

Elmhurst Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123663
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380707
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Thomas
Headteacher	Hilary Powell
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons or part lessons were observed taught by 12 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, representatives of the governing body, and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documentation and policies, including those concerning safeguarding, the school development plan, information from the school's monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress, and reports written about the school. The inspectors scrutinised the questionnaires returned by pupils and staff as well as the 88 questionnaires returned by parents and carers of the pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils are making better than satisfactory progress, especially the boys in writing, the more-able pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those in the early stages of learning English.
- Whether teaching assessment is sufficiently accurate to identify possible underachievement and whether expectations are high enough.
- How senior leaders and governors evaluate the school's provision and whether their evaluations are sufficiently accurate and searching to ensure the school continues to improve.

Information about the school

Elmhurst Junior is a fairly large school of its type. Most of its pupils come from families of White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who are in the early stages of speaking English are below average, but increasing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Their needs are mostly moderate learning difficulties and there are an increasing number of pupils with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and those who are within the autistic syndrome. The proportion of pupils who join classes in all year groups and those who leave before the end of Year 6 is broadly the same as seen nationally. However, almost half of these pupils are facing challenges in their lives that make them vulnerable and/or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Healthy School Plus award and the Active Plus award last year. The school runs a small daily breakfast club.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Elmhurst Junior is a good school that promotes pupils' academic and personal development well. The comments of one parent were typical of many when she wrote, 'I am very happy with the education and care my child receives at Elmhurst School. It has a happy and lively environment and the staff are all excellent at treating all children as individuals.'

Attainment has been broadly average for several years. The vast majority of pupils achieve well from their different starting points, due to good teaching that stimulates pupils' interest and promotes their understanding of how they can improve. Pupils' progress and attainment in reading is particularly strong. Attainment in writing, although still broadly average, is the weakest aspect, particularly for some boys, and fewer pupils reach the higher than expected standard of Level 5 than in reading. Attainment in mathematics is also broadly average but progress is a little inconsistent in some classes because gaps in some pupils' learning are not always sufficiently well identified and addressed which slows their progress. Writing and mathematics are areas of focus for the school. A variety of appropriate strategies are used but they are not yet having sufficient impact on raising attainment.

Pupils enjoy school and their activities. Positive improvements have been made to the curriculum, which motivates pupils' interest well. Good behaviour and very positive attitudes to their work also have a positive impact on the progress pupils make. They try hard and want to do well. These good attitudes, the ability to work well in groups and independently, effective use of computer skills and above-average attendance prepare pupils well for their next stage of education.

Safeguarding procedures are good and relationships between teaching staff and pupils are strong. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and this underpins their good personal development. They have many opportunities to work with other pupils within the school, and contribute to the local community such as by hosting the Remembrance Day service. They have contacts with a school in London through the work of the Arts Council and have strong links with a school in Kenya. All these opportunities have improved pupils' awareness of the diversity of other cultures in Great Britain and internationally. This has been a successful focus since the previous inspection, so promoting good community cohesion.

The good leadership of the headteacher has established a very cohesive school where each individual child matters. The staff work very well as a supportive team with a clear ambition to provide the best learning opportunities for all pupils. The

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many good aspects of the school's provision have been effectively maintained and community cohesion has improved. Evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses are, on the whole, accurate and lead to appropriate focus for improvement. Results from national tests are analysed to identify potential weaknesses but at present, attainment has remained within the average range. The governing body has a number of new members and, under the leadership of the new Chair, have made positive changes to the ways they work, to increase governors' knowledge of the school's provision in order to support more effective monitoring. These factors are evidence of the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, raise attainment in writing by:
 - enabling boys to reach the same standards as girls
 - ensuring pupils use their writing skills, developed in English lessons, to the same standard in other subjects
 - extending the skills of the more-able pupils so they securely work within Level 5
 - provide a clear plan of action for the governing body so they can be fully involved in monitoring progress.
- By July 2012, raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - developing activities that effectively build on pupils' prior learning and challenge their thinking
 - clearly identifying any gaps in pupils' learning so that effective strategies are developed to address them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Scrutiny of pupils' work show that when pupils start in the school, a large group have below-average attainment, especially in writing. Pupils settle well into the school and all groups of pupils make good progress, although there is some inconsistency within mathematics. Pupils in the early stages of learning English do particularly well because of their good support. Those pupils who face challenging circumstances that make them vulnerable make good progress in their personal and social development, which prepares them successfully for effective learning. Good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the various support groups also enables them to achieve well. They tackle their activities positively. One less-able group in a Year 4 class, for example, worked independently and confidently recorded the different shapes they had made of a certain area on their i-pads.

