

Elworth Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111256
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	325331
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Jane Austin HMI

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr E Lea
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Samples
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	School Lane Elworth Sandbach CW11 3HU
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with the acting headteacher, the chair of governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of the school's documentation, 14 staff questionnaires and 85 parental questionnaires.

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

- pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 and the standards they reach by the end of Year 6
- how well teaching is matched to the learning needs of all pupils and especially those who are more able or experience some barriers to learning
- how well children's entitlement to Early Years Foundation Stage provision is met and the impact of outdoor provision on their learning in this phase.

Information about the school

Elworth Church of England Primary is larger than average and serves an area of above average social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are White British and, of the small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds, two are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low and the number with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of Reception-age children. The school has gained a range of awards including Basic Skills, Artsmark, Activemark, Inclusion Mark, and Investors in People. It holds Dyslexia Friendly status.

The deputy headteacher has led the school as acting headteacher for the last two academic years due to the secondment of the headteacher to another post. She was leading the school at the time of the inspection.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school, with some outstanding features. It lives up to its motto, 'Unlocking potential, celebrating achievement.' From the outset, the school successfully fosters in pupils a love of learning and the dispositions needed to be good learners. Throughout the school, vibrant displays of pupils' work celebrate their achievements and stimulate their thinking. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their exemplary behaviour are key ingredients in their good achievement and the above average standards they reach. Pupils thrive because the care and support provided for them are outstanding. Staff know them very well, so pupils feel safe and are confident that there is someone to turn to should they have a problem. Relationships of mutual respect characterise the school.

Pupils are very proud of their school and take a great deal of responsibility for aspects of school life. For example, they raise funds for their chosen charities; tend the gardens; act as road safety officers, playground buddies and recycling champions. The major project this year, led highly effectively by the school council, is designing and equipping the playground. Working to a very large budget, they have been involved in all stages of the process, which will shortly come to fruition. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of justice and consideration for others. While their cultural development is outstanding in terms of their own culture, it is comparatively weaker with regard to their understanding and experience of Britain's diversity and the wider world. The school is at the early stages of developing its strategy for community cohesion.

All pupils make good progress because teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. The support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well tailored to their needs, so that they make progress in line with their peers. Pupils enjoy their homework, which is set as extended projects, and put a great deal of time and effort into it. Pupils are clear that the homework teachers used to set was dull and boring! The school responded to their views and the benefits are evident in the finished results, which are often highly creative, polished and individual. The school is developing a creative approach to curriculum planning, which is helpful in promoting pupils' progress and their enjoyment. It is successful in capturing boys' interest and providing excellent opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills in a range of contexts. The school has yet to extend this approach fully with older pupils but has plans to do so.

The school is led and managed well. The acting headteacher has tackled a fall in pupils' achievement and standards at Key Stage 2 robustly. Effective procedures to check the quality of the school's work contributed to an accurate analysis of the reasons why not all pupils were performing as well as they could. The implementation of a rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress towards their challenging targets has played a major part in ensuring that all now achieve well. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve. It provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the curriculum by developing a more creative approach to learning for the older pupils.
- Develop a strategy for community cohesion to extend pupils' understanding and experience of the cultural diversity of Britain and the wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and this makes a significant contribution to their good progress. They are articulate, confident learners who collaborate very well in groups and pairs and persist with challenging activities, because they are keen to succeed. They work well independently, because the school establishes good routines to support this from the earliest stage and teachers have consistently high expectations. In lessons, pupils listen well, follow instructions promptly and apply themselves diligently to tasks, so no time is wasted. Attendance is high so little time for learning is lost.

Pupils' achievement is good. From broadly average starting points when they join the school in Reception, pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they begin Year 1 with skills and understanding that are more advanced than those expected for their age group. These above average standards are maintained in Key Stage 1. However, for several years, pupils' rates of progress have been too slow in Key Stage 2. The school has tackled this vigorously, primarily through ensuring that pupils' targets are sufficiently high, teaching is closely matched to the needs of all and appropriate support is put in place promptly for those who are falling behind. The effectiveness of these measures is evident in this year's provisional national test results for Year 6 which are well above average. A significant proportion of this group of pupils reached the level above that expected for their age in all the core subjects. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress has improved across Key Stage 2 and is consistently good.

Pupils talk knowledgably about how to keep healthy and stay safe. Their road safety officers keep them informed about local issues and, during the inspection, older pupils were keen to attend the cycling proficiency session. Pupils can explain how to make healthy food choices and at lunchtimes, in the main, they apply what they know. Many participate in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities provided, including the wide array of sports and music.

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

How effective is the provision?

