

Elstow School

Abbeyfields Road, Abbeyfields, Elstow, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 9GP

Inspection dates

2–3 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is supported very well by the school's two deputy headteachers. They share a clear vision and a determination for the school to become outstanding once again.
- The leaders' evaluation of the school is thorough, but not sufficiently analytical. The school's action plan is not as sharply focused as it could be.
- The quality of teaching at Elstow is good. Staff are highly effective in using a range of teaching approaches to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school in a wide range of subjects. The work in pupils' books is well presented and shows great care.
- Pupils behave extremely well, both in their lessons and during less structured parts of the day. Pupils know and follow the school's rules and are able to regulate their own behaviour.
- The quality of early years provision is outstanding. Early years is particularly well led and children are given a very strong start to their educational careers.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and express very positive opinions about it. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils rightly feel very safe at school. The school has a very open and supportive culture that provides pupils with plentiful opportunities to confide in an adult if they are ever worried or upset.
- Pupils reach the expected standard by the time they leave Year 6. However, they do not yet make substantial and sustained progress throughout their time at the school
- Governors receive a good range of information but do not check that the information they are given is accurate. They are not able to judge accurately how the school compares with other schools across the country.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make rapid progress by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching is good in all classes throughout the school
 - reading comprehension skills are taught as effectively as phonics skills
 - pupils are provided with books to read that are well matched to their stage of development.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - self-evaluation is analytical rather than merely descriptive
 - improvement planning is sharply focused, with clear dates and milestones, and measurable success criteria
 - spending of the pupil premium grant is monitored more closely, and with a greater focus on the impact that it has on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is highly committed to the school and is determined to make it as effective as it can be. She is very well supported by two deputy headteachers. The deputy headteacher responsible for teaching and learning joined the school at the beginning of this academic year. Despite being in post for a very short time, she is already having a strong impact on improving the quality of teaching and is beginning to make her mark.
- The second deputy headteacher has responsibility for inclusion and is also clearly effective in her role. Pupils are known well as individuals, and prompt action is taken to address individual issues when they arise. As a result, the school is highly inclusive and meets the needs of a wide range of pupils well.
- The pupil premium grant is spent effectively. The funding is used in a wide variety of ways to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. For example, the funding is used to provide free places for disadvantaged pupils at the school's breakfast club. This has led to improvements in attendance for this group of pupils. Although leaders monitor how the funding is spent, they do not focus sufficiently on the impact of spending on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The primary physical education and sports premium is spent effectively. For example, the funding has been used to improve the range of extra-curricular clubs that are offered. Pupils can now choose to take part in clubs such as 'street dance' and 'ultimate frisbee'. The take-up of clubs has risen as a result and about a fifth of pupils now regularly attend a sports-related club.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The school's leaders have reviewed the curriculum and are fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The curriculum offers pupils a wide range of interesting opportunities, such as educational visits and interesting visitors to school. These help to stimulate pupils' interest and ensure that they are engaged in their learning.
- Leaders changed their approach to the curriculum when they found that it was not providing pupils with sufficient depth of learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, science is now taught as a separate subject and leaders have found that pupils' knowledge of the subject is becoming deeper as a result.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is developed very well. For example, all staff provide strong role models for pupils. They speak politely to each other and to pupils. This sets an expectation that pupils should be polite to everyone that they come into contact with, and they respond accordingly.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern British society. The school uses its curriculum well to teach pupils to value all people in society, including those who have a characteristic protected by law. For example, when learning about relationships, pupils learn about families that have 'two mummies' or 'two daddies' and that all families are equally valuable. Pupils are given plentiful opportunities to take responsibility. For example, in Year 6, pupils work hard to be considered a 'super citizen' and are rewarded by becoming a member of the 'black jacket brigade' and being allowed to wear the much-coveted black fleece.

- The school's leaders have managed well the change from being a lower school to becoming a primary school. The additional year groups have been seamlessly absorbed into the school. The school's leaders have ensured that the oldest pupils in school reach the expected standard by the time they leave Year 6. However, pupils do not yet make the substantial and sustained progress that would be expected in an outstanding school.
- Parents express high degrees of satisfaction with the school. Although few parents responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, virtually all of those who did said that they would recommend the school to others. Parents who spoke to inspectors when they brought their children to school were very positive about the school. For example, many parents said that the staff are very approachable and that this helps them to feel that their children are safe and well cared for.
- The school's leaders evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and plan how to improve the school. Although evaluation is thorough, it is not sufficiently analytical, and the school's planned actions are consequently not sufficiently sharply focused.
- The school's website does not meet statutory requirements. Some required information is missing (such as the results of the key stage 2 national tests in 2016) and some is out of date and does not meet all the required criteria (such as the information on pupil premium). The school's leaders are fully aware of these issues and actions are in hand to address them.