Pupils respond well to challenges. Pupils in Year 3, for example, enjoyed the investigation to find how many different ice creams can be made using two scoops of two different flavours. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 work well collaboratively, sharing ideas and have a good understanding of how they can improve their work. Behaviour in lessons is at least good. Pupils are attentive and responsive to the teachers'

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questions. At breaktime, however, play can be a little boisterous because there is very little for pupils to do except play football. The school council is currently developing plans for purchasing additional resources and play equipment. Pupils take responsibility well and carry out their tasks responsibly. Some are actively involved in sustainability projects such as composting and they work with different groups within the community as well as raising money for local and worldwide charities. Pupils show empathy for those less well off than themselves. Pupils in Year 5 showed considerable awareness of the sacrifice of soldiers in past and current wars in their work leading up to the Remembrance Day service that they would be leading. Pupils have a good understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle, as can be testified by the school’s Healthy School Plus and the Activemark awards.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good levels of care support and guidance underpin the pupils’ good progress. The staff are quick to respond to pupils’ individual needs and to support both the child and its family if required. There are many examples of how vulnerable pupils have been enabled to settle well into the school, and effective work with local agencies has ensured their safety and on-going support. The school’s nurture group enables pupils with personal and social difficulties to develop strategies that will help them overcome negative thoughts and emotions and build self-esteem so they can settle to learning. Effective intervention strategies are also used well to support pupils’ academic learning. Induction procedures are effective and links with the local secondary school ensure that pupils’ transfer is smooth and, on the whole, carefree.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The school responded positively to a request from parents and carers to start a breakfast club and this now provides a calm and enjoyable start to the day for a small group of pupils.

Teachers are typically well prepared and engage their pupils using a good range of resources, especially information and communication technology. Sometimes information from assessment, especially in mathematics, is not used as well as it could be to identify gaps in pupils’ knowledge, but teachers are often effective in monitoring pupils’ learning in the lesson and adapting the activities to better extend their understanding and skills. Teaching focuses well on helping the pupils to understand how they can improve their work. Good partnerships with local schools are being used to develop a shared overview of attainment and ensure assessment is accurate.

The newly devised curriculum stimulates pupils’ interest and motivation to learn. There is an appropriate breadth and balance of subjects and the planning of pupils’ skills is effectively tracked to ensure they are progressively developed from year to year. There is a satisfactory focus on promoting boys’ interest and a good focus on using pupils’ English skills to support their learning in other subjects. However, their writing in history, for example, is not always marked with the same attention as it is in English lessons. A good range of additional activities, visits and visitors enrich pupils’ learning through extending their first-hand experience and skills.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher clearly lead the school’s ambition to raise attainment and to ensure pupils make good progress. An effective range of monitoring procedures are well established. Strategies that focus on improving teaching and learning are promoted well and based on accurate evaluation. This is improving teaching strategies that support pupils’ understanding of how to improve their work and has enabled better progress to be made for many pupils, especially in reading. It is not as yet moving attainment sufficiently in mathematics and in boys’ writing. Assessment data is used well to help staff focus on areas of pupils’ underachievement. Weaker standards in writing last year have prompted the school’s attention in this direction and a variety of strategies are being promoted but there is no clear plan shared with the governing body to support their overview and ability to monitor the school’s progress. Governors are effective in ensuring the safety of staff

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and pupils. Policies and procedures are clear and carried out effectively. The school is rigorous in its monitoring of adults' suitability to work with children, although currently only the headteacher is trained in safer recruitment. Staff are well trained in aspects of first aid and child protection. There are strong links with outside agencies which ensure information and aspects of concern are shared in order to keep pupils safe. The provision for community cohesion is good and the staff are rigorous in tackling any discrimination. Pupils of all abilities are enabled to take advantage of all that the school offers and to do well.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. There are regular and frequent opportunities for parents and carers to learn about how well their children are doing. Parents' and carers' comments on the inspection questionnaire referred to the staff's readiness to listen to their anxieties and concerns. Finances in the school are managed very well and the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents and carers responded to the parent questionnaire, which is a little higher than that found nationally. The vast majority of responses were supportive of the school and there were a good number of comments that referred to the good levels of care given to the pupils, to helpful and friendly staff and how pupils enjoy their activities. A few parents and carers were concerned about the behaviour of some pupils and felt that they were not always sufficiently well managed. A few others felt that teaching was variable and that some pupils did not make as much progress in mathematics as they should. Inspectors raised these

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issues with the school and investigated them thoroughly. Their findings are in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elmhurst Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 244 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	63	31	35	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	64	27	31	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	37	42	46	52	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	49	40	45	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	54	61	29	33	1	1	2	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	43	49	42	48	1	1	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	43	45	51	1	1	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	45	44	50	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	47	53	35	40	5	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	43	39	44	5	6	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	39	46	52	2	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	56	64	24	27	5	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	59	67	24	27	3	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmhurst Junior School, Elmhurst Lane, Street BA16 0HH.

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. You are rightly proud of your school and what it does for you. You and your parents and carers are correct in thinking that you go to a good school.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- You make good progress to reach standards that are similar to those of most pupils nationally. You do really well in your reading but could do a little better in both your writing and your mathematics.
- You want to do well, you try hard and enjoy your work.
- You behave particularly well in lessons.
- You are polite, friendly and helpful, and you enjoy taking responsibility.
- You are taught well and all your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting.
- The school is led well by your headteacher. There are good links with local schools and you have many visits and visitors to the school to make your work more interesting.
- The staff look after you well so you feel safe and happy.

Even though Elmhurst is a good school, there are two things we have asked your headteacher and staff to do to make it even better:

- help you to do even better in your writing
- help you make consistently good progress in mathematics so you get better at your work in mathematics.

Remember, you also do your part by continuing to work hard and to always play sensibly in the playground.

Yours sincerely

Hazel Callaghan
Lead inspector

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