

Elm Wood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100597
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	354857
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Bartleman

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pervin Sivanathan
Headteacher	Mrs M Gibb/Mr C Tunstall
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-two lessons were observed. Fifteen teachers were seen. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and pupils, and inspectors spoke to some parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at individual education plans, assessment information, teachers' planning, pupils' work and key policies and procedures. One hundred and sixty parental questionnaires were received and analysed as well as returns from pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- Has the Early Years Foundation Stage improved sufficiently since the last inspection to accelerate children's learning and progress?
- Is the teaching across the school consistent and effective enough to ensure that pupils make at least good progress?
- How effective are the steps taken to improve attendance and to reduce persistent absence?
- Are pupils in Key Stage 1 making sufficient progress in writing and mathematics?

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. About three quarters of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and over twice the average numbers speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs are mostly related to moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs and speech and language difficulties. There is a breakfast and after-school club. The school is linked to Elm Wood Children Centre which is located away from the school site.

Elm Wood School joined with neighbouring Kingswood School and Paxton School in August 2010 to form the Gipsy Hill Federation. This is a hard federation with a new governing body and an executive headteacher covering all three schools.

The school and the federation have gained many national awards including National Support School, Artsmark Gold and International Schools Award.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Key to the success of this outstanding school is the ambition, energy and drive of its leaders, staff and governing body, to ensure that all pupils can succeed. This is achieved by staff recognising the unique needs of every pupil and ensuring that care and learning opportunities are tailored to meet those needs. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Parents are particularly pleased with the education their children receive and praise the work of the school highly. For example, parents and carers wrote: 'Elm Wood is doing fantastic work with my child'; 'I am extremely happy with the school'; 'Transition into the school is handled exceptionally well.' Many other parents and carers echo these views.

Children in the Early Years get off to an excellent start because of outstanding practices in planning and provision. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is high and achievement is outstanding. Excellent systems to track the progress of pupils are a very important part of this process.

The school provides a friendly, supportive environment where pupils gain confidence and independence quickly. They enjoy school immensely and see themselves as part of a community. The breadth and richness of the curriculum and the care, guidance and support pupils receive are outstanding. Basic skills are developed and utilized very effectively. Pupils' contribution to the school and local community is exemplary. Pupils have a deep sense of fairness and astute understanding of their own and others' place in the world.

Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation has enabled the school to build on its strengths and to address areas for development. Staff have an accurate and perceptive view of the school's performance. They have high aspirations and are striving to further increase the number of pupils exceeding national expectations in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. A close check is kept on how well individuals and groups are learning, so that they can provide additional support when necessary. Regular checks are made on the quality of lessons, and tests and other assessments are evaluated thoroughly to identify what can improve. Morale is extremely high and every member of staff, every governor and every pupil feels they are making an important contribution because what they do is valued highly by the school community. The school's capacity for further sustained improvement is outstanding, as is illustrated by the development of the curriculum and pupil progress since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of pupils who attain above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 by:
 - building on present practices which challenge thinking and promote learning

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- further developing personalised learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and from families whose home language is not English, achieve well, enjoy school very much and have very positive attitudes to learning. Children start the Reception class with knowledge and skill levels that are well below age-related expectations. All pupils, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress so that by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is high. Staff quickly identify any pupil at risk of underachieving and give them the extra help they need. This was seen to great effect during the inspection in the numerous small group activities led by teaching assistants, which ran in parallel with class lessons.

The work seen in lessons and in books showed that pupils undertake a large amount of practical and problem-solving activities. One Year 6 pupil said: 'I really love maths.' She and her classmates were busy making up and finding solutions to word problems relating to ratio, with outstanding effect. During the inspection, pupils were routinely seen explaining their thinking, speculating and offering thoughtful opinions. A strong feature of pupils' learning and progress is the emphasis placed on speaking and the acquisition of key vocabulary across subjects so that pupils become confident and articulate by the time they leave. Pupils develop a wide-ranging awareness of life and culture in other countries in French, geography, art and religious lessons, from visitors, from extensive charity work and from links with schools abroad. Their skills in music and the arts underpin their success in singing and entertaining others locally.

Attendance levels have been broadly average in recent years, but the rate is rising and present figures show that attendance is above average. Robust monitoring and effective support systems have enabled the school to dramatically reduce persistent absence. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and safety, and this is reflected in the school's Advanced Healthy School status. They develop into mature, well-rounded individuals who are making a real difference to their community by joining the school council and acting as buddies and peer mediators.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding, which matched the school's own monitoring. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high and they are well supported by other federation staff and well-planned professional development opportunities. They pose challenging questions, draw the class together regularly to check on pupils' progress and use a wide range of strategies to enable them to show what they can do. Teachers thoughtfully evaluate the success of pupils' learning and use this information systematically to plan the next lesson. Teaching assistants support well during individual and group work. Staff provide pupils with high- quality verbal and written feedback that ensure pupils have a good understanding of their next steps.

Imaginative links are made between subjects but the school has rightly identified that this needs to be further enhanced. High-quality care, guidance and support underpin the school's success and ensure that pupils feel safe and valued. Every step is taken to ensure that pupils, including those who find learning difficult or who are potentially vulnerable, are able to learn successfully. Regular checks on pupils' learning ensure that extra support is well targeted, timely and very effective.

