

# The Elmgreen School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	29649
<b>Local authority</b>	Lambeth
<b>Inspection number</b>	381253
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 February – 1 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Anne Wellham HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	882
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Rogers
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Wilkinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April – 1 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Elmcourt Road London SE27 9BZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 766 5020
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@the-elmgreen-school.org.uk

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## Introduction

Inspection team

Anne Wellham

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Kennedy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ann Sydney

Additional inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 31 teachers teaching 31 lessons, of which four were joint observations with subject or faculty leaders. They also made a series of short visits to another six lessons. Meetings were held with six groups of students, five members of the governing body, a group of parents, a representative from the local authority and school staff including senior and middle leaders and teachers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also analysed 105 responses to the parents' and carers' questionnaire completed during the inspection and questionnaires completed by students and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including school data on attainment and progress, development plans, school self-evaluations and policies, including those for safeguarding students' welfare.

## Information about the school

The school is the first ever parent-promoted school, a school established directly at the behest of local parents with support from the local authority. It opened in September 2007 and moved to a new building in September 2009. Student numbers have increased since the last inspection with the addition of three year groups. The school currently provides education for students in Years 7 to 11. A sixth form will open in September 2012. It is a smaller than average secondary school and it is oversubscribed. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above national average. The students come from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Many students are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Black Caribbean heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally. The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of educational needs, are above national average. The school's performance against current floor standards (national minimum expectations for attainment and progress) will be known when the first group of Year 11 students complete their GCSE examinations in July 2012.

The school specialises in humanities including English. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has taken up post and roles have been added to the leadership team. There have been changes to the leadership of English, mathematics and science. The number of staff has increased year on year in line with the increasing number of students entering the school.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Elmgreen is a satisfactory school. Its key strengths include a flexible curriculum which is responsive to the changing needs and interests of the students, a strong pastoral system and a successful partnership with parents and carers. Overall effectiveness is not yet good because inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall. Inspectors' evaluation of students' learning and performance in lessons confirms that students are making good progress in English where the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. As the school continues to develop and build on recent experience the variations in attainment across subjects and year groups are being tackled effectively.
- A strong ethos based on the values of trust and respect underpins the work of the school. A safe, inclusive environment where all students are valued as individuals contributes to students' strong spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Students are friendly and respond positively to reminders on how to conduct themselves appropriately as they move around the school and in lessons. Attendance is broadly average with some variations in the attendance of different groups of students. Robust actions are being taken to improve punctuality and to reduce higher than average levels of persistent absence.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A considerable number of new staff are recruited each year as the school grows in size and it takes time to embed good practice securely across the school.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and the governing body are driving change and improvement effectively by maintaining a relentless focus on raising aspirations. Well-planned actions arising from honest and rigorous self-evaluation are being targeted to eliminate the variability in achievement and reduce persistent absence. A rigorous programme of monitoring and targeted professional development is improving the proportion

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of good teaching and staff performance is managed effectively.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Raise attainment in mathematics and science by improving the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that all groups of students make good or better progress across all subjects by:
  - matching learning to the needs, abilities and interests of all students so that all activities and tasks present sufficient challenge
  - improving the quality of marking across subjects so that all students receive regular high-quality written feedback on their work
  - establishing good habits for learning and routines that are clearly understood by all.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

In the majority of lessons observed the quality of students' learning was satisfactory and students made satisfactory progress. In subjects where teaching is consistently good and all students engage positively in their learning they make good progress. The information gathered from monitoring the achievement of students from different groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, is being used well to inform teacher's planning but the learning that takes place in lessons is not consistent enough to secure good progress overall. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students with some individuals making good progress, including hearing impaired students, as a result of targeted support and intervention and the strong pastoral care in the school.

The school does not have a full set of national test and examination results to compare to national benchmarks. Results from examinations taken by Year 11 students part-way through their GCSE and equivalent courses indicate that they are making good progress from their starting points in subjects where their results are in line with or above national averages. Current progress is satisfactory in mathematics and science and in history and geography. Targeted intervention, planned changes to the curriculum and improved moderation to check the accuracy of teacher assessment are allowing leaders in mathematics, science and humanities to tackle weaknesses. Students are aware of their targets. In subjects where progress is good

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they understand the link between their targets and their current work and know what to do to improve to the next level.

