

Elson Infant School

Elson Lane, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 4EU

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors work together closely to drive improvement and secure high aspirations among their pupils and community.
- Leaders have successfully tackled previous weaknesses in assessment and the teaching of English. Teaching now guides pupils well in writing but does not do enough to secure accurate spelling.
- The school has sustained its good outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1, which supports good achievement in reading. Pupils across the school are rightly proud of their growing confidence to read well.
- Pupils make good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics, including those who are disadvantaged. Boys' achievement, although improving, is currently weaker than that of girls in English.
- Pastoral and academic support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. Most achieve well, but some still lag too far behind their peers.
- Children achieve well in the early years. Many attain a good level of development, so they are prepared well to join Year 1.
- Pupils and families are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils feel valued; their opinions are appreciated and acted upon. Families in need are supported well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have confidence in their teachers to sort out rare incidents of bullying quickly and fairly.
- Leaders support pupils' personal development extremely well. They act swiftly to support pupils whose complex needs lead to behavioural problems. This means that these pupils improve their conduct.
- Leaders have planned a broad and balanced curriculum. Engagement is high, so pupils want to attend school regularly and try to work hard.
- New assessment systems in subjects other than English and mathematics are not yet embedded. The oversight by leaders, including middle leaders, of these subjects is not precise enough.
- Pupils' achievement is not as strong in some subjects as it is in English and mathematics. Teachers set work that is sometimes too easy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed improvements in teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - spelling outcomes improve so that more pupils achieve well in writing
 - boys' attainment in English is close to that of girls
 - pupils are given work at an appropriate level of difficulty across the curriculum.
- Embed improvements in leadership and management by:
 - sharpening leaders' strategic oversight of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that all these pupils are given suitable support in order to achieve well
 - embedding new assessment systems in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that everyone knows how well pupils achieve across the curriculum
 - ensuring that all subject leaders play an effective role in improving outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and head of school are a united team. They both provide strong, effective leadership and have led improvements to tackle a few areas of weakness. Their principled leadership ensures that priorities are focused appropriately on the needs and interests of pupils, and considers the uniqueness of their community.
- Senior leaders have gained the support of staff. Many speak enthusiastically about the significant positive shift in the 'culture' of the school and the strong leadership. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's vision and how well they are supported. The school's motto, 'Together we shine', exemplifies this ethos.
- The headteacher's accurate evaluations have enabled her to target support where it is most needed and to address weaker attainment in writing. As a result, pupils' progress is improving, including that of disadvantaged pupils. Attainment is catching up with that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is effective in English and mathematics. Leaders' regular checks on teaching help them to identify weaker aspects so they can provide useful training quickly. For example, recent work to refine the use of practical equipment in mathematics is helping to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Leaders keep a close eye on each pupil's progress in English and mathematics. They notice and take action when pupils fall behind, so that they can provide extra support. Fewer pupils fall behind than did in the past. A few boys still do not make good enough progress.
- Leaders have enhanced the curriculum through exciting visits to places of interest. They have ensured that pupils value their coastal location and military history. Older pupils enthusiastically recalled their visits to the SeaCity Museum when studying the Titanic. Others shared facts about HMS Queen Elizabeth or talked about how they were inspired by navy engineers at HMS Sultan.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for well and promotes mutual respect and equality. Leaders have trained teachers in ways to deepen pupils' reflection and philosophical thinking. This means that pupils question each other and thoughtfully consider different opinions to their own. Pupils recalled how they raised funds for others in need. Some spoke sensitively about the significance of Remembrance Day, in particular for service families who are part of their school.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have appropriate opportunities to learn about British values. For example, pupils have a strong sense of democracy and consult regularly with staff and governors on how to improve their school. The youngest children learn about the rule of law when contemplating the roles of people who help them, such as the police.
- Leaders have made very effective use of the sports funding and offer a wide range of sporting opportunities. Training for staff and the purchasing of new equipment, including a climbing wall, have secured better outcomes. The proportion of pupils participating in clubs and competitive sport has notably increased. Pupils benefit from a

wide range of activities, including taekwondo and yoga. A few proudly showed off their skills to an inspector as they refined their coordination when hula-hooping.