The curriculum makes an outstanding and memorable contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning, their personal achievements and their understanding. An outstanding number of visits for pupils and visitors to the school promote cultural diversity very well. World Week, science days and weekly horse riding are examples of the outstanding range of

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enrichment activities which provide pupils with experiences they might otherwise not have. Music and art are vital to the life of the school. All pupils have the opportunity to learn an instrument at some point in the school and beautiful singing can be heard during most of the day. This contributes well to a harmonious and happy community that is enhanced by colourful and interesting creative work. There is outstanding provision for personal, social and health education. 'Shine on Saturday' and 'Friday reading with parents' are examples of effective, additional provision, which run alongside the numerous, well-attended clubs.

Parents and carers are valued as important partners in helping their child to succeed and the school provides many workshops for them to learn how to do this. Teaching assistants are specialists in specific areas like support strategies and speech and language, and their expertise is used very effectively to meet identified needs. Additionally, a wide range of professionals and external agencies work closely with the school to enhance the support for specific pupils. Transition arrangements are detailed and tailored to the needs of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The outstanding leadership and management of the head of school, the executive headteacher and their cross federation leadership team have ensured that the low attainment of 2008 has been moved in two years to be high. This is the result of an unrelenting focus on achievement and a drive for excellent teaching. Evidence seen during the inspection shows that this improvement is likely to be sustained. Leaders and managers believe that nothing but the best will do in this school. Staff form a very strong team who go the extra mile to provide high-quality learning experiences and ensure that all pupils, whatever their backgrounds or abilities, are fully included in school life and are able to succeed. As a result of the exemplary practices and outstanding provision the school achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark in 2009. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and pupils feel that, were it to occur, it would be tackled swiftly. The governing body has a good understanding of their strategic role and have rigorous systems to gather information about the school's performance, which they use well to hold senior leaders to account. They fulfil their statutory role exceedingly well, and despite their relative newness as a hard federation have continued to develop and utilise the good and rigorous systems used by separate governing bodies. There are very secure systems to safeguard pupils and to monitor provision. Close checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with children, risks are assessed robustly and the security of the school site is reviewed and improved regularly.

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A number of initiatives introduced since the time of the last inspection have successfully accelerated progress. A cycle of innovation and review is at the heart of the school's leadership. The parent and carer questionnaires showed an extremely high degree of satisfaction with the way the school is led and managed. Levels of parental engagement are good because the school listens well to their concerns and views. Faculty and year leaders have developed their roles well and they are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. They have a clear focus on teaching and its impact on pupils' learning within the school and across the federation.

The school has established very strong links with parents and carers, and these have a positive impact on pupils' learning and well-being. Links with outside agencies are used extremely well to support pupils in need. Support for families is strong, too, and is enhanced by the school's close links with the neighbouring Children's Centre. The school has a very clear understanding of its own and the local community, and promotes community cohesion extremely well. Impact is evaluated thoughtfully, for example by using information gathered from taking part in a national parent partnership assessment. International links are very strong and are reflected in the school's international award.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Very good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly and their needs are accurately assessed. This assessment continues throughout the Nursery and Reception classes and enables staff to provide extremely effectively for the interests and abilities of all children. As a result, children enjoy their work thoroughly; their behaviour and personal skills are excellent. The welcoming and highly stimulating learning environment that children meet throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, linked with exceptionally strong levels of care and outstanding teaching, ensures that progress is outstanding. The

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children play safely, share equipment highly responsibly and speak happily about what they do and know.

The outstanding teaching and what is taught captures children's natural curiosity and provides a remarkably rich range of activities, carefully balanced between those led by staff and those chosen by children. The outside areas are resourced extremely effectively to engage children's interest and enjoyment across all areas of learning. All adults in the Nursery and Reception classes are exceptionally adept in engaging children in conversation, developing vocabulary and sentence construction. They have highly developed skills in observing and assessing what children do, so next steps in learning are planned individually and very appropriately. The clarity of vision and purpose displayed by the coordinator and other federation teachers ensures that planning and management of resources and learning opportunities are outstanding. Very comprehensive and detailed records of the children's needs are kept and the children's progress is monitored carefully.

Partnerships with parents and carers are excellent and start from the well-managed transition into school and the home visits, which parents and carers greatly appreciate. Strong links with the Children's Centre provide continuity in learning for children entering the Nursery and additional support for their families.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have exceptionally positive views of the school. All of those who replied to the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school and are safe. They praise especially the support and commitment of the staff and agree that the school meets their child's particular needs. There is commendation for the quality of leadership and management and the high quality of teaching. Quotations include, 'I know my child is comfortable, supported and enjoys school with his friends.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elm Wood 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 160 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 304 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	125	78	33	21	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	120	75	40	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	99	62	55	34	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	100	63	53	33	6	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	108	68	50	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	102	64	50	31	6	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	56	62	39	5	3	0	0
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)	72	45	72	45	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	54	65	41	7	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	101	63	50	31	6	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	53	62	39	10	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	113	71	45	28	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	116	73	43	27	0	0	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 2010 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 2009/10 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.



13 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elm Wood School, Lambeth SE27 9RR

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you and were impressed with your enthusiasm as you answered our questions. Yours is an outstanding school and you are rightly proud of it.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

- You work very well together, showing respect and tolerance for each other.
- Staff have high expectations for you and take considerable care to make sure you are well supported.
- You make outstanding progress and attainment is high by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is outstanding and your teachers provide you with a range of engaging activities.
- Your curriculum is outstanding and offers you an exceptional range of trips, events and other enriching activities that you really enjoy.
- Your school is led and managed very well.

We have asked the school to do one thing to make your school even better.

- To increase the number of pupils in Years 1 and 2 who achieve the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection of your school. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Bartleman

Lead inspector

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