

Elm Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102272
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	368244
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leslie Graves
Headteacher	Victoria Knox
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons were observed taught by 14 teachers and support staff. Inspectors visited classrooms, and observed behaviour at playtimes, lunchtimes and around the school. They held meetings with members of the governing body, teaching staff, members of the school council and pupils in all year groups. Inspectors examined pupils' work in lessons and school documents, including improvement plans, safety records and assessment information. They analysed 109 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Those completed by 127 pupils and 39 staff were also analysed.

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

- How well children develop their skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their language and number work.
- The pupils' development of writing skills in Years 1 to 6, particularly for the boys.
- How teachers modify their planning and teaching to ensure all pupils make quicker progress in gaining basic skills.
- Whether senior leaders and governors use self-evaluation effectively to guide the development of the 'new' school.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average school opened as Elm Park Primary in September 2009, following the amalgamation of two local primary schools, Ayloff and Dunningford. The new school operated from the former Dunningford school site until a week prior to the inspection, when children started the term in the new building after an extended Easter holiday. The school serves a wide area. Approximately 31% of pupils are of ethnic minority heritage, with Black or Black British African pupils forming the largest group. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the number of pupils having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes.

The merger has caused significant disruption to normal routines and there have been a number of staff changes and appointments throughout the process. Pupils in Year 6 have remained in the old Dunningford building while they take their national tests, partly at their own and their parents' and carers' requests. They will be joining the main school soon after their completion. The school has the national Healthy School award and a breakfast club, managed by the governing body, is provided for pupils to attend each morning.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Elm Park school has come through difficult times recently. There have been challenges in bringing two former schools together to create a new school. The challenges include moving temporarily into an old building and then into a brand-new building just before the inspection. Despite the inevitable difficulties and challenges for some, the school has maintained a satisfactory level of education for its pupils.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a happy, secure start to their school life and are beginning to enjoy their new surroundings. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average attainment by the time they leave. The school's first set of national test results last year pointed to areas needing improvement, particularly for the boys. Better systems to monitor pupils' progress, changes in class organisation, such as grouping by ability, and specific programmes to help boost writing levels are beginning to help more pupils make better progress. The school realises there is still some way to go, as not all pupils write confidently or at length in all subjects. The pupils' mathematical skills are not developed sufficiently as they are not used enough in investigative work or 'real-world' contexts. Pupils are confident in discussing their work with others as their speaking skills develop well. Those of ethnic minority heritage, such as Black or Black British African pupils, along with others learning English as an additional language, make similar progress to their peers.

A new curriculum, introduced recently, is providing a better framework for more relevant and engaging activities, but not all planning and teaching makes the best use of the learning opportunities it presents. Although teachers are, to some extent, planning more interesting topics, too much teaching is predictable and lacks the consistent spark to motivate pupils' learning. Despite lessons lacking pace at times, pupils behave well in class and work together with little fuss. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and keep active. Around the school, pupils behave well, although some admit that there are occasional lapses. Most pupils appear to be making the best use of their new facilities, although some of these are not yet finished. Pupils say they feel valued and safe, some citing the new closed-circuit television cameras as reassuring. The general consensus among them was that the new school meets with their approval.

Senior leaders, supported by the governing body, have ensured that the challenges presented by amalgamation have not significantly hindered pupils' welfare and well-being. Changes to staffing had an adverse impact upon academic outcomes last year. The school acted quickly in response to the first set of national results. However, the focus on improvement, particularly academic outcomes, has been slowed by practical day-to-day challenges of amalgamation. Most parents and carers are supportive, but the school recognises that, for some, changes have been more difficult to accept or support. The school's self-evaluation of what needs to be done is accurate and is based upon an