- Leaders respond well to the increasing needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, in particular those with complex social, emotional and mental health needs. Additional funding has been used wisely to commission specialist services to help families. The inclusion leader and emotional literacy support assistant keeps a close eye on the impact of pastoral support so they can adjust quickly to pupils' emerging needs.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive well-targeted support, which is helping most to catch up, notably in reading. New assessment systems are being embedded but these do not yet help leaders to keep an incisive eye on the impact of funding on academic achievement and address any issues that arise. A few of these pupils make slow progress in some aspects of their work.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is stimulating and engaging. However, their understanding of pupils' achievement in some subjects is not routinely sharp. New assessment systems do not yet help them to gain an incisive view of achievement across the curriculum. This means that some weak progress is neither identified nor addressed.
- A few aspects of the curriculum are not challenging pupils as well as they should, for example in humanities. Pupils do not demonstrate the same quality of enquiry that they do elsewhere in lessons or show as much pride when setting out this work. Subject leaders have appropriate plans to address this, but these are in their infancy.

Governance of the school

- The governing body invests wisely in training and inducts new members well. Governors are passionate about their roles and ambitious for the school. They keep a keen oversight on the work of the headteacher through the appraisal process, and incisively check teachers' performance before making prudent pay decisions. They monitor extra funding for vulnerable pupils closely and have secured strong outcomes for pupils in sport.
- Governors are well informed about most aspects of the school's work through the headteacher's good-quality reports. This information enables governors to have a secure understanding of most of the school's work and to ask probing and challenging questions which hold leaders to account. However, when governors visit the school to evaluate its performance, their activities are not sufficiently focused on how well pupils achieve in subjects beyond English and mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established very effective systems to record any concerns about pupils and ensure that, when appropriate, these are referred to a wide range of outside agencies. School leaders work effectively to ensure that pupils and families receive the help they need. Leaders make sure that appropriate checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are carried out diligently, prior to appointment.

- Staff are well trained and know how to keep pupils safe. There are rigorous processes in place to keep an oversight of the care of pupils with complex behavioural needs.
- Governors are vigilant and check safeguarding at the school closely. They have sensibly reviewed and modified the school's systems for recording training in order to improve their monitoring.
- The home-school link worker engages effectively with families and contributes strongly to the welfare of vulnerable families. She is well trained and highly vigilant to risks, including those which challenge British values.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers share their good subject knowledge with the pupils in most subjects and make good use of wall displays to provide key information to support learning. Teachers explain and model clearly what pupils are to learn. In writing the use of well-chosen texts motivates pupils, particularly boys.
- Teachers are very positive and enthusiastic. They work well as a team. Morale is high and teaching staff feel appropriately supported. Adults plan together so that activities, including homework, generally build on pupils' earlier learning effectively.
- The warm relationships between staff and pupils secure a positive climate for learning. Teachers remain calm and do not raise their voices, ensuring a friendly and productive atmosphere. Teachers and teaching assistants manage the infrequent occasions of poor behaviour by a few individual pupils, unobtrusively and effectively.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils read skilfully. Teachers plan tasks which help pupils justify their views. For example, pupils retrieved quotations to support their views when comparing different versions of Little Red Riding Hood. Others posed their own questions, inspired by the front cover, or charted the different emotions that a character experienced, so they could develop empathy and derive possible consequences.
- Teachers reward good reading, to inspire pupils. Pupils appreciate these superstar awards and the exciting new range of books they have to read. These are helping them develop fluency, accuracy and an understanding of different writing conventions.
- Teachers work hard to design motivating and purposeful experiences, so that pupils want to write. For example, a visit to the school's forest, to discover 'fairy doors', inspired pupils to develop characterisation as they sculpted their imaginary creatures. Adults modelled techniques such as alliteration skilfully, so pupils applied them well in their own writing. Pupils shared good examples proudly to help each other learn together.
- Teachers model errors in their own work to help pupils spot these and learn to value reflection and improvement. Some pupils apply these skills well and eagerly use their 'polishing pens'. Adults are quick to give helpful feedback to pupils, but too often do not give pupils enough help to avoid them making repeated spelling errors.
- Teachers question pupils effectively to help them to think hard. In mathematics, teachers develop pupils' verbal reasoning skills well by asking them to solve problems and explain their thinking. Adults model mathematical calculations with practical

