

Ellesmere Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123365
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340322
Inspection dates	16 and 17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Jill Arnold

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leslie Aspey
Headteacher	Richard Pallett
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
School address	Elson Road Ellesmere Shropshire SY12 9EU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work in their books and on display. They looked at a range of the school's documentation including that relating to pupils' progress, safeguarding, teaching, governance and finance. Responses to questionnaires received from 105 pupils, 36 staff and parents of 92 pupils were also taken into account.

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

- the attainment of pupils in mathematics, particularly that of girls
- the impact of leadership on improving the quality of teaching and learning
- how effectively assessment is used to promote learning, including marking, feedback and individual targets for pupils.

Information about the school

Ellesmere Primary is larger than average. There are nine classes and 65 children in the nursery unit. Another 34 children are due to join the nursery in the spring term. The school premises are used by the community for adult learning and there is a children's centre and privately run playgroup on the same site. The school provides care for children outside school hours in the form of breakfast and after-school clubs. Although pupils come from a range of cultural backgrounds, 80% are White British. Approximately 2% of pupils speak English as an additional language. There are 14% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is lower than the national average. The school has achieved the Healthy School Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) Award for Gifted and Talented Pupils, and accreditation for Effective Early Learning and Financial Management Standards in Schools (FMSiS).

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

2

Main findings

Ellesmere Primary is a good school where pupils are happy, well-behaved and make good progress, often from below average starting points when they join in the nursery. Standards in English and mathematics are in line with national averages and in science they are above average. Teamwork is strong and relationships with pupils and parents are very positive. The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy and assistant head, provides a clear vision for the school and is committed to ensuring the best possible care and education for its pupils. Self-evaluation is rigorous and takes account of the views of pupils and parents. The leadership team has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness, and has been successful in making improvements, such as the organisation of mathematics teaching for older pupils and the reading programme in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's strong leadership and positive track record are clear indicators of its good capacity for continuing improvement.

The school operates very smoothly and ensures that pupils are well-cared for. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The governing body is supportive and knowledgeable about the school's work and undertakes its role as a 'critical friend' to the school seriously. However, it is insufficiently involved in evaluating the work of school and helping to determine its direction.

Good teaching and a varied curriculum help pupils to enjoy school. Very good use is made of the spacious accommodation and grounds to provide a stimulating and well-organised learning environment. Teaching engages pupils well, motivating them to take an active part in lessons and do their best. Whilst teaching is already good, there are elements which the school is keen to make even better to lift attainment in English and mathematics to above average. Approaches to planning, marking and setting targets for individual pupils are under review to improve the extent to which these help pupils to improve their work. Planning is very effective in the nursery, where assessment is routinely used to inform daily planning of activities which build step-by-step on children's learning. Elsewhere in the school it is, at times, a little too prescriptive, and does not always provide sufficient flexibility for teachers to respond to pupils' immediate needs, particularly the higher attaining pupils. The excellent approach to marking in a very precise way should be extended across the school to ensure that all pupils are provided with very clear guidance, and time, to improve their work.

The wide range of other activities to support and enrich pupils' academic progress

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and personal development enables them to make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community. Pupils are keen to express their views and take on responsibility, and proud to be ambassadors for their school. The school's promotion of community cohesion with respect to the wider and global communities, though satisfactory, is less developed and not formally evaluated.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment at the end of Y6 in English and mathematics to above average by:
 - further developing the quality of teaching in all year groups to plan and deliver lessons which meet the full range of pupils' abilities
 - refining the use of assessment information to set clear, constructive targets for individual pupils
 - providing time for pupils to act on guidance, improve their work and achieve these targets.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body from satisfactory to good by:
 - ensuring that it becomes more proactive in the school's self-evaluation processes
 - extending good practice across all areas of its work.
- Improve the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion from satisfactory to good by:
 - taking action to promote community cohesion in a wider context beyond the school
 - evaluating the impact of its actions.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Since 2005, the school's Year 6 National Curriculum test results have been above or close to national averages. Science results have been consistently above average, significantly so from 2005 to 2007. In 2008, the school was concerned that mathematics results had dipped and girls had not performed well at the higher Level 5. The school took action to address this and in 2009, mathematics results improved. Results in mathematics and English were similar to the national picture, and girls did as well as boys overall. The school's most recent assessments of pupils' progress indicate that they are on track to achieve their targets in the current year. During the inspection, pupils made good progress in lessons by extending and consolidating their learning well.

Pupils achieve well because they are keen to learn, apply themselves productively in lessons and try hard to do their best. They acquire positive attitudes to school in the

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nursery and enjoy the wide-ranging opportunities provided as they progress through the school. Most pupils behave well, show respect and are proud of their achievements. The school works effectively to improve the behaviour of a small minority of pupils who have difficulties.

Pupils' good personal, social and emotional skills, positive attitudes and good attendance make a strong contribution to their preparation for their future lives. Their involvement in charitable work and community events, and their willingness to express their views and take on responsibility in school are outstanding. This includes the excellent work of the school council which is an effective mechanism for pupils to contribute to decisions in school which affect them, such as the project to improve playground resources. The 'very important pupils' (VIPs), librarians, playground buddies, 'IT tekkies' and school councillors all play a significant part.

The school's assessment of pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties shows that the majority make good progress in relation to their respective starting points and capabilities. Gifted and talented pupils enjoy opportunities to take on additional challenges such as their recent presentation to the town council on the topic of 'a greener, safer school.' Pupils at the early stages of learning to speak English quickly gain confidence and make progress with effective support.

