

Ely St Mary's Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110842
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337587
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2009
Reporting inspector	John Mason

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Shiers
Headteacher	James Hickish
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents, representatives of the Church and an external advisor. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work in books, reports from advisors working with the school, the school's development plans, tracking data showing pupils' progress, policy documents, governing body minutes and 96 responses to the questionnaires sent to parents.

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

- the extent to which pupils' learning and progress and the quality of teaching are good
- the capacity of leaders and managers to drive and sustain improvement
- the extent to which the curriculum and personal development are strengths of the school.

Information about the school

Ely St Mary is a larger than average junior school. Pupils come mainly from the northern half of the City of Ely. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Many of these pupils are from Eastern Europe and are at an early stage in learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties, including the number with statements of need, is above average. As a result of a local restructuring of primary education, the school currently has a substantial shortfall of pupils on roll. Future plans are that the school will take four forms each year instead of the present three, over the next three years, and numbers will increase considerably. The school holds an Eco Award and Healthy Schools' accreditation.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Ely St Mary's is a good school with a very strong sense of community. Pupils, parents and staff praise its caring ethos and the wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop interests and take responsibility. In a courteous, respectful and collaborative environment pupils greatly enjoy their learning.

Although results in national tests in recent years have been broadly average, standards in English and mathematics are now on the rise and pupils in most classes are making good progress. In 2009, results in mathematics were above average and the current Year 6 are on course to sustain this good achievement. Pupils' performance in English dropped in 2009, but standards in Year 6 are rising and are above average for their stage in schooling. Writing, a weakness identified by the school, is demonstrably improving. This improvement has been gained through the successful adoption of an approach that helps pupils reflect effectively on the content and accuracy of their work; this includes very thorough feedback from teachers on how to improve. The school has been relatively less successful with science, where attainment is still broadly average. Pupils in Year 3 settle into the routines of school well, but their progress is not as rapid as pupils in later year groups. The reason for this discrepancy is that the school does not focus rigorously enough on assessing and tracking pupils from an early enough stage. Improved liaison with feeder schools is now beginning to address this issue.

The school is a hive of activity from early morning, through lunch breaks and well into the evening. The range of clubs is exceptionally wide and provides a wealth of opportunities to support pupils' personal development, as well as contributing to the good curriculum. Pupils at all ages willingly adopt roles of responsibility, following the strong Christian principles of active citizenship held by staff. Charity work, ecology projects, musical performances and the school's 'Beavers' all reach out to the local community and are highly valued. The good pastoral care and support promote a very strong ethos of respect and ensure pupils feel very safe at school. Pupils respond well to the school's initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles and this is reflected particularly well in their keenness to participate in sports and other forms of exercise. In most lessons behaviour is very good but, occasionally, at breaks some pupils are insensitive to others. Knowledge and skills are communicated well through effective teaching, lively and engaging activities and good class management. Good use of home-school diaries helps parents and carers to support learning. However, in mathematics and science the quality of marking is inconsistent, and work is not always kept together in one place, limiting opportunities for pupils to reflect on their earlier learning. Long gaps between science topics exacerbate this shortcoming. In general, assessment information and individual targets are not shared with pupils fully enough to enable them build a clear picture of

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what they need to do next to improve, although materials planned to get pupils to discuss learning in their classroom groupings are very effective.

