

Elworth Hall Primary School

Lawton Way, Elworth, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 1TE

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
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. It is not good because

- In Key Stage 1, standards in writing and mathematics have dropped since the last inspection. Current work shows things are improving but overall, standards are too low given pupils' starting points.
- Although attainment is rising in Key Stage 2 and standards are above average, not enough pupils are making expected progress in English, and the proportion making more than expected progress is too low.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent because in some lessons in Key Stage 1 and in English in Key Stage 2, tasks are not always matched closely to pupils' needs and abilities so as to provide the challenge they need to do their best.
- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not yet sufficiently thorough or accurate enough to drive up improvements in teaching, where needed.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2 are above average and a high proportion of pupils reached the highest levels in 2012 national tests.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school.
- Because behaviour is managed well and relationships are caring and supportive, pupils are ready to learn and have positive attitudes to school.
- Subject and other middle leaders are skilled and are beginning to make a strong contribution to school improvements.
- A recently restructured governing body have members with the skills and determination to make a significant contribution to school improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.
- Inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by seven teachers, including one joint observation with the headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to classrooms, listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work.
- Discussions were held with two groups of pupils, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and members of staff including senior and subject leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and outcomes from the school's consultations with parents and staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including data on pupils' progress, school development plans, records of lesson observations carried out by school leaders, performance management documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

John Dunne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Helm

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Elworth Hall is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school currently has no disabled pupils on roll.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- Provision for a small number of pupils with complex needs and learning difficulties is based within the school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, so that more is at least good, by:
 - making sure that in all lessons, tasks are always challenging enough and that they are matched closely to pupils' needs and abilities
 - ensuring that in all lessons, pupils do not spend too long listening to teachers, so that they have greater opportunities to reinforce their learning by being able to work on their own or in groups
 - checking that the quality of marking is consistently good in all classes, so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve standards for writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 by:
 - making sure that pupils have clear targets for improving their writing and mathematical skills and understand fully what they need to do to reach them
 - ensuring that the detailed information the school has about pupils' progress, is used more effectively to identify and deal with underachievement.
- In Key Stage 2, increase significantly the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in English by:
 - making sure that the work for average and higher-ability pupils pushes them harder, so they can all make expected levels of progress and many can do better than this
 - making sure pupils have targets which they understand and which give them information on how to improve their work to a higher level.
- Increase the effectiveness of senior leaders in removing the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that the checks they make on the quality of teaching are more thorough and more sharply focused on pupils' progress
 - ensuring all teachers receive more detailed guidance as to how their teaching can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally in line with those normally expected. Good teaching and a rich range of activities enables them to make good progress.
- By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the good quality teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) provides children with a solid foundation for developing their reading skills. Since the last inspection in 2010, this good progress has been maintained in Key Stage 1, where standards in reading have remained above average.
- This is not the case for writing and mathematics where, during the same period, standards have declined and were below nationally expected levels in the 2012 Key Stage 1 tests. Work in pupils' books for this term shows things are improving, but in lessons, where work is not well matched to pupils' level of understanding, progress slows.
- In Key Stage 2, standards and pupils' progress in all areas has fluctuated over the past two years. In 2011, attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 was too low, given pupils' starting points. In addition, the proportion of pupils making and exceeding the expected levels of progress shows pupils were underachieving.
- 2012 saw a much improved picture for mathematics where standards, as shown by the national tests at the end of Year 6, rose to well above those seen nationally with a good proportion reaching the highest levels. Standards in English also rose to above average, but the proportion of pupils making and exceeding the expected levels of progress remained too low.
- During the inspection, in lessons seen, pupils' work and the schools' accurate data for pupils' progress show that the pace of improvement has picked up in Key Stage 2. These improvements have not been in place long enough to demonstrate that good achievement over the past two years is secure.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, including those pupils who have complex educational needs, make good progress and achieve well as they move up through the school because of the dedicated and expert teaching and support they receive. Similarly, because their needs are targeted well, those eligible for extra funds through the pupil premium make the same progress as others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching for pupils with special educational needs and complex learning difficulties is effective and their social development is skilfully nurtured. Activities are appropriately challenging. Consequently, these pupils feel secure, valued and make good progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Learning tasks are well planned to match children's needs closely. There are a wealth of activities both indoors and outdoors to encourage children to interact. As a result, children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, the quality of teaching, although improving, still has some weaknesses that slow pupils' learning. This is evident both in lessons seen and in the school's own checks on the quality of teaching. It is also shown by variation in pupils' achievement over the past two years in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is some very good teaching in the school. In one English lesson, pupils of all abilities made rapid gains in their writing because:
 - the pace of the lesson was brisk and it built strongly upon what pupils had already learnt
 - really interesting tasks, the enthusiasm of the teacher, coupled with her exceptionally strong subject knowledge, inspired pupils so they were really enthusiastic about what they were learning
 - the work was skilfully adapted for pupils working at different levels and so pupils of all

