

The Elton CofE Primary School of the Foundation of Frances and Jane Proby

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110847
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310439
Inspection date	1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Cox

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kate Ward
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Drake
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	School Lane Elton Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE8 6RS
Telephone number	01832280314
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector focused especially on pupils' achievement, particularly in relation to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mathematics throughout the school and writing at Key Stage 2; on how well the pupils' cultural understanding is developed, on the effectiveness of all staff in taking on a leadership and management role. Evidence was collected from observations of lessons and sampling of pupils' work, discussions with the pupils, the staff and chair of governors, and a scrutiny of a wide range of school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Few pupils in this small school are from minority ethnic groups and none has a first language other than English. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. Many pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds, which are reflected in the low proportion entitled to free school meals. Attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year but is usually above national expectations. Many pupils leave in Year 4 to take advantage of the range of choices in upper schools and some to attend private schools. Some pupils join the school during Key Stage 2. Therefore, few pupils who leave in Year 6 have been with the school since Year 2. There has been considerable turnover of the teaching staff in the past two years, with three quarters leaving and new appointments being made.

The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the National Standards for Healthy Schools and the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils rightly report that this is a good school. Some features are outstanding. Many parents wrote positive comments, for example, 'It has a lovely, caring ethos while being committed to learning'. 'We have been extremely impressed by the love, care and commitment that all staff give to the children.' The school's consistently good work is due to the headteacher's clarity of vision for the future of the school and the pupils' well-being. All in the school share her determination that the pupils should achieve their best, in the most supportive environment. The staff work closely as a team, with a good understanding of their role in leading and managing improvement. Rigorous checking of the school's effectiveness and the impact of initiatives is the key to its development. The priorities identified are appropriate and planning to bring them about is well-focused. All staff and governors are completely involved in the process and understand their role in bringing about improvement. The school gives good value for money and is well-placed to continue serving its pupils well.

As almost all parents agree, pupils are taught well and therefore develop good learning habits. They listen attentively, concentrate on their lessons and try to do their best because they are eager to learn. Their teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly. Teaching throughout the school is enthusiastic and lively, and teachers use interesting, practical activities to stimulate the pupils, who agree that lessons are fun. Teachers cater well for the wide range of ability and ages in their class because they have a good knowledge of the different levels at which pupils are working. Most tasks build well on what they have already learned. Teachers often use questioning very well, to promote thinking and explore understanding. They ensure that pupils understand what they need to achieve in the lesson and help them to evaluate for themselves whether they have met these criteria. Pupils receive good feedback on their work and marking usually helps them to understand what they need to do to improve.

At the end of Year 2, standards are generally higher than the national average, and in 2005 they were exceptionally high. Standards are consistently above average in reading, often in writing, and sometimes in mathematics. The end of Year 6 test results have generally been average or higher. They are consistently above average in English but more variable in mathematics, where standards had been rising but fell in 2007. The school has identified mental mathematics as a focus area for further improvement. Their attainment in science has generally been average. The school's detailed and regular assessments demonstrate that pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, although overall standards are distorted by the number who leave at the end of Year 4. Pupils' achievement is very good in reading, and good in writing and science. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are better than is usual for their age. Their achievement is satisfactory in mathematics.

Academic support and guidance is very good. The school has a very thorough bank of information about the progress pupils are making and uses this to set them challenging targets. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those in danger of falling behind, are identified at an early stage and given the support they require to make similar progress to others. There are good strategies for accelerating the progress of pupils who are gifted or talented, for example by teaching them in older classes for the subjects in which they show promise. As a result, almost all of these pupils make good progress in most subjects. However, the school has identified that the most able boys are not challenged sufficiently to achieve their best in writing and therefore do not make as much progress as they could. Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a good contribution to the progress of the pupils they support.

Because the school's care for its pupils is outstanding, their personal qualities are particularly good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Their enjoyment in leading the lunchtime prayers reflects the school's strong spiritual ethos. Through the good curriculum, pupils have many opportunities to develop understanding of their own and others' faiths and cultures. They say that the educational visits, for example to the Hindu temple in Leicester, are exciting and add to their thorough enjoyment of school. A good range of experiences, such as the 'Safety Challenge' day, gives them an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Many other visits and visitors help to enliven the curriculum and extend pupils' understanding. In addition, the school provides a very good range of activities outside the school day. The school plans very carefully to ensure that pupils, most of whom are in mixed-age classes, cover subjects at the right level and learn the skills appropriate for their age. Many first-hand activities are built into the curriculum to bring the work alive. The school makes good use of specialist subject expertise, for example in music, to teach classes and for instrumental tuition.

Behaviour is outstanding and pupils grow into confident, thoughtful and mature individuals. Pupils say that they can recall no instances of bullying, and are confident that any instance would be sorted out rapidly. They make an excellent contribution to the local and wider community, through such initiatives as their involvement in the construction of a school in Kenya. The school council is thoroughly committed to its role in 'making the school better'. Attendance is above average; it has been extremely good until recently but has fallen because some parents take their children on holiday during term time. Pupils' lunchboxes reflect their very good awareness of how to keep themselves healthy. They feel very safe and say that they can confide in any adult if they are upset. Relationships are excellent, between pupils of all ages and with adults. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education and their future lives because exceptional personal qualities are combined with good academic achievement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class so that standards are above those expected by the time they enter Year 1. Almost all reach the goals expected of them and many exceed these. The staff have a secure understanding of the needs of these young children and carefully plan activities that will challenge them. They quickly find out what children know when they start school and devise well balanced independent and adult-directed activities to ensure that they make rapid progress. Parents are appreciative of the effective measures to ensure that children settle into school quickly and develop confidence. Staff employ good methods to support the growth of their independence, for example by using the 'activity board' to record their choices of independent activities. Some children enter with higher than usual language skills and many know at least some of the sounds of letters. Staff build on these abilities rapidly, for example, by introducing children to parts of the language such as adjectives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2, and especially in mental mathematics, so that pupils' achievement matches that in English.
- Develop teaching strategies to support the most able boys to achieve their potential in writing.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Elton CofE Primary School, School Lane, Elton, PE8 6RS

Thank you so much for your help when I visited your school . I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and particularly chatting to some of you. I thought you'd like to know what I found out about your school.

I was very impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way that you looked after each other. The older children are very sensible and members of the school council do their jobs well. The children I had lunch with were interesting and helpful. You work very hard and listen to your teachers very well.

I agree with you that you go to a good school and that your teachers make learning fun. There are lots of interesting visits and people who come to talk to you, and you have many exciting clubs after school. They look after you really well and help you to know what you need to learn. So you make good progress in science and English, especially with your reading. I could see how good you are at speaking and listening. You told me that if any of you needed help with your work, you would get it. Mrs Drake and the staff work hard to make sure that the work you are given is at the right level.

There are two things I've asked the teachers to do to make your school even better, and some of you can help with this by making sure that you always do your best.

- To help you, especially the junior children, to do better in mathematics, so you all need to practise so that you are really good at working sums out in your heads.
- A few of the boys, who find learning very easy, need help to make sure that they write as well as they possibly can.

I'm sure that you'll continue to enjoy your time at Elton and to learn well.

My best wishes for the future

Pat Cox

Inspector