

# Inspection of The Elms Primary School

The Elms, Gloucester Street, Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 7HZ

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Inspection dates:	13 and 14 May 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Calum Jacques. This school is part of Cambrian Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Richard Evans, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Cook. There is also an executive headteacher, Joseph Rubba, who is responsible for this school and one other.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The Elms Primary School is an inclusive and happy community. Pupils typically describe their school as a friendly place where people are kind to each other. They talk proudly about their school values, such as kindness and resilience, and how they are rewarded for demonstrating these. Another of the school's values is community; many pupils take on leadership roles, such as play leaders or reading buddies, through which they support and care for others.

Pupils recognise that the school has high expectations of what they can achieve. However, last year the school's published outcomes were below the national average, particularly in reading and mathematics. Improvements have been made to the quality of education, and current pupils are learning well.

The school is determined that pupils should have a range of opportunities to learn about the world around them. There has been a focus on diversifying the curriculum and the books pupils read. This encourages pupils to appreciate different cultures and backgrounds. Pupils enjoy opportunities to showcase their talents and interests during assemblies or performances in the community. They look forward to events, such as sporting festivals and science fairs, where they compete against other schools.

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

The school has been through a period of change since converting from a junior school to a primary school in September 2022. This coincided with a period of disruption to staffing and leadership, which are now stable. Under current leadership, the school has started to flourish and there have been notable improvements within a short period of time.

Pupils' behaviour has improved dramatically this academic year. The school has focused on developing consistent approaches to support pupils to manage their behaviour. This work has been successful. Pupils and teachers recognise the more positive culture in the school, which is built on strong relationships and shared values. Routines are established quickly in the early years so that children understand what is expected of them as they move up through the school.

The curriculum has been carefully considered so that it is clear what the school wants pupils to know and remember in each subject. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and present new concepts clearly and precisely. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to recall their learning, for example when developing fluency with important number facts in mathematics. Sometimes, in the wider curriculum, tasks are not designed to challenge pupils fully. At these times, pupils do not learn to apply their learning confidently and independently.

Teachers know pupils well at this school. They make frequent checks on learning, both during lessons and as part of regular assessments. There are systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and these have been refined over

time. This includes the early identification of children's needs as part of the transition into Nursery and Reception.

The school has developed an effective and systematic approach to ensuring that pupils become competent readers. Staff delivering this programme benefit from regular training and are highly knowledgeable. They use regular checks on pupils' learning to adapt the delivery of the curriculum. If pupils fall behind, they receive additional support to catch up with their peers. Reading is prioritised right from Nursery, where staff lay strong foundations through a focus on communication and language. Throughout the early years, children benefit from opportunities to engage with books and stories. They particularly look forward to visits from the 'mystery reader', where a parent or carer visits their class to share a story with them.

Pupils' personal development is prioritised by the school. There is a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe online. Pupils are taught about different cultures and religions. Information about the PSHE curriculum is shared with parents so that they know what is being discussed in class.

Leaders, including governors and trust leaders, know their school well. They have a nuanced understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Changes at the school have been managed skilfully and with careful consideration of staff's workload. The school has utilised expertise and capacity from the wider trust, for example, by bringing together colleagues with similar roles to learn from each other. There is a strong collaborative culture among staff, who feel proud to see the difference they are making.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Sometimes the design of tasks across the wider curriculum is not consistently as ambitious as it could be. This means that some pupils do not learn to apply their learning as confidently and independently as they could, for example in extended writing tasks. The school should ensure that the lesson activities provide pupils with suitably challenging opportunities to apply their learning across a range of subjects.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138009
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10379858
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	311
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Anthony Cook
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Richard Evans
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joseph Rubba (executive headteacher) Calum Jacques (head of school)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.theelmsprimary.co.uk">www.theelmsprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The Elms Primary School was formerly known as Faringdon Junior School until September 2022. Up until this point, the school only admitted pupils aged seven and upwards. The school now admits pupils from age three as part of its nursery provision.
- Since the school became a primary school in 2022, it has had three different headteachers. The executive headteacher joined the school in September 2024.
- The school is part of Cambrian Learning Trust, which has been recently formed as part of a merger between two local trusts.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of senior staff in the school, including the executive headteacher, the head of school and the assistant headteacher. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local governing committee, the board of trustees and the Cambrian Learning Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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 as open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to surveys from parents, pupils and staff. Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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