The very good relationships between teachers and pupils create an excellent climate for learning. Teachers use exciting and imaginative ways of grabbing pupils' interest at the beginning of lessons and then keeping them involved in their learning. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and in some lessons younger pupils create their own simple success criteria. Pupils respond to well-targeted questions with fluent, detailed answers. They talk purposefully with their partners. Teachers make effective use of resources, including interactive whiteboards and pupils enjoy using these themselves. Lessons move at a brisk pace; pupils enjoy the challenge of timed activities. Where learning is less successful, too much time is spent on teacher-led activities and work is not as finely matched to the needs of all pupils. There is some exemplary practice in marking which helps pupils understand what they need to do next to improve and gives them opportunities to assess their own work and that of their classmates. However, this is not embedded fully across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are very well supported by teaching assistants. The individual education plans prepared for them are sharply focused and reviewed regularly.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about the themed days, such as 'A taste of India', that enrich the good curriculum. The school makes effective use of a good range of visits and visitors, such as artists-in-residence, to enhance pupils' experiences and broaden their perspectives. Outstanding extra-curricular opportunities include a wide range of sports and musical activities, such as the school orchestra. Approximately a quarter of the pupils have instrumental lessons.

The school is alert to the performance of various groups of pupils and is effective in promoting equality of opportunity. Barriers to learning are identified early and well-targeted support for pupils put in place. A number of pupils benefit from the school's expertise in addressing speech and language difficulties. The school has identified pupils who are gifted and talented and, with them, has drawn up individual plans to foster their gifts. These plans include taking advantage of opportunities offered

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

outside school, for instance, by some universities. Pupils choose areas they would like to pursue and apply for events and courses themselves, with the school's support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

In her two years at the school's helm, the acting headteacher has steered a determined course for improvement. She has effectively communicated her high expectations to staff and gained their commitment to measures needed to accelerate pupils' progress and drive up standards, particularly at Key Stage 2. Well-staged plans are based on a robust analysis of strengths and areas for development and this year's provisional national test results, which are much improved on the results for several previous years, demonstrate the effectiveness of the steps taken. Levels of accountability have increased, with performance management closely linked to the school's priorities. Staff are rising to the challenge in a shared culture of continuous improvement. Middle leaders provide a clear sense of direction to developments in their curriculum areas, well founded on the cycle of regular checks on the quality of the school's work.

Governors know the school well, are very committed to its success and track its progress against planned developments carefully. They bring a range of relevant expertise to their role, enabling the governing body to provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders regarding the school's performance. Safeguarding procedures are good. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has conducted an audit of its needs as a foundation for developing its strategy and policy in this area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a place where children's excitement about learning is palpable. Staff are highly responsive to children's preferences, so topics capture children's imaginations, because these are rooted in their interests. Themed activities are carefully planned to build children's skills and understanding across all the areas of learning. Frequent, focused assessments ensure that each child's learning journey is carefully tracked and opportunities for them to take their next steps in learning are provided. Learning difficulties are identified early and appropriate support put in place. Consequently, children make good progress. They develop into enthusiastic, persistent and articulate learners who cooperate well with one another. Good routines and high expectations promote children's independence well so that they are confident in choosing activities and concentrate purposefully as they participate in these. There is a good balance both between adult- and child-initiated activities, and indoor and outdoor provision. The outdoor provision is outstanding. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good.

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

Parents' views of the school's provision and care for their children are overwhelmingly positive. A small number of parents added comments to the questionnaires, both positive and critical, which inspectors followed up, but no issues arose from these.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elworth Church of England 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 85 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 377 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	83	21	1	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.

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elworth Church of England Primary School, Sandbach,
CW11 3HU

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you, seeing how much you enjoyed your lessons and hearing about the many other activities you take part in at school. We share your view that Elworth is a good school and we think there are aspects of it that are outstanding.

Some of the best things are:

- your exemplary behaviour and enthusiasm for learning that help you make good progress in lessons and reach above average standards
- the excellent relationships between children and adults throughout the school and the way in which you show consideration for others
- the exciting topics teachers plan that fire your imaginations
- your impressive homework projects
- the carefully planned activities that help children in Reception have fun indoors and especially outdoors as they learn
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities that so many of you enjoy
- the excellent work of the school council in planning your new playground
- the way in which you take responsibility for improving school life, for example, as playground buddies and road safety officers
- the outstanding care and support provided for you by all the staff.

As you know from your own work, there is always something that you can improve. It's the same for a school. We have asked your headteacher and staff to develop the exciting curriculum so that the older pupils benefit from it fully. We have also asked them to plan more opportunities for you to find out about the lives of different ethnic and religious groups in Britain and beyond.

We wish you every success in the future. Keep up the good work!

Jane Austin HMI
on behalf of the inspection team

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