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improving range of information to guide priority setting and to identify weaknesses to remedy. The fact that predicted results for this year's tests look more promising than last, as initiatives are starting to take hold, indicates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Improve pupils' confidence to write and apply their mathematical skills in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - giving pupils, particularly boys, more guidance about how to use their writing skills effectively in different subjects
 - ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in investigative work and 'real-life' contexts.ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in investigative work and 'real-life' contexts.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good in Years 1 to 6 this coming year by:
 - making sure teachers use good questioning to extend pupils' thinking and learning
 - keeping teachers' explanations short so that pupils can start practical work sooner
 - marking pupils' work consistently well so that they know how to improve their work
 - using monitoring of teaching more effectively to pinpoint those teachers who need extra support and guidance.
- Improve the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 this coming year by ensuring that:
 - all activities engage pupils' interests fully and develop their independence to learn
 - the curriculum is used to develop pupils' awareness of others with differing backgrounds who live much further from the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils enjoy attending and one pupil's comment, that the new school is 'not good.., it's great!', was typical. Others described the wide corridors and balcony as 'cool'. Pupils behave well on most occasions and they say that bullying is rare. In class, pupils are attentive, although some boys find it hard to sustain their concentration during long whole-class discussions. Activity levels are high at playtimes and supplement regular physical education lessons. The school's recognition as a healthy organisation is well founded and many pupils testify to the benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables. Pupils enjoy attending the breakfast club and say it gives them a good start. The school council enjoyed their involvement in influencing school uniform design, the facilities in the new building and local fundraising. The pupils' generally good attitudes have helped to raise their attainment and current work indicates they reach broadly average levels this year.

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Given their average starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement. In English work, pupils write in different styles and with increasing confidence, although the quality of their work drops when writing in different subjects. In mathematics, they do not readily apply their secure number skills in investigative work or within real-life contexts. In a well-taught lesson in Year 3, however, pupils did develop a good understanding of how to calculate time intervals related to the setting of video recorders. Boys and those from minority ethnic groups are starting to close the attainment gap with others. Few significant variations were apparent in book work, but some boys' progress slows when explanations are too long. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, as adult support within and beyond the classroom helps them to keep pace with classmates. This is also true for those pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils' improving levels of basic skills, combined with the good promotion of their spiritual, moral and social awareness, ensure they are adequately prepared for their next schools.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Good relationships develop between teachers and their pupils in most classes and teachers use additional adults effectively to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and or/disabilities. Pupils work collaboratively often and to good effect. Speaking and listening activities enable them to discuss their learning, but do not always encourage pupils to reflect on their own learning. Teachers' explanations are overly long at times,

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restricting the time pupils have to contribute or engage in learning independently. Teachers' questioning does not always challenge pupils' thinking to extend their learning. Systematic teaching of basic skills was evident in a well-taught number-based lesson in Year 4, when pupils enjoyed being challenged in calculating.

The curriculum is starting to be practically based and interesting, but works better in some classes than others. Programmes focused on developing pupils' reading and writing skills are making a difference. Pupils benefit also from trips out of school, such as to a national art gallery. Most teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to illustrate lessons. Residential trips and a good range of after-school clubs, from sports to a theatre club, help broaden pupils' experiences and horizons beyond school. Links with other schools help extend opportunities for physical education, such as swimming. Teachers mark work regularly; however, comments in books are not always clear in supporting pupils' understanding about what are the next steps in their learning.

The school's good levels of care, guidance and support have most effect in ensuring that pupils are generally happy, feel well cared for, safe, and know they can influence what goes on in school. Although many parents and carers share a view that their children are well cared for, some feel that the merger into one school has not been entirely trouble-free. Mindful of the coming together of two groups of pupils, the school has been successful in its attempts to ease the transition, as well as the recent move to a new building. Links with external professional agencies have enabled those pupils whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable to get the support they need to feel secure in the school and to maintain their progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, the governing body and staff have succeeded in amalgamating two school communities with some skill. Some unavoidable staffing disruption contributed to dips in pupils' attainment last year. In order to drive improvement, leaders and managers diagnose accurately where weaknesses lie, but ambitions to raise the quality of teaching and the curriculum have slowed during the disruption. Monitoring of teaching is regular, although it is not always focused sharply enough on pupils' learning rather than on teaching techniques. Priorities in planning have been reviewed usefully and reduced to aid clarity. The governing body recognises that, for some parents and carers, it has also been a stressful time. The effectiveness of links and engagement with parents and carers remains satisfactory rather than good, as a small minority are still to be convinced that the amalgamation has been a success, citing lapses in pupils' behaviour as one outcome.

