

# Elms Farm Community Primary School

Dornccliffe Avenue, Sheldon, Birmingham, West Midlands B33 0PJ

## Inspection dates

4 July–12 September 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not fully addressed all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders do not monitor effectively enough to identify the key weaknesses in teaching and pupils' outcomes. Plans for improvement do not focus sharply on the most important priorities for the school.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across key stages 1 and 2. Too frequently, tasks set for pupils are not accurately matched to their abilities and do not provide sufficient challenge, especially for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils apply their skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately in pieces of writing across the curriculum. Expectations from teachers of what pupils can and should achieve are not high enough across all subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils should be doing better. Leaders have not accurately identified what the barriers to learning are for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress across key stages 1 and 2. Too few achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding through problem-solving and reasoning.
- Despite their efforts, leaders have not been successful in ensuring that all parents fulfil their responsibilities by making sure that their children attend school regularly and on time. Attendance remains below the national average.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported extremely well. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life as citizens in modern Britain.
- Children make a positive start in the early years provision. Teaching is well matched to the needs and interests of the children.
- Pupils are courteous, respectful and well-behaved. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and caring. As a result, pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and they feel safe.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 so that more pupils make at least good progress by ensuring that:
  - teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able pupils
  - teachers provide tasks that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities
  - teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical thinking by using reasoning in problem-solving activities
  - teachers provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills accurately when writing independently and at length across a range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - monitoring more accurately to identify the most important priorities for the school that will bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes
  - ensuring that leaders have plans for improvement that include tightly defined measures of success, timescales for actions linked to the school's most pressing priorities, and systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of leaders' actions
  - identifying the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and implementing actions that will help reduce the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged
  - identifying and applying more effective methods that encourage parents to fulfil their responsibilities in making sure that their children attend school regularly and on time.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders are fully committed to delivering the best possible education for the pupils at Elms Farm Community Primary School. However, although leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection, leaders have not yet sufficiently improved the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across the school. Consequently, pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders undertake a wide range of approaches to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching. However, too much emphasis is placed on the strengths of the teaching being monitored. Leaders do not use the outcomes of their monitoring sufficiently well to accurately identify what the most pressing priorities for improvement are.
- Leaders' plans do not focus on the most important priorities that will bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and outcomes for pupils. School improvement plans do not have sharply defined success criteria and timescales for when actions will take place. This limits leaders' effectiveness in evaluating the impact of actions taken.
- Leaders have not accurately identified what the specific barriers to learning are for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they have not ensured that interventions and support are always appropriately matched to the particular needs of all of these pupils. The pupil premium funding has been spent on providing additional teachers and teaching assistants who provide one-to-one and small-group support. While the progress that disadvantaged pupils make has steadily improved over time, it is still not swift enough to reduce the differences in their achievement and that of other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged.
- Pupils' mobility has been a significant factor for the school over recent years. A large number of pupils join and leave the school during the school year. Leaders have ensured that induction arrangements for these pupils, including a minority who speak no English when they start at the school and have often not been at school before, are effective in allowing the pupils to settle quickly and happily into school life.
- The headteacher has taken strong action to address the least effective teaching in school. As a result, a number of teaching staff have left the school during the past year and new staff have been appointed.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics undertake a range of monitoring and evaluation activities. This helps them to know the strengths and weaknesses within their areas of responsibility. They have implemented actions, including leading staff development training, that have brought about improvements in the teaching of reading and basic skills in mathematics. However, leaders are aware that not all teaching in these subjects is consistently good enough yet.
- Pupils are given opportunities to learn across a broad and balanced curriculum. Topics, such as 'Stargazers' and 'Hola Mexico', are well planned to engage pupils' interests and are enhanced by a range of visits, including to the Think Tank and Cadbury's World.
- Pupils value the opportunities that the school offers them to extend and enhance their learning. Pupils were particularly keen to share with inspectors some of the extra-

curricular opportunities they enjoy, such as physical activities including tag rugby, dodgeball, 'can dance', football, cross-country running and multi-skills. Pupils also enjoy the opportunities to grow vegetables, which they then harvest and sell. This connection with nature is further enhanced through outdoor learning opportunities provided by their forest school work.