Governance of the school

- The new chair of the governing body had been in post for little over a week at the time of the inspection. Although very new to the role, the chair brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the post, having been a governor at the school for a number of years and vice-chair most recently. Actions are already in place to ensure that the chair of the governing body is provided with appropriate support to help him to be fully effective.
- Governors have not ensured that self-evaluation is sufficiently analytical. They do not use the criteria in the school inspection handbook to judge how good or otherwise each element of the school is. This means that they are not able to judge accurately how the school compares with other schools across the country.
- Governors receive a good range of information on all aspects of the school's provision from the headteacher and other school leaders. However, they do not use any external sources, such as information from the school's improvement advisor's visits, to check that the information they are given is accurate.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets statutory requirements. The school's processes for ensuring that they only employ people who are suitable to work with children are robust.
- The designated senior lead for safeguarding and her deputy have both received appropriate training to fulfil their roles. They are experienced and knowledgeable, and take prompt and decisive action in response to concerns when they arise.
- The designated safeguarding lead has a very good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty

and the school's role in protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Staff have been provided with appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their duties in this area.

- Records of child protection concerns are thorough and detailed. Files are well kept and show clearly what action has been taken, when, and by whom.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge of the topics they teach. This enables them to set high expectations and present information clearly and explicitly to pupils. Pupils make better progress as a result.
- Teachers use questioning techniques well to assess the extent to which pupils understand what they are taught. As a result, pupils' misconceptions about what they are learning are identified and addressed promptly. Questioning is also used skilfully to encourage pupils to think more deeply about what they are learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of how hard pupils will work and how they should behave. Pupils respond well to this, producing good-quality work and behaving extremely well as a result.
- Staff create safe learning environments in their classrooms. They teach pupils that everybody learns through making mistakes and encourage a 'have a go' approach to learning. As a result, pupils are not afraid to try new things for fear of getting them wrong.
- The most able pupils are challenged well throughout lessons. Teachers prepare carefully for what the most able pupils already know and can do. They do not hold the most able pupils back by making them waste time completing activities that are too easy for them.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils' individual learning needs. For example, teaching assistants work closely with pupils, on an individual or small-group basis, to help them to take make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The school is developing its own assessment system, matched closely to the new national curriculum. The system has been introduced throughout the school and staff are increasingly confident and competent in using it. The school's leaders are able to use the system to track and monitor the progress pupils make. Leaders are continuing to modify and develop the system.
- The overall quality of teaching is typically good. However, there is some variability between classes, with some teaching over time being weaker. Where this is the case, pupils do not make the rapid progress that they could. The school's leaders are well aware of where teaching is weaker in the school and are providing appropriate support and development to ensure that teaching is improved.
- The teaching of reading is not as effective as it could be. Phonics is taught well and pupils are able to decode texts well to read them. However, the teaching of comprehension skills is less successful. The school's leaders are aware of this and are taking action to improve it. Pupils are not always provided with suitable books to read, with some choices being too easy and others too hard.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very polite and friendly. They are supportive and respectful of each other. Adults provide very strong role models, and pupils are taught to be good citizens and decent members of the community.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and their parents also feel that they are safe. Pupils are taught to how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, they learn how to use the internet safely through regular e-safety sessions and reminders.
- The school takes pupils' emotional welfare very seriously. Staff keep a very close eye on pupils at all times and maintain a 'vulnerability register' to ensure that individual pupils' needs are met. They monitor pupils' well-being carefully and take prompt and appropriate action when necessary.
- Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils know what constitutes bullying and they know that they should always tell an adult if it happens to them. Pupils feel safe from bullying because they have absolute faith that staff will help them, and would be able to sort things out quickly.
- The school has a very open culture where pupils feel able to talk to teachers and other staff freely. They know that staff are always available to listen to them and they trust staff completely. This very open culture promotes pupils' welfare very well and helps to ensure that they are safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Expectations of how pupils should behave are high throughout the school. This, combined with consistent behaviour management, means that pupils behave extremely well. Pupils are able to regulate their own behaviour and require very little supervision to do so.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons, no matter who they are with. Pupils are equally respectful and well behaved when working with a teaching assistant or a teacher providing cover for their class as when they are working with their own class teacher.
- Pupils show particularly supportive and caring attitudes to each other. They cooperate very well with each other in lessons and play very successfully together during breaktimes.
- Pupils take pride in their work. They take great care with their handwriting and ensure that their work is neatly presented. Pupils show very good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well and try their hardest.
- Pupils attend school regularly and on time. Levels of attendance are similar to other schools nationally. Where pupils' attendance dips below average, the school takes prompt and decisive action to address it. Pupils' attendance improves swiftly as a result.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in key stage 1, and attainment at the end of Year 2 has compared favourably with the national average for the last three years. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average in 2016.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was broadly similar to the national average in 2016. The proportion who reached the high standard was the same as the national average.
- The work in pupils' exercise books shows clearly that pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils produce work that is appropriate to their age and stage of development. Pupils' work is well presented and the quality of handwriting is a particular strength.
- Phonics is taught very well and pupils make very good progress. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above the national average. In 2016, 93% of Year 1 pupils reached the expected level. This is a far higher than the national average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. In reading and mathematics this group of pupils often make better progress than their peers. In writing, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils in the school and others nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally make good progress because appropriate actions are taken to ensure that their individual needs are met. However, leaders do not analyse the effectiveness of these actions closely enough and do not focus sufficiently on whether the actions taken have sufficient impact on improving the progress pupils make.
- The most able pupils, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, make good progress. Teachers provide pupils with work that challenges and stimulates them. The school's assessment information and the work in pupils' exercise books show clearly that the most able pupils make good progress.
- Results in the key stage 2 national tests do not accurately reflect the good progress that current pupils make at Elstow. The school has learned lessons from the assessments of its first two cohorts of Year 6 pupils in the national tests in 2015 and the significantly revised national tests in 2016. Suitable steps are being taken to ensure that pupils are better prepared to meet the rigorous standards of the end-of-key-stage assessments in 2017.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years provision is extremely well led. The early years leader is knowledgeable and experienced. She evaluates the quality of the provision frequently and accurately. The early years leader has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. She responds very quickly when areas are identified for improvement.
- Children enter early years with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age,

