

Elm Wood Primary School

Elm Street, Middleton, Manchester, M24 2EG

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management, including governance, are making sure that pupils' achievements are good and teaching continues to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils know how to stay safe and behave well. The calm and positive approach used by members of staff leads to a happy school where pupils say that they feel safe and cared for well.
- Children learn quickly in the early years because members of staff provide exciting activities and support and guide individuals' differing needs well.
- Most teaching makes learning interesting and so pupils respond positively and are enthusiastic and eager to learn.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school. They make good progress from their starting points because they are, in most lessons, given work which is just at the right level.
- The curriculum is designed well to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and communication skills effectively in different subjects.
- Pupils are taught a wide range of interesting subjects. This has a good impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and their attendance.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils take pride in belonging to the school and respect the needs of others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not always clear about exactly what they are expected to learn and, as a result, progress for all pupils is sometimes not as fast as it could be.
- The most able pupils are not always given work that is hard enough to ensure they reach their potential.
- Teachers' marking is not always helpful in indicating to pupils how they can improve their work.
- Leaders across the school do not always use the wide range of information they have available in order to accurately plan for improvements and then to check that these improvements are being made.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 19 lessons taught by 15 teachers and listened to pupils reading. A whole-school assembly was also observed.
- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, staff, three members of the governing body, groups of pupils, some parents and a representative from the local authority. The inspectors also talked informally with pupils in the dining room and playground.
- Documents reviewed include: the school’s own information about pupils’ progress; plans for school improvement; the monitoring of learning and teachers’ performance; organisation of the curriculum; safeguarding information; and the minutes of governing body meetings. In addition, the school's website was scrutinised.
- The inspectors also took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), results of the school's own consultations with parents, discussions with parents before school and 24 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Adrian Francis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Hints