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Governors visit the school to gauge progress, although the outcomes are not recorded systematically to aid monitoring. Safeguarding routines follow national guidance and policies are reviewed regularly. Checks and vetting procedures for all staff are rigorous and up to date. Site security is maintained to a good level, aided by closed-circuit television. To ensure equal opportunities and to tackle any discrimination, the school monitors different groups of pupils. The monitoring is helping to pinpoint any potentially vulnerable groups of pupils needing extra support. Few significant differences between groups of pupils were noted, but boys' progress slows in lessons which do not engage them fully. ♦ The school promotes satisfactory levels of community cohesion, as pupils' involvement in their school and local community is good. Links with other schools, or curriculum topics teaching about others much further from the local area or globally, are at a very early stage of development. Consequently, pupils' awareness of others from different backgrounds or areas is no better than satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a secure start to school and are busily getting to grips with their new environment. The deputy headteacher has guided the development of this part of the school with some skill, having taken over the temporary leadership at short notice and when the amalgamation was in full swing. The move to the new premises has expanded the opportunities for children to engage in a range of activities, but at this stage, not all of the facilities are being used to best effect and classroom organisation is still being refined. Further improvements and completion of building works are planned for the outside area, for example. Teachers promote children's basic skills securely, often through topic approaches such as 'the seaside' this term. Children enjoyed searching for buried treasure in the sand tray, acting in the pirate cave and writing out their treasure map. Simple

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activities help their counting skills develop systematically and art work, such as sticking pasta on paper to make pictures, helps to develop their fine motor skills. Teachers and adults promote children's independent skills well, although on occasions, adults leave some children too long before guiding them into different activities or extending their learning more fully. Staff engage children actively in their learning and staff dressing up as pirates certainly helped children get into the spirit of the topic. Children's social skills develop well as they play together willingly, help each other to pack up and share resources. Their welfare needs are catered for appropriately and they are aware of routines such as hand-washing and hygiene. Induction arrangements, through which the staff visit local nurseries and make early links with parents and carers, help children make a happy start to school. New assessment arrangements, through which adults record the achievements of children, help staff assess the children's progress and create learning folders which can be shared with parents and carers, other children and children themselves. When they enter Year 1, children have made good progress in gaining social skills and they reach the expected levels in their physical development, language, communication and number skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-average number of parents and carers returned questionnaires. About a quarter of these included comments, a number of which contained concerns and highlighted areas parents and carers wanted to see improved. Several were of a specific nature, but some common themes emerged. These included a perceived drop in standards of behaviour and, as a consequence, some instances of unchecked bullying. On the positive side, others felt the move of premises had been handled well, that their children were happy at the school and the staff were helpful. Inspectors cannot comment on individual concerns, but found that pupils' behaviour around the school was generally good and that, when asked, pupils voiced few concerns regarding bullying beyond what might commonly be found. In lessons, most pupils behave well, although sometimes there are small pockets of low-level disruption. Many pupils spoke positively about the new school, staff and their fellow classmates. ♦

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elm Park Primary 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 109 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 405 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	61	33	30	7	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	50	51	47	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	48	44	49	45	12	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	41	54	50	8	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	49	43	39	9	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	46	41	38	12	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	42	51	47	7	6	2	2
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)	47	43	43	39	9	8	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	40	48	44	14	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	31	54	50	7	6	10	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	32	50	46	5	5	8	7
The school is led and managed effectively	44	40	45	41	7	6	9	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	51	41	38	4	4	6	6

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 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 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.



13 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elm Park Primary, Hornchurch, RM12 5UA

This letter is to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. Your new school is looking good. The majority of your parents and carers think you are happy at school and that it provides a satisfactory education for you. We have also found this to be the case.

Here are some of the things we found out

- The youngest children in Reception classes like their new surroundings. Overall, they learn satisfactorily.
- You behave well and most of you try hard in lessons, which helps you to make satisfactory progress.
- You reach average levels in your work when you leave and achieve satisfactorily in most aspects of your work.
- You are good at keeping active at playtimes and know lots about eating healthily. When your new sports court is open, you will have even more space.
- Staff work hard to make sure you feel valued and it was good that you had a say on the school uniform in your new school.
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult or are learning how to speak English.
- Teaching is satisfactory and getting better.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further

- Give all of you more guidance and opportunities to improve your writing in other subjects and mathematics work, particularly for the boys.
- Help your teachers to make lessons even more fun and help increase the pace of your learning.
- Build on the way the lessons and activities (we call it the curriculum) help you to learn basic subjects more quickly, are even more fun and teach you about the world around you.

You can help your teachers by keeping up your good behaviour as some parents or carers think it can be even better. Let them know how the new school is progressing.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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