abilities were being stretched

- skilled teaching assistants and the class teacher had very high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - adults used sharply focused questioning which made pupils think deeply about what they were writing.
- Not enough lessons are like this. In some, the level of challenge and pace of teaching are not well matched to pupils' abilities to enable them to progress at a fast enough rate.
 - Occasionally, teachers spend too long on explanations, pupils' interest wanes and they are not able to spend enough time practising their learning by working on their own or in groups.
 - The teaching of music, drama, dance and the visual arts is particularly good and enriched by a wide range of extra activities that teachers put on for the pupils.
 - Pupils' books are marked regularly and some marking is exemplary. However, sometimes teachers fail to show pupils clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Additionally, many pupils do not know what level they are working at and are unclear as to what they need to do to reach the higher levels.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Attendance has improved and is well-above average.
- Teachers and other adults have high expectations of behaviour and have good classroom management skills, particularly for pupils with complex emotional needs.
- The majority of learning activities are interesting so consequently, unsettled behaviour in lessons rarely interferes with learning. Occasionally, whole-class discussions are not pitched at the right level for everyone, or are too lengthy. When this happens pupils' attention wanders because they become bored.
- The way in which pupils from many social backgrounds interact harmoniously is a strength of the school and provides a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Pupils are able to concentrate well on their own but are also keen to learn and collaborate. For example, they often work with a partner which helps them learn by solving problems together.
- Pupils benefit from anti-bullying projects and lessons on personal development. As a result, they have a sound understanding of different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe, including how to keep safe when using new technologies. They are confident that adults deal swiftly with any worries they report and say there is almost no bullying.
- Discussions with pupils, the school's recent parental survey and the results of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) confirm that almost everyone believes that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved and everyone feels safe.
- There are various opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For example, school councillors ensure that pupils' opinions are considered when the school's leaders make decisions about the school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school has moved forward since the last inspection and leaders and managers have successfully dealt with some of the areas for improvement identified; behaviour is now good and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now making good progress. In addition:
 - systems to check up and track pupils' progress have improved and leaders have a better understanding of the achievement of all pupils and groups of pupils in the school
 - partnerships with successful schools have enabled skilled subject, and other middle, leaders to bring in sound systems for teaching phonics and assessing pupils' progress regularly and accurately and ensuring class teachers understand this information
 - the underachievement in mathematics in 2011 has been effectively dealt with

- attendance has risen to above average.
- Senior leaders have performance management in place for all teachers and this has helped improve the quality of teaching. However, they have not been fully successful in ensuring that all teaching is at least good and in increasing the pace of teaching and learning in some lessons. This is because lesson observations, including those for performance management, too often fail to pick up on the main weaknesses. Instead, they focus too much on what teachers do, rather than on how well pupils are learning. As a result, teachers are not always clear as to what they need to do to improve. In addition, senior leaders are not always able to accurately identify the training needs for all teachers.
- While teachers receive reliable information about what their pupils have successfully learnt and where misunderstandings remain, leaders and managers do not always check that this information is being used to plan work which is accurately matched to pupils' needs.
- These weaker aspects of leadership and management have not been able to get rid of inconsistencies to improve teaching to a good standard overall and have not enabled pupils' achievement to be good overall.
- The curriculum covers the full range of subjects and connects them well around a common theme. Pupils find this enjoyable because they can see the links between subjects.
- The very effective teaching of the arts and the many opportunities for pupils to join in a wide range of out of school activities contributes well to their spiritual, social and cultural development.
- The school is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. This is evident in the way pupils with complex needs fit into the school so well and also in the good achievement for pupils with special educational needs. The school has effectively used additional funding to employ additional support to boost learning for those pupils eligible for the pupil premium.
- Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority enabled the school to work with other schools which have excellent practice and has funded outside experts to help the school identify where improvements need to be made.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The effectively restructured governing body has recently appointed members with a significant level of understanding of school leadership. Others have undertaken effective training which has enabled them to develop the skills needed to accurately check up on data about pupils' progress. Members are committed to drive up the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and they now have increased skills which will enable them to provide even more challenge and support to school leaders in their ambition to drive up standards.

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	11163
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	401175

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Holmes
Headteacher	Margaret Blease-Bourne
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2010
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