Additional Inspector

Carl Faulkner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs or the new education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average. The term disadvantaged is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those children who are looked after by the local authority and are eligible for the pupil premium. This proportion has risen steadily over the past three years.
- The very large majority of pupils are from White British families. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- An out-of-school club, which is not managed by the governing body, operates on the school site. This is subject to a separate inspection and has its own report which can be found on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers' expectations are consistently clear about what pupils are to learn, and that they always give pupils work that is hard enough so that all pupils produce the quality of work they are capable of, particularly the most able
 - developing a more consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work so that they know how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve, have the opportunity to make improvements and use their increased understanding in subsequent lessons.
- Strengthen leadership and management by developing all leaders' skills so that they can use the information they have to more accurately plan improvements with clear goals and criteria so that success can be checked and measured.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management of the school, including of the early years, are good. The headteacher and other senior leaders ensure that the school continues to improve. The large majority of issues raised at the last inspection have been tackled successfully. As a result pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is good.
- Leaders at all levels have clear plans to improve the school further. There have been some specific successes over the past year, for example, pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved. However, there is not always a clear and accurate understanding of exactly what improvement is expected to be achieved in what timescale, and leaders are not all held accountable for the success of their actions.
- Systems for improving teaching are successful and a wide range of information and data is collected by leaders. Members of staff are given clear pointers to help them to develop their teaching and leaders are rigorous in providing training as needed. Careful checks on teachers' performance, linked to salary progression, have had a positive impact on lifting standards of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about the next steps needed in the subjects they manage and there are clear plans in place to support members of staff in the classroom. However, these plans are not checked fully by middle leaders to ensure that success is been achieved. For example, there is an effective system for checking pupils' learning in lessons but the information collected is not always used by teachers to ensure that all pupils are then given hard-enough work.
- The school is well organised in its planning for teaching various subjects of the curriculum and provides additional interesting activities to help bring learning to life for pupils. There is good provision for pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy, preparing them well for the next steps in education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the good examples set by members of staff, links with the community and work in lessons and assemblies. For example, pupils are taught to recognise the difference between right and wrong and good manners are promoted successfully from when children start school in the early years.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Adults working in school are checked for their suitability, and training on how to keep the pupils safe is kept up to date.
- Pupils who are entitled to additional funding receive appropriate and effective support for their specific needs. For example, funding provides targeted learning support from additional members of staff, including a family support worker and a pastoral assistant. Pupils who receive additional funding are making good progress and catching up with other pupils.
- The special funding to improve physical education and sport has been spent on large outdoor play equipment. Although pupils say they enjoy playing on this, there is little evidence that this spending has increased participation in physical education and sport and the school has not evaluated the use of this spending. The school does, however, organise a wide range of additional out-of-school activities and competitions and these contribute well towards the pupils' health and well-being.
- The large majority of parents are pleased with the school. They typically are happy with communications and relationships with the school and make comments such as, 'My child is very happy here and is doing really well.'
- The local authority has provided a good level of support for this school. It works closely with the school's leadership to support areas identified for development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and how it can improve. They ask leaders challenging questions to make sure that the school is continuing to improve. Several governors involve themselves in the life of the school and see for themselves how well it is doing. They make sure that teachers encourage tolerance and respect among pupils to help prepare them for life in modern Britain.
 - Governors have an understanding of how the pupil premium funding is used and understand that gaps have narrowed between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. They also know how the primary sports funding has been spent but could more carefully monitor the impact of both in terms of what difference it is making to pupils' achievements. Governors appreciate how the appraisal system has contributed to the good teaching. They make sure that teachers' pay rises are linked to the progress that pupils make and that teachers have high-quality training opportunities.
 - Governors carry out their statutory duties well, for example, they make sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school, are friendly and are keen to answer their teachers' questions. Very little time is wasted in lessons because pupils generally concentrate well on their work. They have positive attitudes to their learning, which helps promote their good progress. A few parents are unhappy with behaviour at the school. However, the inspection team found that instances of poor behaviour are rare. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures are effective and closely followed when dealing with these rare incidents.
- Pupils say the behaviour system of rewards and consequences works well. They all feel that, 'It is good to be green.' which reflects a desire to behave well and do well in lessons. They told inspectors that, although there are three stages for addressing poor behaviour, it is rare for anyone to get further than the first step and receive a red card.
- Pupils enjoy learning and work together well with their talk partners. They behave well in most lessons and only become restless when the work they have been given is not hard enough. They care for the school and are keen to help others.
- Pupils who arrive at school during the school year say that they settle very quickly because 'everyone is so friendly'.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Over the past year, the work of a dedicated staff team has made significant improvements to rates of attendance and punctuality, which are now above average.
- Discrimination of any kind is successfully discouraged. Pupils show each other respect and are aware that bullying can take many forms. Any unkind or bullying behaviour is taken seriously. It is recorded diligently and dealt with effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they can speak up if they have any concerns, knowing who to go to for help.
- Pupils are clear about how to stay safe, including when using the computers. They explain confidently how to avoid danger when using social media.

The quality of teaching is good

- Work seen from the last school year as well as checks made by the school's leaders and evidence gathered throughout the inspection, demonstrate that good-quality teaching ensures good achievement over time.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work, and there is mutual respect between pupils and their teachers and other members of staff. As a result, pupils are generally keen to get on with their work and try to learn successfully by following their teachers' instructions. For example, pupils in Year 6 enthusiastically explored the properties of 3D shapes, developed their understanding of important concepts and their proficiency with mathematical language.
- Teaching assistants play an important role in this school. They help disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to increase their skills in English and mathematics. The school provides extra support for some of these pupils in small groups or as individuals, both inside and outside lessons, and, as a result, they learn and achieve well.
- Pupils say that they have a general idea of how well they are doing and understand their targets, which are often recorded in the front of their books. However, although teachers know the school's marking policy, this is not applied consistently when work is marked and feedback given to pupils. Some of their comments are more helpful than others in showing pupils how well they have done and how to improve their work. Pupils in some classes are more likely to be made to act directly upon teachers' comments than in others.
- Pupils receive regular homework in literacy, mathematics and sometimes in other subjects, for example, topic work. In addition, pupils are expected to read daily. Learning spellings and spelling tests are a regular part of school life. All of these strategies have made a good contribution to improving standards, particularly in writing, which have improved over the past year.
- Teachers mainly prepare activities that engage and interest pupils well. However, sometimes pupils are not always clear about exactly what they are expected to learn and, as a result, their progress is not as

fast as it could be.

