

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Elsenham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street, Elsenham, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 6DD

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 November 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this nurturing, happy school. There is a strong sense of community here. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They have lovely manners. The values of love, hope, faith, wisdom and kindness underpin everything that happens at the school. Pupils attend well because they love coming to school.

Adults are ambitious for all pupils. There is a culture of high aspiration. Pupils achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive support that is carefully tailored to meet their needs. This helps them to achieve well in relation to their starting points.

An extensive programme of activities and experiences supports pupils' character development and takes them beyond the school gates. Older pupils learn courage, perseverance and independence on an adventurous residential trip. Eco-councillors litter-pick in the local area. Gardening club members plant crocus bulbs around a nearby housing development.

Many pupils contribute actively to the life of the school. 'Leaders in learning' represent different curriculum areas. They inspire other pupils to develop a love of learning by leading activities in their subject. 'Well-being champions' devise ways to help pupils who need emotional support. 'Inclusion ambassadors' ensure that everyone feels valued, listened to and included.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's actions since the last inspection have strengthened the curriculum significantly and improved pupils' achievement. From early years to Year 6, the school has identified curriculum goals in each subject. It has mapped out the curriculum carefully, so that pupils build their learning towards these goals. The school's systems for checking that the curriculum is working are well developed. Curriculum leaders adjust and enhance the curriculum, so that it is as effective as possible. For example, in science, an increased number of practical investigations bring learning to life. In geography, more frequent outdoor learning activities develop pupils' fieldwork skills.

As the school has grown, the number of pupils with SEND has increased. School leaders and governors have responded swiftly. They work together to provide the school with the resources it needs. They ensure that staff are appropriately trained to meet pupils' differing needs. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They revisit previous learning at the start of every lesson. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned. Teachers check pupils' understanding frequently. They deal with misconceptions skilfully and identify any pupils who need extra help. For pupils with SEND, teachers adapt the curriculum according to the pupils' needs.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. In early years, stories are at the forefront of learning. Children develop a love of books from the moment they join the school. In the school's library, pupils from all year groups can choose high-quality books by a wide range of authors. Skilled adults teach daily phonics lessons. Throughout the Reception Year and key stage 1, children and pupils quickly learn the sounds they need to become competent readers. They practise by reading books that are at the right level of challenge. If any pupils struggle with reading, the school provides them with the effective support they need to catch up.

The school's high expectations for pupils' behaviour are widely understood and consistently reinforced. This means pupils know when to participate actively in the learning, and when to focus on what the adults are saying. Sometimes, pupils struggle to meet adults' expectations for behaviour, often as a result of their additional needs. However, the school takes effective action to support these pupils to improve their conduct over time.

Pupils are extremely well prepared for their future lives. They learn about a range of belief systems in religious education lessons. A carefully planned programme of personal, social and health education teaches them about issues, such as personal safety, healthy relationships and financial awareness. Pupils have a mature understanding of diversity. They celebrate the differences within their own community, showing tolerance and respect. Pastoral care is a priority. Pupils learn to look after their own and others' mental health. They develop resilience and positive attitudes through a range of well-being initiatives.

Governors are well informed about the school's performance. They conduct checks to assure themselves that the school's work is focused on the right things. Leaders and

governors take actions to reduce staff workload and support staff well-being. This enables staff to focus on the quality of their provision for pupils. There is a strong, shared vision of providing the best possible educational experiences for everyone.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and](#)

[protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	115129
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345150
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of governing body	Simon Bird and Felicity Savage
Headteacher	Linda Todd
Website	www.elsenham.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pupil numbers have increased significantly since the last inspection. The school was previously a one-form-entry school and now takes in two forms each year.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2020.
- The school has a religious character. Its last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act was in March 2024 and the next inspection is due five years from that date.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with a range of leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. She met with governors, including the co-chairs of governors. She also spoke on the telephone with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Chelmsford.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text responses. She also reviewed responses to the staff survey and spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024