incorporated into the Victorian topic. Pupils have good opportunities to learn musical instruments such as the guitar and drums. Clubs, outings and visitors enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment. Popular clubs include chess, choir, cricket, cross-country running, football and 'eco schools'. Successful residential trips to Norfolk for Year 5 and to the Isle of Wight for Year 6 provide exciting outdoor activities which build pupils' problem-solving, team and personal skills. Health and safety are promoted well throughout the curriculum.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Most pupils enter the Reception class with the knowledge and skills expected for their age. They settle quickly into routines and enjoy their learning. Children respond well to adults and good relationships are established. Welfare provision is good and children make good progress in their personal and social development. Leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory, as is teaching. There is a good emphasis on promoting language and numeracy skills. At times, learning activities are too teacher-led and children do not have sufficient scope to explore and work independently. Opportunities to work creatively and to develop a knowledge and understanding of the world are limited. The school is aware that the range of outdoor learning activities is insufficient and has clear plans to tackle this issue. Children make satisfactory progress overall. By the end of Reception, standards are broadly in line with those expected, except in knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of pupils' progress by ensuring that all lessons have sufficient challenge and pace, and that the existing good practice is more widespread.
- Use assessment and individual target-setting more effectively to improve progress.
- Improve provision and progress in the EYFS by providing more opportunities for children to develop creative skills, learn independently, and acquire a wider knowledge and understanding of the world.

A small proportion of the 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.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	2
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?	3
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

8 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmwood Primary School, Chelmsford, CM3 5NB

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we have found. Yours is a satisfactory school and it has good features.

These are the main strengths of the school:

- You really enjoy school.
- Many of you are making good progress in Years 3 to 6.
- The school is a friendly and pleasant place to be.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- Your headteacher and deputy lead the school well.
- The teachers and other grown-ups take good care of you.
- The school offers a good range of additional activities, such as trips and clubs.

There are three things that your teachers could work on to make it even better:

- Some of you could make more progress with some extra challenge and a quicker pace in lessons.
- Teachers could make more use of learning targets in literacy and numeracy.
- Children in Reception should have more chances to be creative, to be independent and to learn about the world.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector