

Elworth CofE Primary School

School Lane, Elworth, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 3HU

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The extended leadership structure of senior and middle leaders is not yet sufficiently strong to support the process of improvement that has been started and led by the acting headteacher and the executive headteacher.
- Checks on achievement and teaching, until recently have not been thorough enough and this has contributed to a slow but continued decline in pupils' attainment and progress in recent years, especially the most able.
- Plans to establish clear systems to check how well teachers are performing throughout the school are not yet in place.
- Leaders do not make enough use of the existing good and outstanding practice in the school to improve teaching when it is less effective.
- The governing body is not yet well enough informed to hold leaders fully to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Most pupils reach above average standards and make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because most teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Teaching is good because teachers make sure pupils are interested and work enthusiastically. Adults expect the most of pupils and teachers make effective use of other adults to support pupils.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils supported by pupil-premium funding achieve well and make good progress.
- The school is friendly and welcoming. Pupils behave well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The executive headteacher has tackled some weaknesses in the systems and processes for checking and evaluating the pupils' progress and this has put the school on a much stronger footing as it seeks to move to being good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes and saw 16 lessons, two of which were joint observations with the executive headteacher and the acting headteacher. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils read and observed teaching assistants working with pupils.
- Discussions were held with pupils in lessons and their work was discussed with them.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, teaching and classroom support staff, pupils, a member of the local authority and an external consultant to the school.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and checked reading progress records, including home-school diaries.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including national assessment data, the school's information about pupils' progress, monitoring records of the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils, and the school improvement plan. In addition, the minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and external reports from the local authority were reviewed.
- Fifty-six responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire were taken into account (Parent View). Members of the inspection team also spoke to parents while they were bringing their children to school and reviewed other responses from parents gathered by the school.

Inspection team

Gillian Hunter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Anthony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil-premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The substantive headteacher left the school at the end of the autumn term 2013 and temporary leadership arrangements have been put into place while governors appoint a suitable replacement.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make outstanding progress by:
 - providing effective training and development opportunities for staff including sharing best practice from within and beyond the school
 - targeting and challenging the most able pupils throughout the school in every lesson and for the whole lesson
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for learning.
- Further strengthen leadership and management by:
 - establishing and developing an extended leadership team who can ensure through careful checking of the quality of teaching that all work set in lessons helps all pupils to learn well, whatever their ability
 - showing clearly in the school improvement plan how actions are expected to improve pupils' progress so that leaders and governors can check more efficiently on how well they are doing
 - establishing thorough systems to check teachers' performance and making sure that teachers' targets are sharply focused on the progress of pupils in their class

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are typically seen in children of the same age. They make good progress in the Reception Year because they enjoy exciting activities that capture their interest. As a result, standards are high by the time they start Year 1.
- Most pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 reaching standards above those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2013 pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was one term ahead of what is nationally expected in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has recognised that, although standards are still above the national there has been a continuing slow decline over time, especially for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics. Actions have been put in place this year to ensure that this decline is halted. The school's tracking information and work in books show that pupils' attainment and progress are good and rapidly improving.
- Consistently good teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2 mean pupils read with confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils achieve very well in reading and reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils are fluent and accurate when they read and use good expression.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to the other pupils in their classes because the school provides well-targeted support.
- The school's efforts to provide equal opportunities for all pupils are generally good. In 2013, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were two terms above similar pupils nationally in reading and writing by the end of Year 6; in mathematics they were a term ahead. The gap in attainment between eligible pupils and those not eligible in the school is narrower than the gap between these groups nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good and some outstanding teaching leads to the good achievement of pupils in lessons and over time. The majority of teachers set work at the correct level for all pupils. Teachers skilfully and rapidly increase the rate of learning when they recognise that pupils have understood the work set.
- Pupils are questioned in a way that prompts them to explain their thinking. As a result, teachers are clear about what pupils know and can do. Teachers plan learning carefully with teaching assistants to improve pupils' understanding. They have a clear understanding of how effectively their teaching is helping pupils to increase their learning.
- Good relationships promote the school's Christian values positively and consistently. Teachers expect the best of pupils and pupils respond exceptionally well to this. Teachers often draw on imaginative ideas to interest pupils in their learning.
- Good subject knowledge and the use of a good range of teaching techniques ensures that pupils learn well. Staff with expertise in mathematics and literacy successfully get the most out of the most able pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6 by setting them suitably challenging work. This is not always the case throughout the school. In some classes, the work is too easy especially for the most able. They are not always given the right level of work from the beginning of lessons, only getting on to the harder work part way through when independent work is set and therefore learning is slowed.
- Little use is made of ICT, other than by the teacher demonstrating to the class. There are few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good because all adults, including skilled teaching assistants, ensure that pupils receive support which is set at

the right level and well matched to their needs.