- Leaders and staff make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are taught about different faiths and cultures. British values, such as democracy, are understood by pupils. Displays around the school celebrate this aspect of the school's work in seeking to develop empathy, understanding, tolerance and respect.
- Participation in the arts is also promoted well. All the pupils in Year 4 learn to play a brass instrument and pupils have had opportunities to watch live ballet and theatre. This builds a rich tapestry of experience, and enables pupils to try out new things and develop fresh interests and skills.
- The primary physical education and sports funding is used effectively to enhance the school's existing provision. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a variety of sporting events and competitions against other local schools.
- Additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very well managed. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the support their children receive and the high quality of provision and care leaders with responsibility for this group of pupils provide for their children and families.
- The large majority of parents value the commitment and dedication of all staff to ensuring that their children's time in school is happy and safe. They say that their children enjoy coming to school. They particularly appreciate the high level of care given to pupils.
- The local authority has a realistic view of the school's performance. It has provided support to leaders that has helped middle leaders to become more effective.

## **Governance**

- Governors are ambitious for the school. The chair of the governing body has a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of governors in driving and shaping school improvement. Governors understand there is more work to be done to address the aspects of underperformance within the school, including pupils' attendance and punctuality. They recognise that improvement plans need to be more closely focused on the most pressing priorities.
- Governors, rightly, commissioned an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium recently. Leaders are acting on the recommendations of this review to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors have a good depth of understanding of the finances available to the school and monitor expenditure closely. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively, including ensuring that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors use a range of assessment information to compare the performance of the school with others, both locally and nationally. They have secure systems in place to

ensure that the management of teachers' performance, including the headteacher's, is used to hold staff to account for pupils' outcomes.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding within school. This is led by a core team of leaders who are well trained and knowledgeable about child protection. There is also a strong, collective sense of responsibility across all staff to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff have a good awareness of what constitutes abuse, and are vigilant in looking out for indicators of risk or harm.
- Safeguarding training is thorough, regular and matched well to the needs of all staff. All staff have undertaken training in combating radicalisation and extremism. Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the local context and liaise well with outside agencies, including the police and social care. Policies are kept up to date and procedures are robust and well known by staff. Records of any concerns or referrals are kept securely. Good use is made of an online monitoring system to log and report all safeguarding issues. The school provides excellent pastoral care for vulnerable pupils and families.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults appointed to work at the school.
- The vast majority of parents and pupils agree that pupils are safe and happy in school.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe online and can cite some unsafe online activities which could expose them to harm.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but it is not consistently good. The quality of teaching is uneven across year groups, which means that it varies in its effectiveness in ensuring that pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Teachers set tasks that are too easy for some pupils, especially the most able pupils. As a result, too few of the most able pupils reach the higher standards by the time they leave the school.
- The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling has improved and pupils apply these skills well in their written English work. However, teachers do not ensure that the same standards are applied when writing in other subjects, such as geography and science. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to write independently and at length across other curriculum areas. As a result, standards of writing are too variable and progress is not as strong as it should be across the curriculum.
- In mathematics, teaching does not always provide enough challenge. Work seen in pupils' books confirms that there is a large focus on developing basic skills but insufficient opportunities to apply this knowledge in meaningful and relevant contexts.

This means that pupils have limited opportunities to develop skills in reasoning, justifying their thinking and solving problems.