Despite pupils' good overall academic and personal outcomes, the school's capacity to improve is no greater than satisfactory at present. Recent restructuring of the senior and middle management teams to facilitate changes to the school's size is motivating the enthusiastic staff well to develop provision further, but some improvements are not yet fully embedded. Some key middle leaders are new to their roles of driving improvement and plans have yet to be realised, for example in science. The monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but there is limited use of observation to identify best practice and areas for improvement. In spite of the temporary decrease in the number of pupils, the school is managing its unusual financial position well. However, it leaves the school with a limited budget for curricular developments, a shortage of teaching assistants and constraints in providing professional development courses for staff, although some have been undertaken to improve English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor more effectively the quality of teaching and learning to focus on raising standards in all core subjects, especially science, in particular by:
 - more regularly reinforcing skills pupils learn
 - improving the ways pupils record their work
 - providing high quality feedback about pupils' written work so that it matches the quality emerging in literacy.
- Use assessment data more rigorously and consistently to:
 - track carefully pupils' progress in Year 3 and identify strategies at a very early stage to improve the pace of learning in this year
 - develop a more personalised approach to supporting all pupils in their learning so that pupils have a better understanding of individual targets and the steps they need to take to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' attainment remains broadly average as a whole, but good progress is lifting current standards in both English and mathematics. Pupils develop good skills in English. They articulate themselves particularly well. Reading and writing are improving strongly. Pupils' keen interest and success in problem solving is a strength, such that the above average standards reached in mathematics in 2009 are being maintained. As pupils entered Year 3 with average attainment, these current standards at Year 6 illustrate pupils' good overall progress. Progress is relatively slower, however, in science, where standards remain broadly average. Data from recent years suggests that girls do not perform as well as boys, but inspectors found that this disparity is no longer significant. The small group of pupils of Eastern European heritage make particularly good progress and engage well in the life of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or

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disabilities also make good progress from a range of different starting points. The school aims to offer an engaging, wide ranging education and, as a result, pupils are enthusiastic and interested in learning in all subjects, as illustrated by their total commitment to a music class learning to play steel pans.

Pupils also greatly enjoy their education because they make substantial gains in their personal development. Through involvement in stimulating field trips, residential stays and activities weeks they bond well and learn to collaborate well with one another. Their social and moral awareness is heightened by the good range of visitors who address assembly, such as the local community policing team. Pupils in most classes take some form of responsibility around the school, be it through the school council, as 'Eco Warriors', or helping in the library. Spiritual awareness is very well promoted in assembly. Children are encouraged to share their individual prayers which are often very moving. As a result, they understand very well the reasons for engaging in active charitable work for a number of causes. Through music and the arts in particular, they develop a varied range of cultural insights. There is considerable support for community initiatives, such as entertaining elderly residents, the local play leadership scheme and involvement in Church and civic events. Attendance is average. Given their well developed social proficiency and aptitude in using new technologies, pupils develop good skills for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching is engaging and teachers make good use of all resources, including computers, to help pupils learn and progress well. In most lessons teacher's questioning extends and consolidates pupils' learning very well. Carefully directed tasks for small groups help pupils to engage enthusiastically in the skills of learning. They resolve problems and share ideas with one another very effectively. In most cases the management of pupils' behaviour is very good, but in a few lessons teachers do not vary activities enough to keep the full concentration of all pupils. Relationships in class are very strong and supportive. Teaching assistants know the needs of the pupils and they support them well.

The effectiveness of marking varies. It is strongest in writing. In addition, pupils' work in mathematics is not always recorded in the same place, thus constraining pupils' ability to refer back to previous learning. Although teachers track pupils' work carefully and plan to meet their different abilities well, many pupils are unsure of the levels at which they are working and, as a result, do not sufficiently strive on their own initiative to reach their targets. The practice of tracking pupils' progress varies between different classes, an aspect which the school is in the process of refining.

The broad and balanced curriculum is comprehensively enriched by the 'Extended School Academy' and the regular off-site trips, focus weeks and visitors to the school. Good cross-curricular links are being developed in mathematics and information and communication technology. All subjects, including French, are well promoted and the school is poised to tackle science. Gifted and talented pupils particularly benefit from the depth of learning opportunities offered.

