

Elaine Primary Academy

Elaine Avenue, Strood, Kent ME2 2YN

Inspection dates	15–16 June
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require 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

- Positive changes introduced by the executive headteacher are beginning to have an impact, but teaching is not yet consistent between year groups.
- Leaders are beginning to use information about the progress of pupils to identify gaps in their learning but some teachers are still developing their proficiency. As a result, teaching does not always meet the needs of pupils.
- Pupils have gaps in their knowledge of basic skills in mathematics and English, and this leads to slower progress.
- Some teaching does not provide enough challenge for pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils do not always work at the level they are capable of.
- Pupils do not always take responsibility for their own learning and when this happens they do not move on quickly to the next activity. They do not always know how to improve their work.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough and this affects their learning.
- Parents do not always feel well informed about their children's learning and cannot always support it at home.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has brought stability to the school through her influential leadership and positive recruitment of teachers and leaders.
- The governors and trust board work effectively with the executive headteacher to provide sustained challenge. This has led to improved learning and an increase in the progress of pupils.
- The trust has built a sustainable and flexible team which can support a drive for excellence. Through this, teachers and leaders are developing their skills.
- Middle leaders are beginning to share the good teaching practice seen in some year groups more widely across the school. As a result, improvements in teaching are evident.
- Early years teaching is well led and provides children with a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that it is consistently good or better, by making sure that all teachers:
 - refine planning to more accurately meet the needs and starting points of all pupils
 - provide more effective feedback and guidance to help pupils to take the next steps in their learning
 - assess achievements regularly in lessons to help pupils to understand how well they are progressing
 - develop speaking and listening skills and improve the quality of questioning
 - improve spelling and handwriting
 - strengthen basic skills in all aspects of mathematics
 - provide a wider range of learning opportunities for the most able pupils.
- Develop the positive relationships with parents which exist in some year groups so that all parents are more able to support their children using:
 - clear information on reading and homework
 - guidance on what is being taught in class and advice on ways to support their children at home
 - advice on how to improve the attendance of their children where this is too low.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher has a clear vision and high aspirations for the pupils and staff. She works effectively with governors and the trust board, who support her, to rapidly improve teaching and learning.
- Leaders are improving the quality of teaching rapidly by introducing requirements for minimum standards and non-negotiable practices. There are robust systems to check on the quality of teaching. Leaders use these well to reward performance and pay fairly. As a result, the expectations of staff have risen and pupils are trying harder.
- Senior leaders set high expectation and provide support to staff through training and team planning. This has improved the consistency of provision and supports increasing proficiency in teaching. The introduction of rigorous systems to track performance is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Through early identification and training, middle leaders are providing stability and sustainability for the school. The training they receive is helping them to understand what a leader needs to know and do. They have shared planning time with leaders from other schools. As a result, the leaders of mathematics, reading and writing are now able to effectively support teachers, through better planning, assessment and early intervention, to improve the quality of teaching.
- Chalklands provision is well led and provides an important service for the local authority and strong additional support to the school, by providing some short-term placements for pupils needing this support. Leaders have a clear understanding of what is effective and provide guidance for teachers and teaching assistants to help pupils in all areas of their learning.
- Leaders plan well to support all pupils with special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged. They use regular meetings to check pupils' needs and progress. They have increased provision to include: specialised teaching; mentoring; better resources; small-group teaching and in-class intervention. This has resulted in improved progress for these groups of pupils.
- Leaders at all levels are ambitious for the school. They know that many pupils have had inconsistent teaching in the past. Leaders are using changes to the curriculum nationally and new assessment strategies as a way of boosting the school's performance all round. The curriculum covers a wide variety of subjects which help pupils to develop well. Leaders use shared planning but also provide opportunities for individual input for teachers, through topic choices.
- Pupils have access to a wide variety of clubs, activities and competitions. These include a range of sports, information and communication technology (ICT), minecraft club and cookery.
- The school has received support from a national leader of education (NLE) and the academy trust thoroughly checks the work of school leaders and governors. Trust members and governors are focused on the needs of each individual so that outcomes become as good as they can be.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium and physical education (PE) and sport premium for primary schools is used effectively. As a result pupils are making better progress, they know how to be fit and healthy and behaviour has improved.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has recently been restructured to increase its effectiveness. Governors are stringent in holding the school's leaders to account through regular meetings that focus upon pupils' progress and school improvement.
 - The local governing body are well trained and have recently reorganised the way they work. As a result, they now make an increasing contribution to school improvement. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and work well with leaders on planning for school improvement. They are able to track progress and challenge the executive headteacher effectively.
 - Governors report to the trust board and have a positive working relationship which promotes centralised practices such as setting expectations for teacher performance and standards for classroom practice.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems to recruit and train staff are suitably robust. The school makes good use of trust support. Pupils know how to stay safe including information about e-safety. Parents at the school gate report that behaviour is now well managed and improving and that their children are happy and safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good because some teachers are new to the school or at the start of their careers. Where teachers have not yet developed their skills, the progress of pupils is slower.
- Agreed teaching practices are not routinely used in all lessons and this inconsistency is hindering pupils' understanding of how well they are progressing.
- Teachers give pupils advice on how to improve their learning but pupils do not always have confidence to take the next steps and improve their work without adult support. Pupils' understanding of how to improve as a result of the feedback they are given is inconsistent. At times, they have misconceptions in mathematics which are not always addressed in a timely manner. Leaders are working with teachers to address this but practice is not yet consistent.
- The school has a legacy of low standards, with many pupils lacking basic skills. Leaders are addressing this with a strong focus on the development of number skills, phonics and reading. Pupils across all key stages were seen to be making good progress in number work.
- Planning for problem solving and reasoning is not yet well developed. Therefore, the most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge.
- Standards in writing have been low but the most recent work shows that most pupils are making better progress, with some making significant progress. Pupils learn to edit and improve their work but spelling is not always accurate and handwriting is not yet consistently good. Leaders have introduced some standard practices including the use of target vocabulary, working walls and models of better writing, which are having a positive effect on learning.
- Guided reading sessions are well structured but many pupils need more opportunities to read independently and with parents, because some pupils were unable to understand and solve word problems. Parents of younger children come into school on a regular basis and reading days are organised to help parents to read with their children.
- Pupils say that teachers make learning fun. They enjoy science and topic work, but many pupils do not sustain an interest in their own learning. They lack the resilience to work independently over a sustained period. Leaders have provided them with some strategies to encourage independence and rewards for effort, which has allowed some pupils to achieve greater independence.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make a positive contribution to the learning of individuals and groups. They work well alongside the class teacher to help pupils to focus on their learning and to provide early intervention. Pupils make good progress in small groups as a result of skilful teaching.
- Staff know the pupils and support them well so that they are all included in learning and are now making better progress. Leaders have identified disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs or disability and provide them with additional support. Initiatives include dog mentoring and play therapy. These have raised pupils' self-esteem and improved their performance.
- Speaking and listening are not yet well developed, with some older pupils still needing direct questions to encourage simple responses. In the early years this is being addressed, with teachers encouraging children to talk together and to respond to a wide range of questions using complete sentences.
- Leaders help teachers to model the use of language. Most teachers were seen to use timely, brief teacher input to punctuate lessons. Some teachers were seen to use effective questioning to encourage pupils to explain their ideas and develop their thinking, and this resulted in pupils making good progress within the lesson.
- School leaders have recently introduced more opportunities to engage with parents, including a parents' forum. This has begun to help them to support their children's learning more effectively. Some parents recognised this improved engagement and were pleased to confirm that their children were now learning better. The views of parents were varied, and some still felt that pupils still suffered from the number of staff changes in the past. They said that they needed better information from school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils do not arrive at school punctually, but teachers make sure they are integrated into learning quickly so that their lateness does not affect the learning of others. The breakfast club has been introduced to provide a safe and social start to the day. As a result, punctuality and attendance have improved. Pupils come into school ready to learn.

- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils are met at the start of the day and they are escorted through the building quietly to their classrooms.
- Pupils play well together at playtime and lunchtime. Adults support pupils and help them to organise play activities.
- The school and classrooms are well cared for. Teachers use display to support learning and to promote a positive ethos.
- A rewards system promotes good behaviour and pupils understand the actions which lead to positive or negative outcomes.
- Pupils have leadership opportunities which include school council, prefects, and play leaders. Pupils take pride in these roles and know their suggestions for improvements have been acted on. They believe that they are having a positive impact in supporting their peers.
- Pupils are encouraged to stay healthy through PE, keeping active and eating healthy food. They like their school dinners and recognise the importance of a balanced diet.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe and stay safe. They understand what bullying is and that it can take different forms. They know that any language or actions that may cause offence will not be tolerated and that they are safe to learn without any type of discrimination.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- School records confirm that the number of recorded instances of poor behaviour and the number of exclusions has been high but these are now reducing because of the consistency with which leaders manage the actions of individuals and support their wider needs.
- The school has a clear behaviour policy and does not tolerate poor behaviour. Expectations for behaviour are made very clear to pupils. Pupils understand that these expectations help them to behave well in class and make better progress.
- Although behaviour has improved, the behaviour of some pupils is not yet good enough. Some pupils find it difficult to sustain interest in lessons. They can become distracted and lose focus on learning.
- Pupils generally show responsible attitudes and conduct themselves well in the playground, at lunchtimes and around the school. Most pupils respond well to teachers' and other adults' instructions because they know how they should behave. On occasion, however, some pupils need to be reminded too frequently by adults rather than managing their own behaviour.
- Attendance in the past was below the national average and too many pupils missed school regularly. The school has now developed robust procedures to improve attendance, including the use of an attendance advisory practitioner. Leaders are steadfast in their efforts to improve attendance and promote positive attitudes through assemblies and prizes for the pupils and gaining parental support through the parents' forum. Attendance figures are showing signs of improvement and fewer pupils than previously miss school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, the school failed to meet floor standards in reading, writing and mathematics, with a decline in progress measures for both mathematics and writing.
- Recently appointed middle leaders are being supported by the trust and the executive headteacher to implement new strategies and better learning opportunities. As a result, the current Year 6 pupils have made rapid progress during this academic year in both literacy and mathematics.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability is improving. The gaps between their performance and that of other pupils have narrowed. Where individual pupils have not made good progress there are specific interventions in place which are improving performance.
- Progress made by pupils eligible for free school meals is variable, with more consistent improvement in key stage 1. As a result of training and support for teachers since the start of the year, disadvantaged pupils across the school are making better progress and gaps in attainment are beginning to close.
- In the 2015 screening test for phonics (letters and sounds that they make), results were below national averages but outcomes have been improving over the past three years and school data suggests that this improvement is continuing for the current pupils.
- In 2015, attainment was below average for most measures and well below for expected outcomes in mathematics. However, the improvements to leadership, introduction of minimum expectations and better planning together with pupil progress tracking are beginning to improve outcomes for all pupils.
- Pupils enter the Nursery and Reception classes with their development, skills and understanding below that expected for their age. Pupils make good progress in Nursery and are well prepared for Reception. In