equipment, so that pupils can learn to structure the way they solve tasks. As a result, pupils are becoming more efficient in how they approach mathematical problems.

- Teachers plan interesting and meaningful lessons. In art, parents sometimes collaborate alongside pupils' projects, which inspires them to achieve well. Pupils study artists and cultures and learn new skills such as pointillism. They are rightly proud when their work is framed in the school's gallery.
- Teachers plan enquiry regularly so that pupils achieve well in science. Pupils have opportunities to frame questions, observe carefully, consider change and make connections.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school provides effective support to those pupils with particular emotional needs. The Ark provides a safe haven for all pupils. It is an invaluable resource for the few pupils that need it most, so they learn to manage their feelings and regulate their conduct.
- Pastoral support plans for individual pupils ensure that provision is modified to meet their emotional needs fully. This means that pupils' needs are met well and outbursts are significantly reducing.
- Pupils are confident and know what they need to do to become successful learners. They talk about being in 'the pit' and of ways to get themselves out of this when they are anxious and find things difficult. Adults develop pupils' resilience sensitively.
- The school's charitable work helps pupils to think about others who are less fortunate than themselves. Support for pupils whose family members work overseas in the services provides valuable nurture. This is a strong aspect of the school's work.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop physical and emotional well-being through sporting activities, a themed Healthy Living week and philosophy lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Around the school and in class, most pupils behave well and are courteous and respectful. On the playground, pupils play well together. They appreciate eating their lunch together in classrooms and lunchtimes are calm and reflective.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of bullying and are keen to make one another feel valued. Most are confident that adults in school sort out minor squabbles or the few instances of bullying quickly. They follow 'Hector's top tips' carefully to keep themselves safe on the internet, so that they do not share personal information.
- Pupils take on responsibilities and leadership roles within school with pride, such as those who are mini-governors. Everyone plays their part in sharing responsibilities, including those that supervise and return lunch trolleys to the servery safely.