- The most effective teaching ensures that the work set for pupils in lessons is at an appropriate level to challenge each pupil. On these occasions, teachers know the learning needs of their pupils and quickly identify and address misconceptions. For example, in a key stage 1 class, pupils were learning to tell the time. Some pupils were being supported by an adult to revisit 'quarter to' and 'quarter past' the hour, because this had been picked up as a concept needing further consolidation. Other pupils were telling the time to the minute and were able to add and subtract minutes from a given time. In such lessons, pupils make rapid progress and acquire skills and understanding effectively.
- Teaching assistants generally make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. They are increasingly being held to account for the progress of the pupils whom they work with. Leaders ensure that they are given time to work alongside teachers in planning lessons and reviewing pupils' progress.
- There is a whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics that helps pupils to make good progress in developing initial reading skills. Pupils enjoy reading and talk knowledgeably about books. They have been inspired by opportunities to meet a number of authors. The importance of reading has a high profile within the school. Pupils are read to regularly by adults and are encouraged to read at home and for pleasure.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive carefully planned additional teaching that targets their learning needs. For example, there is an emphasis on developing communication skills in speaking and listening. The school has developed assessment systems well to identify any gaps and then provides additional support as required. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous to each other and to adults. There is a strong culture of tolerance and respect throughout the school.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to develop responsibility and make a contribution to the school and the wider community. They have raised money for a number of charities, including a national cancer support charity. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and has established a code of conduct for council members, which is published on the school's website. The oldest pupils act as play leaders for younger pupils. They help to organise games and promote play on the 'pirate ship' and the stage area.
- A 'rights respecting schools' steering group has been established as part of the school's efforts to gain the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award. Assemblies are used to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of protecting the rights of individuals. The 'Elms Farm family charter' highlights the particular rights that

are of significance at the school such as 'We have the right to play: we will respect this by being gentle'.

- Leaders and teachers work hard to maintain and develop the caring environment in the school, as well as nurturing pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils are proud of their school and are able to talk about everything they enjoy within school. This was exemplified by a pupil's comment that 'We are one big community'.
- Pupils say they are happy in school and feel safe. They know whom they can talk to if they have concerns. They know about the different forms of bullying and stated that bullying incidents are rare, and they are confident that any disputes would be sorted out fairly by members of staff.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils in all classes conduct themselves well when they move around the school because expectations are clear and routines are firmly established. Pupils play well together at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils make good use of the interesting range of equipment available to them on the playgrounds, including the 'pirate ship', the 'trim trails' and the 'scrapstore'. Pupils are encouraged and supported in using their imagination and cooperating with others. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere in the dining room.
- In lessons, pupils respond promptly to the instructions of adults. This ensures that the movement from one subject or activity to another happens smoothly.
- There are good systems in place for monitoring pupils' behaviour. As a result of the high expectations that all staff have for how pupils behave, there have been significant improvements in the attitudes of a minority of pupils who at times display inappropriate behaviour.
- Attendance has risen slightly since the previous inspection but is still below the national average. Leaders have taken action to try to improve attendance. These measures include checking carefully on the attendance of individual pupils, holding termly attendance reward days for pupils with over 97% attendance and weekly awards for the classes with the highest attendance. However, leaders recognise that they need to take stronger and more decisive action to ensure that all parents understand the impact that low attendance has on their children's learning and fulfil their responsibilities in making sure that their children attend regularly and on time.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress as they move through the school. Outcomes are improving but still too few pupils reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of key stage 2. This is the result of inconsistent teaching over time.
- Unvalidated assessment information for 2017 indicates that the school is closing the attainment gap with national standards in key stage 2 in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, attainment is still below national figures in these

areas and in reading and mathematics. Progress is not strong enough to allow all pupils to be sufficiently well prepared for when they move to secondary school. Pupils generally make stronger progress in Year 6 but this does not fully compensate for the slower progress they made earlier in their schooling.