- Teachers follow school policy and prepare work at four different levels of challenge. For the most able pupils, however, even the top level of work they are given is not always hard enough to stretch them sufficiently to ensure that they make rapid progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils usually start in Key Stage 1 with skills that are a little below what is typical for their age. They make good progress as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2.
- School data show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014 improved on the previous year. The proportion of pupils making expected or better progress across Key Stage 1 has improved over the past year.
- The Year 6 groups in 2013 and 2014 had lower starting points at the end of Year 2 than other year groups in the school. In 2013, by the end of Key Stage 2, standards overall were broadly average, with writing being a little weaker than other subjects. School records show that, in 2014, although standards were broadly average overall, writing improved at the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in relation to the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher Level 5. The proportions of pupils in these two year groups making expected or better progress across Key Stage 2 was close to or above the national average. This reflects pupils' good achievement from their different starting points.
- The results of the most recent national screening check at the end of Year 1 on pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were above average. During the inspection, pupils used their phonic knowledge well to read and spell unfamiliar words.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made varying rates of progress across the school in the past. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2013, they were about a year behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. They were under-performing when compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, by about the same amount. Over the past year, however, concerted efforts have been made to close the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others and, as a result, these pupils are generally making better progress. Unvalidated school data indicates that the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, both in school and nationally, have narrowed. This has been achieved through the imaginative use of funding and individual and small group help and support that is better focused on helping pupils to learn.
- The small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. Any who speak English as an additional language soon acquire the linguistic skills they need and make equally good progress due to the help they receive.
- The most able pupils make good progress. However, some of the most able pupils do not always achieve the exceptionally high standards that they could. This is because teachers' guidance and the work they give the most able pupils does not always recognise their higher starting points in learning and they are not always given hard-enough tasks or homework that fully challenges them.

The early years provision is good

- Only a few children are working within the levels typical for their age when they join the Nursery class. All groups of children make good progress in the early years, including the small proportion who are most able. They listen carefully and are keen and ready to learn. Despite, however, making good progress in most areas of learning, the attainment of many children remains a little below levels typical for their age when they join Year 1.
- Teaching is good and includes many exciting opportunities for children to progress well. Members of staff are caring and are generally good at supporting the differing needs of individuals and small groups of children, including disabled children and those who have special educational needs. For example, during the inspection, children were encouraged to extend their knowledge of phonics by working in pairs and questioning each other. They were very well supported and their learning was extended well by the teacher.
- However, sometimes the skills of the most able are not sufficiently extended, and those who need to catch up are not always given enough extra help so that they reach their full potential.
- Children develop good learning habits alongside social awareness and respect for each other and for the adults who work with them. For example, in a shared reading session in the Reception class, children showed that they were listening by responding to the teacher's miming of the actions through miming

back. They listened carefully, and showed that they were beginning to share ideas and play well together.

- Resources are easily accessible to the children and are well chosen to stimulate interest. They contribute well to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as in encouraging imagination in the role-play areas.
- Good arrangements are in place to keep children safe and healthy. All activities are checked and safety needs are considered carefully. Adults are swift to take action when they observe children using equipment unsafely. As a result, children settle into school quickly and are confident about trying new activities.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. The leader was appointed within the past year and has taken swift action to improve what the school offers children, both indoors and in the dedicated outdoor area. There are clear plans to strengthen learning for those children who need to catch up and also for the most able.
- There are opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning and to get to know the early years staff. They share much of their children's home learning by hanging contributions on the 'wow tree' to demonstrate what their children can do.

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	105791
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	444145

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Connorton
Headteacher	David Willis
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2011
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