- Most parents appreciate the ways the school supports their children as individuals. Pupils understand the purpose of the school's 'super heroes', such as Respectful Rubin, so they behave well. As one parent commented, 'Assembly times are lovely to see and all of the children are so well behaved and managed in a kind, gentle and positive way.'
- Leaders work closely with parents to reinforce the benefits of good attendance and retain a sharp focus on this. As a result, attendance is in line with the national figure. Punctuality is improving and pupils arrive increasingly well prepared to learn.
- Pupils are generally attentive and try their best with their learning tasks. However, they do not progress as well as they could in humanities, or take enough pride in some 'topic' work.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Historical weakness in the assessment of writing resulted in weaker attainment in the past. Leaders have overseen improvements and addressed this, and pupils' progress is now good.
- Attainment in 2017 was broadly in line with the national picture in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils in the school are sustaining and building on this positive picture. Leaders agree that not enough is done to ensure that all boys achieve well across the school, despite recent improvements.
- Strong phonics teaching underpins pupils' good progress in reading, which is resulting in strong achievement. An average proportion of pupils met the required standard in the phonics screening check in 2017. Pupils currently in the school develop fluency and comprehension skills well.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. They develop their calculation skills well, and use different mathematical jottings and resources to help them solve problems. Their knowledge of number facts, for example number bonds in Year 1, develops appropriately over time so they become fluent in arithmetic.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported effectively in class and most achieve well. On occasions, some tasks are not adapted precisely to help pupils catch up and as a result a small number of pupils fall behind.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, particularly those with the lowest starting points. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics is increasing in key stage 1.
- The proportion of the most able pupils who are achieving a greater depth of learning has increased in reading and writing, including for disadvantaged pupils. They achieve more strongly in these subjects than in the wider curriculum.
- Although pupils have many interesting opportunities to learn across the wider curriculum, their achievement in some subjects is not strong. This is mainly because the tasks that teachers provide for pupils limit their responses at times and, as a result, inhibit their progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are prepared well for Year 1. They make good progress from their starting points, including disadvantaged pupils. Teachers and other members of staff work closely with parents and external agencies to provide the right level of support for each child. Welfare requirements are secure.
- Staff are calm and caring and children feel valued and secure. Parents have the opportunity to 'stay and play', which helps children to settle quickly into the Reception classes. Parents new to the school spoke highly of this opportunity.
- Children behave well. They are taught to listen and get along with each other. They cooperate well, sharing resources, for example, as they carefully moved crates, planks and guttering to create imaginary worlds and routes.
- Adults take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and encourage them to talk together purposefully. They question children skilfully about what they know and want to find out, setting up interesting activities. For example, children observed how far toy cars travelled down slopes and talked about the effect of the textured surface.
- Phonics is taught well. Adults' pronunciation is clear and accurate. Overall, children make good progress in reading and writing, and some of the most able children are beginning to attain more highly in these areas than in the past.
- In the Reception classes, teachers capture children's interests well and as a result, children are inspired to write. They develop and link their ideas into simple sentences and set to their writing eagerly. For example, when returning from the school's forest, a child successfully applied his knowledge of sounds to write independently about how a dinosaur hunts for prey.
- A range of interesting resources spark children's mathematical curiosity and help them to form numbers and make simple calculations. Children were eager to throw tennis balls into numbered tubes to record and compare scores. Adults sensitively encouraged them to use concepts such as 'more than' or 'less than' when talking about the results.
- During teacher-led learning activities, adults question and guide children to move their learning on well, for example when programming toys and adjusting simple directional commands.
- Adults make careful notes about children's progress, which are used well to plan learning activities. Close links with parents ensure that staff share useful information about learning. Leaders are beginning to gather parental views to inform their assessments further.
- Strong leadership of the early years has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for children. Boys are improving their attainment from their lower starting points in some areas. Recent gains include improving their self-confidence and awareness, and their listening skills so they can be ready to learn.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of what works well and are adjusting their plans to develop aspects of the curriculum that are slightly less effective than others. For example, leaders have identified the need to demand more of children as they follow their interests through play.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 116163 |
| Local authority | Hampshire |
| Inspection number | 10045778 |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 261 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Gordon Duff |
| Executive Headteacher | Debby Marshall |
| Telephone number | 02392 581208 |
| Website | www.elsoninfantschool.co.uk |
| Email address | d.marshall@elsongomer-inf.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 8–9 May 2014 |

Information about this school

- Elson is a larger-than-average-sized infant school. The early years includes three Reception classes. Pupils are taught throughout the school in single-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The school serves pupils of service families who are eligible for additional funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club. This is run by a private company which has separate Ofsted registration and is inspected separately.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector also met with three governors and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited 13 lessons, three of which were visited with the assistant headteacher. In addition, the headteacher and head of school observed part lessons with an inspector.
- Inspectors listened to four pupils read and met with groups of pupils to talk about their views of the books they were reading.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books, spoke with pupils about their work and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and met with a small group of pupils to discuss their views about safety and the wider curriculum.
- Parents' views were taken into account through face-to-face informal discussions. Inspectors considered 22 responses to the online survey, Parent View, including 26 free-text comments. The school's own surveys of parents' views were also considered.
- Inspectors took account of 27 survey responses submitted by staff.
- Inspectors checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, staff appraisals and records of monitoring and improvement. They observed pupils in the playground, at lunchtime and around the school.

Inspection team

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| Susan Aspland, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Barney Geen | Ofsted Inspector |
| Debra Anderson | Ofsted Inspector |

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