- School assessment information and evidence gathered during the inspection shows that attainment for pupils in Year 2 has improved this year in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' progress from their starting points is still not good enough.
- The most able pupils do not make enough progress. This is because the work that they are set is not sufficiently demanding and does not challenge them to think deeply. As a result, too few pupils reach the higher standards by the end of key stage 2. There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in key stage 1 in 2017, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is still below that of other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged. While it is improving due to the support that the school provides, a lack of clear identification of the specific barriers to learning means that differences in outcomes are still too large.
- The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check dipped in 2016 and was slightly below the national average. Pupils who had been at the school since starting in Reception did far better than those pupils who had moved to the school. This situation is replicated in outcomes across the rest of the school. Pupils who have undertaken all of their primary education at Elms Farm Community Primary School make better progress and attain higher standards than newly arrived pupils.
- There are no significant differences in outcomes between pupils from different ethnic groups.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because the school's provision meets their academic needs, as well as their personal and social development.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are below those that are typical for their age. As a result of good teaching and activities that engage children's interest and are well matched to their abilities, they make good progress and are well prepared for their move to Year 1. In 2016, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above the national average. A similar proportion of children achieved a good level of development in 2017.
- Children benefit from a stimulating, well-resourced and attractive environment, both indoors and out. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming.
- Teachers and teaching assistants get to know the children very well and use their interests to support learning. Children enjoy the opportunities to be creative and imaginative. An example of this was evident during the inspection when inspectors



observed children in the 'garden centre' role play area, dressing up as bees and pretending to make honey.

- Children quickly learn essential social and emotional skills. They are able to share, take turns, concentrate and apply themselves to set activities. They are supportive and appreciative of each other. The comment of a child who was being helped by another child to put on an apron said, 'You are a good friend.' This is typical of the strong social interaction between children within the early years provision.
- Positive relationships between adults and children and the use of praise make a strong contribution to the development of confident, engaged learners. Clear routines and well-established behaviour management strategies have a positive impact on attitudes to learning.
- Adults' effective use of open-ended questioning enables children to explain their reasoning and this deepens understanding. This was clearly seen during the inspection during an activity where children were looking at snails. They were fascinated and the adult with them prompted discussion through sophisticated questioning.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength within the early years, making a clear contribution to the strong performance achieved by children at the end of the Reception Year in reading and writing. Reception pupils were able to explain that a 'digraph' is two letters that make one sound. They identified that the word 'teeth' has two digraphs, 'ee' and 'th'.
- The needs of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are carefully considered and catered for. Staff know the children really well and plan activities that meet their needs. This highly individualised focus, coupled with effective teaching, ensures that these children make strong progress from their relatively low starting points.
- Leaders in the early years have worked hard to establish effective communication with parents through workshops and 'pair and share' sessions, where parents have the opportunity to see some of the work that their children have completed. Parents say that their children are happy to come to school and, if problems occurred, they would feel able to raise any concerns.
- Safeguarding is effective. All adults have the welfare of each child as their highest priority. Children are well cared for and valued as individuals.
- Disadvantaged children generally make the same good progress as others in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff have an awareness of their specific needs and plan carefully to ensure that any gaps in learning are addressed. Good use is made of outside agencies, especially for children who have speech and language difficulties.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have recognised that the achievement of boys has not been as strong as that of girls over time, and have formulated plans to address this. However, it is too early to fully see what the impact of these changes will make.

## School details

Unique reference number	103381
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10032581

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	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Lomax
Headteacher	Elizabeth Gallagher
Telephone number	0121 464 4634
Website	<a href="http://www.elmsfarmschool.co.uk">www.elmsfarmschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiry@elmsfarm.bham.sch.uk">enquiry@elmsfarm.bham.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	29–30 April 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Elms Farm Community Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above that in most schools. The largest minority group are of Pakistani heritage. Slightly more pupils speak English as an additional language than the national average.
- There are two classes in each year group and a Nursery class.
- The proportion of pupils who start at or leave the school during their primary education is well above the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all year groups. A number of these observations were undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of staff. An inspector met three governors and the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with a group of pupils. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunch and breaktimes, as well as in lessons.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 20 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors met parents at the start of the school day. They considered the 39 responses from staff to a questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of information on pupils' performance and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also reviewed minutes of governors' meetings and monitoring records of the school's work to gauge its effectiveness, and looked at pupils' work in books.
- On 12 September 2017, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school to gather additional information on pupils' outcomes, leadership and management, and personal development, behaviour and welfare.

## Inspection team

Adam Hewett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Crooks	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Whitcombe	Ofsted Inspector
Su Plant	Ofsted Inspector

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