Good care, guidance and support are underpinned by the caring Christian ethos of the school. Vulnerable pupils, and parents who have difficulty engaging with school, receive strong support, especially through the services of a home-school worker and counsellor. Good links with external agencies successfully support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language. Particularly good systems are in place to smooth the transition of these pupils to secondary education. The school successfully manages transfers of pupils from other schools. Effective procedures to monitor attendance mean that absence is promptly followed up. Good social links with the neighbouring infant school enable pupils to settle in at St Mary's well, but academic liaison, with local infant schools, is not yet robust enough to get all pupils off to a flying start in Year 3.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching

Taking into account:

The use of assessment to support learning

2

3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The cohesive and committed staff take a keen role in the development of the school, driven by the headteacher and his senior team. Planning is robust and carefully prepared to meet the local changes and shifting numbers of pupils attending the school. There are innovative plans to see the school through its expansion. All stakeholders, including pupils and parents have contributed. While managing the change, the monitoring of provision of teaching and learning has lacked rigour, resulting in some inconsistencies in teaching and learning. A new, able and enthusiastic 'School Improvement Team' of subject and year leaders has been formed to develop greater accountability in addressing identified areas for improvement. However, some members of this team are new to their roles and have not yet been able to implement their plans to further improve practice and provision.

Governors are providing impressive support in managing change and setting the future direction of the school. However, they have not been critical enough in challenging the school to address areas of relative weakness, such as pupils' progress in Year 3 and in science. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good, and particularly strong within the local community. Its plans to widen the scope of initiatives for national and global citizenship are advancing well. Parents are closely involved in the life of the school and their children's educations. Equal opportunities and inclusive practices are well promoted. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Views of parents and carers

Parents' views of the school and its provision are very positive. Parents particularly appreciate the wide range of opportunities available through the 'Extended School Academy' clubs and the annual trips. The vast majority believe that teaching is good and their children are making good progress. A few have concerns that individual needs could be dealt with more promptly and some comment on inappropriate behaviour of a few pupils at break times. Inspection evidence found some evidence to support this view, but also found behaviour as a whole to be good. Some parents feel safety could be improved at better break times. The school is already taking action to address the specific concerns they raised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ely St Mary's Church of England Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 96 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 309 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	52	42	44	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	51	41	43	4	4	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	41	52	54	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	40	48	50	8	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	46	49	51	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	39	52	54	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	32	61	64	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	29	57	59	9	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	30	57	59	9	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	30	54	56	10	10	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	27	60	63	6	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	45	50	52	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	49	44	46	4	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 November 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Ely St Mary's Church of England Junior School, Ely CB7 4RB

Thank you for being so friendly, helpful and welcoming when the three inspectors recently visited school. We enjoyed talking to you and observing you at work and at play. Please also thank your parents for kindly completing the questionnaires.

We found Ely St Mary's to be a good school where you enjoy your learning. We were particularly impressed by the way you get on so well and openly as a community. Most of you find great pleasure in helping one another. For example when pupils have a prayer or a wish you listen carefully or rally round with support. When you work around the table in class you do this cooperatively so that you all learn. You enjoy taking responsible roles around the school, like being a 'play pal', or off-site by visiting the infants or making music at events in church or in the city. You show respect and regard for others, you feel safe at school and keep yourselves healthy. Your behaviour is good. Often it is excellent, but occasionally a few of you lapse into inappropriate behaviour in the playground.

We agree with you that you are well taught and that teachers take good care of you. You are progressing well and this is now starting to improve your standards in English and mathematics. Results in mathematics leapt up in 2009 and Year 6 is up to the challenge of maintaining these standards. Year 6 are doing well in their English now. The school's new writing scheme is making a big difference because you get good feedback on how to improve and plenty of opportunity to reflect on the content and accuracy of your writing.

To help you all learn better still, we have asked teachers to do the following things:

- improve the rate at which you make progress in all subjects, in particular in Year 3 and in science
- mark your work so that you know better how to improve
- help you record the work you do in mathematics and science better, so that you can use your books for reference when you need to
- make sure you all know at what level you are working and that you understand what you have to do to raise your levels using your own initiative more.

Perhaps, if you discuss these points with a friend you will come up with some good ways

to help you and others to make even better progress

Wishing you every success in the future,

Yours sincerely

John Mason

Lead Inspector

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