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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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Lessons are planned thoroughly with pupils' interests and varying abilities in mind and are conducted in a lively, interactive way which results in good progress by pupils. Some lessons cater very successfully for higher attaining pupils, but there is scope for greater consistency across the school. Year 5 and 6 pupils are positive about their literacy and numeracy groups, where teaching is aligned closely to their abilities and provides appropriate challenge. Pupils requiring additional support make good progress in small groups with lessons targeted at improving specific areas of their learning.

Teachers generally provide pupils with helpful feedback and guidance, using short tasks and questions to assess pupils' understanding during lessons. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, writing encouraging and often helpful comments or 'a star and a wish' to identify what pupils have achieved and what they need to improve. The quality of marking is excellent in some year groups, providing specific guidance that is easy for pupils to understand and act on. However, it is variable across the school and pupils are not always given enough time to improve their work. Teachers take time to set appropriate targets for individual pupils in literacy and numeracy. These provide useful reminders about what to aim for, but are not updated often enough to be a real catalyst for speeding up pupils' progress further.

The school provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities which make a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development and their enjoyment of school. Learning in many aspects of the curriculum is enhanced by first hand-experience gained through visits to places in the immediate locality and beyond, and by visitors to school.

The school gives high priority to the safety and welfare of all pupils and has rigorous procedures to assess and mitigate risk. The site and accommodation are very secure and well maintained. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is carefully planned and managed, including liaison with multi-agency teams and parents. The provision of teaching assistants and a learning mentor makes a significant contribution to improving individual pupils' learning and personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher, deputy and assistant head are a committed leadership group

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whose enthusiasm generates ambition in the staff and motivates the pupils. Staff are clear about the part they play in the school and teamwork is strong. There are effective systems for school self-evaluation and improvement planning, including consultation with pupils and parents that contribute towards pupils' good progress. For example, the progress of all pupils is tracked rigorously and action taken to accelerate the progress of targeted individuals and groups is mostly successful. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' work contributes to improvement, by informing the planning for ability groups in literacy and numeracy for example.

Governors are generous in their support and oversee sound safeguarding procedures. They ask questions and request information, but are not influential enough in determining the school's strategic direction. The school actively promotes community cohesion within its school community and is reaching out into the local community. It has not yet formally evaluated the contribution that it makes locally or taken action to promote community cohesion in a wider context.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Sharply focused leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage drive the good progress children make, often from starting points that are below the expectations for their age. By the end of the end of their reception year, the majority of the children are well on the way to achieving the expectations for their age. The key worker system promotes well the positive relationships that underpin learning and enable children to feel safe. Teamwork is strong and ensures a consistent yet flexible approach which accommodates children's individual needs. Staff make

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effective use of assessment information to plan activities that are sharply focused on children’s next steps, in all areas of their learning. Just occasionally, the expectations for more capable children should be higher. Staff are skilled at encouraging children to be curious and confident to try new things. High quality resources and a well-planned, stimulating environment, help children to thoroughly enjoy school. Outdoor resources are excellent, but the way activities are planned sometimes limits the opportunity for children to access the outdoors freely. Parents appreciate the care and attention staff provide for children, helping them to settle quickly when they start in the nursery unit and transfer smoothly into school for their reception year.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents’ responses to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive and many comment on how much their children enjoy school. The following comment summarises the many views expressed in the questionnaires: ‘Both of our children thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are clearly happy. The school is always striving to provide the best opportunities for pupils and genuinely works in partnership with parents, with their views being actively sought and valued. Overall we feel that the school is a happy, safe and interesting environment which is enabling our children to make good progress.’ Several expressed appreciation for the approachability and care of staff and the range of activities provided. A few feel the range of opportunities for physical education and sport should be better to help their children to lead a more healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ellesmere Primary 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 324 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	77%	19	21%	1	1%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	71	77%	21	23%	0	0%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child’s progress	49	53%	38	41%	2	2%	0	0%
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	53%	37	40%	2	2%	0	0%
The teaching is good at this school	57	62%	31	34%	0	0%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	54	59%	34	37%	2	2%	0	0%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	53%	34	37%	5	5%	1	1%
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)	54	59%	30	33%	1	1%	0	0%
The school meets my child’s particular needs	53	58%	32	35%	3	3%	0	0%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	47%	40	43%	1	1%	2	2%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	45%	39	42%	3	3%	0	0%
The school is led and managed effectively	61	66%	27	29%	2	2%	0	0%
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	66	72%	22	24%	1	1%	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 all 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

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 pupils' 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.



18 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ellesmere Primary School, Ellesmere, Shropshire SY12 9EU

Thank you for your warm welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit, especially visiting your classes and listening to your views. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

We agree with you, your parents, the staff and governors that yours is a good school. Almost from the moment we arrived we could tell that your school is a well organised and happy place, where the staff look after you well and put your interests first. The teachers provide interesting and well planned lessons which enable you to enjoy your learning and make good progress. We were impressed with your positive attitudes and your responsible behaviour. Your activities in and out of school and the work of the school council make your contribution to the community outstanding. Well done!

You are right to be proud of your school. It provides you with a good education that enables you to acquire the literacy and numeracy skills expected for your age and to be well-prepared for secondary school when the time comes. During the inspection we had some good discussions with your headteacher, the deputy head and assistant head about what makes your school good and how to make it even better.

- The first thing is to improve your understanding of what it means to be a member of our national and global communities.
- The second thing is to get the governors even more involved in testing out just how good things are in your school.
- The third thing is to help you to learn even better, by making sure that you are absolutely clear about what you need to do to improve your literacy and numeracy work and by giving you time to follow up on the advice teachers give you.

With our very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Jill Arnold, lead inspector

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