2015, pupils had made good progress in many areas but not in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are now making better progress in all areas as they are given a wide variety of opportunities to develop these skills.

- In 2015 the school had a small number of pupils whose prior attainment had been high. These all attained the minimum expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics, but although they attained well at a higher level in reading this was not true for mathematics and writing. The most able pupils do not consistently have sufficient challenge in these two subjects.

Early years provision

is good

- The majority of children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge which are below those typically seen for their age. As a result of the interesting, stimulating environment and good teaching, they quickly become confident learners.
- Early years parents feel well supported and have strong positive relationships with the teachers. They are kept informed of their children's learning and progress. They are given support and guidance for helping their children at home and are invited into school to see what their children are learning.
- Teaching has improved this year as a result of strong leadership. Characteristics of effective learning are designed into planning and learning journals are used well. As a result, children make good progress from low starting points. The number of children achieving a good level of development is increasing.
- Communication and language is being developed through high expectations for good speaking and listening skills and effective teaching of phonics. One parent said, 'he wouldn't talk before he came to school and now he talks all the time'.
- Children who attend the Nursery make better progress than those who join the school in Reception. They benefit from a strong Nursery provision.
- Children have a wide range of experiences. These often relate to a central theme. An example seen was the study of a rainbow fish story being used to develop written work and reading. This was extended into a study of dead fish and crabs and live giant snails. Pupils were able to talk about their observations and develop language skills.
- The early years provision needs further development of the outdoor learning area so that this can reflect the stronger indoor environment.
- Children need more opportunities to learn independently through rich activities supported by questions and challenge. At times, the adult-led activities restricted their learning.
- The Nursery and Reception classes provide a safe, nurturing environment for children. Children are well cared for. Children in the Reception Year now are well prepared socially and academically for their time in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	138504
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10012331

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsored by the Williamson Trust
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	366
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Veen Rama
Executive headteacher	Lucy Davenport
Telephone number	01634 294 817
Website	www.elaine.medway.sch.uk
Email address	office@elaineacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 April 2014

Information about this school

- This is an above average-sized primary academy sponsored by the Williamson Trust.
- The academy has had additional support and guidance from an NLE during the current academic year.
- About half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils needing extra support is above average. The proportion with an education, health and care plan or statement is well above average.
- The Chalklands Opportunity Centre provision is attached to the school. This is a specially resourced provision for 18 pupils with behavioural, social and emotional needs. This provides an education for primary-aged pupils from across the Medway area.
- The school has Nursery provision.
- The school did not meet the government's floor targets in 2015, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has had a substantive executive headteacher since September 2014 who has recently been joined by a school improvement adviser. Together they are bringing stability to the school following an extended period of change to staffing, leadership and governance.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons and five part-lessons across all year groups and subjects. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed small-group teaching and the work of the Chalklands Provision. They took learning walks around the school and dropped into classrooms.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff, governors and trust representatives.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents including the school's strategic planning, minutes of meetings, reports of attendance and behaviour and records related to pupils' safety and academic progress.
- Inspectors scrutinised books in lessons and a sample of Year 4 and 5 pupils' English and mathematics books.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes, around the school and during other activities. Inspectors listened to pupils read. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally and formally.
- Inspectors took into account the 26 responses from parents on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) as well as speaking to parents informally at the beginning of both days.

Inspection team

Ann McCarthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Marshall	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Keen	Ofsted Inspector

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