### **Quality of teaching**

Strategies to improve satisfactory teaching are increasing the proportion of good lessons and inadequate teaching is rare. Students value the high quality of support they receive and the positive relationships that they have with their teachers. Written comments from parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire reflected a wide range of views about how well their children are taught and the progress they are making. Inspectors observed variations in the quality of teaching and learning.

The best learning takes place when students of different abilities are challenged to think for themselves and they are able to pose questions, work in groups and solve problems collaboratively. The most effective teaching uses a wide range of activities that develop students' oral, literacy and numeracy skills, whatever the subject content. Students benefit from precise marking which tells them clearly what they have learned and provides targeted steps to improve their work. The planned curriculum is well designed and flexible enough to meet students' changing needs and interests, especially at Key Stage 4. Interactive and engaging tasks, particularly in English, citizenship, drama, philosophy and ethics, are used well in the best lessons to provide opportunities for students to reflect on different experiences which effectively promote their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, lessons provide limited challenge because learning is not matched carefully enough to the needs, abilities and interests of different groups of students. Students who have not been helped to establish routinely good habits for learning take the opportunity to waste time and occasionally distract others. Irregular marking, gaps in work and imprecise feedback limits students' ability to actively engage with their learning and to make consistent progress. Targeted intervention programmes are used to accelerate progress in subjects where teaching is mostly satisfactory, particularly in mathematics and science.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students report that they feel safe and that they have a good understanding of the risks they may encounter both within and outside school. Those parents and carers that responded to the inspection questionnaire are extremely satisfied with this aspect of the school's work. However, concerns were expressed by a small minority of parents and carers, staff and students about the standard of behaviour at the school, particularly in lessons.

Inspectors observed variations in behaviour during the inspection, including some good behaviour in lessons but also students who were reluctant to engage with their learning. School data and reports indicate that behaviour has improved over time

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with a reduction in exclusions and recorded instances of negative behaviour. The school is successful in helping students to stay in school and learn. Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively and students who struggle to control their own behaviour receive targeted support through interventions. Opportunities are provided for students to reflect on negative behaviour and consider their choices and consequences of their actions. The different forms of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, are understood by students and they express confidence in the prompt manner in which the school deals with the rare instances that occur.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher clearly communicates his drive, vision and ambition for the further development of the school in line with the strong ethos, 'The Elmgreen Way'. He is supported by an astute and well-informed governing body and a dedicated team of senior and middle leaders. Staff are highly committed and proud to be members of the school. The strong partnership that the school has built up with parents and carers is a very positive feature of the school.

The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding and the systems in place are coherent and effective. A strong commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination is at the heart of the school's work. As a result, the school is a harmonious environment where students from a very wide range of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds work together and respect each other. There is good provision for the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The good curriculum provides a good range of support as students prepare for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Monitoring of students' achievement and of teaching and learning is very thorough and the practice of recording and evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve performance is securely embedded. The few areas of remaining weakness have been identified and are being tackled effectively although it is too early for this to be evident in students' achievement. The school has good capacity to continue its journey of improvement.

## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**

2 March 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of The Elmgreen School, London SE27 9BZ**

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. Your school is growing and changing quickly and is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education. We were impressed with how proud the students, parents and carers and staff are of the school's achievements. The headteacher and senior staff lead your school well and they receive strong support from the governors and the parents and carers. They all want to make sure that you are continually encouraged to have high expectations of yourselves and others.

You told us that you enjoy most of your lessons and learn a lot but you also told us about a few lessons where teaching is weaker where you learn less. We think that you could do better in mathematics and science and have asked the school to make sure that this happens. We want the senior leaders and subject leaders to check that your work in all subjects is always marked and that you are provided with high quality written feedback to tell you how to move on to the next level. You can help by adopting good habits for learning and showing positive attitudes to your work in every lesson.

Some of the parents and carers who completed questionnaires and some students and staff are concerned about the few students who do not always behave as well as everyone else. We saw a range of different behaviour in lessons and around the school. The school's records and the students we talked to reported that behaviour improves as students begin to become part of 'The Elmgreen Way'. We were pleased to hear that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with very quickly. There are some students who do not come to school regularly and they are missing important chances to learn. You can all help by attending regularly and being punctual.

We wish you all at The Elmgreen School a happy and successful future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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