although some children are below this level. Children make excellent progress during their time in early years and the proportion who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is well above the national average. As a result, children are very well prepared for Year 1.

- Teaching is particularly strong in the early years classes. The staff work extremely closely together and ensure that all possible opportunities are taken to extend children's learning and understanding. They know the children extremely well and plan carefully to meet children's individual needs.
- Teachers' expectations of what children can do are high, and children respond well to their high aspirations. For example, during the inspection children were observed to know and use the word 'alliteration' and to be able to provide good examples of alliteration using their first names.
- Phonics is taught particularly well in early years. Staff ensure that phonics teaching is active and lively, encouraging children to link closely the sounds they hear with the letters they see written. This enables children to make rapid progress in their early reading development.
- Staff have created a very calm and positive learning environment. Staff have high expectations of how children should behave and they are consistent in their approach to managing behaviour. They ensure that instructions are very clear and rules are known and understood. As a result, even at this early stage in the school year, children are exceptionally well behaved.
- Children are taught to take responsibility for themselves, to try hard and to help other people. The early years' mantra that 'We care, we share, we do our best' is repeated frequently and constantly reinforced. Children respond very well to this and the mantra is reflected in their behaviour. For example, when preparing to go outside to play, children patiently helped each other to put on their coats and to do up the zips.

School details

Unique reference number	109448
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10012444

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ryan Tobias
Headteacher	Jenny Jackson
Telephone number	01234302300
Website	www.elstowschool.co.uk
Email address	jjackson@elstowschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 February 2009

Information about this school

- Since the school was last inspected it has grown from a lower school to a full primary school. At the time of the last inspection the school had two classes per year group from Reception to Year 4. The school has had Year 6 pupils for the last two years.
- Significant building works have been carried out since the last inspection. A new block of four classrooms, and an additional school hall, were constructed to accommodate the additional classes when the school became a primary school.
- The headteacher is a national leader of education but is not currently providing support to any other schools.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about assessment in key stage 2, spending of the pupil premium grant, spending of the primary physical education and sport premium, and governors' governance roles in other schools.

- The school meets the most recent floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection of a previously exempt school was scheduled under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005 following concerns about outcomes for pupils. The inspection was deemed section 5 under the same Act.
- Inspectors gathered a range of information to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed learning in parts of 16 lessons, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the school’s leaders, two representatives of the local authority, two groups of pupils, and representatives of the school’s governing body.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils’ exercise books, listened to them read and talked to them about their work.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including the 37 responses to Parent View (Ofsted’s online questionnaire), one letter to inspectors and conversations with parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s assessment information, records of leaders’ monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and a range of other documents.

Inspection team

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Chris Lake	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector
Sandra Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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