- The vast majority of parents who responded to questionnaires or met with inspectors are very happy with the quality of teaching experienced by their children and feel that all children are treated as individuals and helped to do well. Inspectors agree with these views while also finding that some aspects of teaching could be improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are friendly, welcoming to visitors and able to talk with immense confidence. They work enthusiastically on their own or in groups because lessons interest them. Most pupils behave in a respectful way to each other and other adults, both in class and around school.
- Good systems and strategies are in place to reward and improve pupils' behaviour. There are few recorded incidents of poor behaviour and there have been no exclusions in the last three years. There are very few recorded incidents of discriminatory or derogatory language and none was heard during the inspection.
- Older pupils have roles of responsibility, such as prefects or school councillors: they take these seriously and carry them out conscientiously.
- Through various subjects of the curriculum, pupils develop a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and show respect and consideration for others. There are many opportunities for pupils to think about and express their feelings and to reflect on their learning and behaviour. This does much to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, which is a strength of the school.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities and clubs provided for them, especially the outdoor activities and visits.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. Pupils attend school regularly and on time.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents agree that their children feel safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- In recent years, areas for improvement identified in the school's improvement plan have not been precise, measurable and challenging enough. As a result, senior leaders and the governing body have not been able to ensure that all aspects of teaching and learning have been improving strongly.
- Plans to establish thorough systems to check teachers' performance are not yet in place. The current systems are weak because the objectives that have been agreed have not been challenging enough to make a difference or to provide well focused training for staff according to their individual needs.
- School improvement plans do not specify clearly the outcomes against which planned actions are to be judged. For example, targets for pupils' achievement are not precise enough so that their success can be measured.
- Since the previous headteacher left the school at the end of the autumn term 2013, the governors have secured temporary leadership arrangements and this will continue until a replacement headteacher has been appointed and is in post. Two attempts to recruit have not been successful as the governing body seek to recruit the best person for the post.
- Over this last term, the temporary leadership arrangements have included the deputy headteacher acting as headteacher for half the week and a headteacher from a local primary school who has acted as executive headteacher to support to the school also for half the week. This is beginning to help school improvement.
- The executive headteacher has supported the acting headteacher to develop his leadership skills

and prepare for leading the school through the summer term. The leadership of the acting headteacher, although still at an early stage, is developing well. He has strong support from staff and parents and has good credibility as an effective teacher. The work of the acting headteacher supported by other leaders demonstrates that the school leadership has the capacity to carry on making improvements. This is because of the recent improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement.

- The executive headteacher has set up a more thorough process for checking pupils' progress. Challenging targets have been set for pupils to reach by the end of this year in reading, writing and mathematics. In the past, the school's checks on assessment data, pupils' work and the quality of teaching have not been strong or consistent enough.
- Middle and senior leaders are working together to create a school where morale is high and pupils learn well. Subject and phase leaders are passionate about their areas of responsibility. However, they have had few opportunities to develop as key leaders in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is well planned, includes a good range of activities which pupils find enjoyable and promotes well their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Effective use of visits, locally and further afield, improves the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world.
- The school takes good care of its pupils. All staff make sure that pupils enjoy their learning and feel safe. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety meet legal requirements.
- School leaders are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and recognise that the most able pupils, and some girls, do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders are now focusing on individual and groups of pupils at risk of underachieving. This is in order to allocate available resources, as well as the pupil-premium funding, as effectively as possible.
- The school has used the new primary sport funding effectively to enhance and improve the participation of pupils in competitive sport. This is well linked to the physical education and Healthy Schools curriculum and is resulting in better physical well-being as well as improving their performance levels in physical education and sport activities.
- The local authority has provided a small amount of support to the staff and governing body of the school since the last inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well including its strengths and weaknesses. They have strong links with classes and senior and middle leaders. Governors continue to be involved in setting the strategic direction of the school but have, until recently, been provided with limited information to enable them to hold leaders to account. They are aware of how the small amount of pupil-premium funding is used and check this closely to ensure that it benefits those who are entitled to it. Governors review the headteacher's performance annually. Although there are systems in place for managing the performance of staff, they are not challenging enough to make improvements to teaching. Governors and senior leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111256
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	439546

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ed Lea
Headteacher	Neil Garrett(Acting) , Mr Rob Whittle(Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
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