

Elliott Park School

Independent school standard inspection report

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| DfE registration number | 886/6057 |
| Unique Reference Number (URN) | 119005 |
| Inspection number | 397665 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 November 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Jo Caswell HMI |

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Elliott Park School is an independent non-selective school for boys and girls aged three to 11 years of age. It opened in September 1985 and was originally based in Sheerness, Kent and moved to its current purpose-built premises in Minster-on-Sea, on the Isle of Sheppey, in April 1986. The school has experienced several changes in ownership since it opened and is now listed as a limited company. The headteacher has been associated with the school for many years and has been headteacher since 2004.

There are currently 56 pupils on roll. Of these, seven attend on a part-time basis. There are no children attending who have a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of the Little Sunbeams Nursery class, which opened in September 2011, and the Sunbeams Reception class. A total of 13 pupils are in receipt of government nursery funding.

The school aims to teach children how to grow into positive, responsible young people who can work and cooperate with others while developing knowledge and skills to achieve their true potential. The school was last inspected in 2009 when all regulations were judged to be met.

Evaluation of the school

Elliott Park School meets its aims and provides a good quality of education. All regulations are met and the school has maintained its high standards since the last inspection. Notable investment has been made in the school over the last couple of years and this has significantly improved the areas for development raised at the last inspection in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good and safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Staff with expert subject knowledge take responsibility for key areas and extensive written policies support the effective

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

delivery of the curriculum. Good quality lesson plans and schemes of work are devised by subject leaders and draw on National Curriculum and commercial materials where appropriate. All the required areas of learning are covered.

The school has taken care to develop the curriculum so that all pupils find something to meet their specific needs and succeed in. For example, some pupils excel in academic areas, while others are especially good at sports, information and communication technology (ICT) or music, and teachers extend this and support it appropriately. This ensures all pupils benefit from an extensive curriculum, which is tailored to support individual need and recognises the individual strengths and abilities of each pupil.

Cross-curricular provision is good throughout the school as teachers support pupils' learning across many subject areas. For example, in a Year 3 ICT lesson, pupils used their literacy skills to design and write party invitations. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT resources have been significantly improved throughout the school after the installation of interactive whiteboards in many classrooms. This has been particularly effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where some children have made significant progress in learning to use these resources; for example, in developing early writing skills within the Little Sunbeams Nursery. These children are also very interested in the interactive whiteboard, so planning now ensures regular access to relevant programs which encourage children to develop the essential manipulative and coordination skills to assist them with writing.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is delivered effectively. A reorganisation of the Nursery and Reception classes has made a positive impact on strengthening the delivery of the curriculum. Teachers have strong knowledge of the early years phase of education and effective links are now in place between the classes to build on provision and enhance children's learning. Improvements have been made to the outside area to extend the curriculum.

Pupils' learning is enriched through a range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, such as 'detective club,' French, board games, sports club, ICT club and music. Pupils have many opportunities to take on areas of responsibility within the school, such as becoming classroom monitors, or serving on the school council, and their learning is enhanced through a range of visits and activity weeks. For example, recent outings have included visits to the Guildhall Museum in Rochester to support work on the Victorian period and theatre trips to London and the O2 arena. The last activity week had a nautical theme, enabling pupils to take part in dinghy sailing and to visit Chatham Dockyard. Visitors to the school have included the emergency services, including the coastguard, to talk about community safety. Sport is an integral part of the curriculum with pupils excelling in many local competitions with other schools.

The quality of teaching and assessment are good. In each key stage, inspectors noted the majority of lessons to be of good quality. One lesson was noted to be outstanding. In this lesson, pupils worked exceptionally well both independently and in small groups. The teacher provided continuous feedback to the pupils, resulting in

an active, busy and purposeful lesson, which resulted in pupils making outstanding progress in their learning.

Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and are highly motivated to learn. This is reflected in their good attendance. One pupil expressed the view of many by telling inspectors, 'I really enjoy lessons. Teachers make learning fun.' Pupils really enjoy coming to school and this was reflected by the views of the vast majority of parents and carers, who confirmed how happy and settled their child is at school. In the parent questionnaire, 90% of parents and carers confirmed their child was happy at school.

Very positive relationships are evident between pupils and their peers, and between pupils and staff. This plays a significant role in developing pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Teachers set high expectations that clearly motivate pupils to produce their best work and to persistently try hard. From the youngest age, pupils are actively engaged in their learning; they develop key skills to question, explore and experiment and take an active interest in finding out new things. Highly effective questioning and interaction from staff encourage pupils to reflect on their learning, consolidate their knowledge and build on their experiences.

Outstanding levels of behaviour throughout the school and the kindness, respect and courtesy shown by pupils towards their peers and adults play a key part in ensuring the school is a very positive learning environment.

Teachers are highly motivated and clearly enjoy their role. Several teachers noted in the staff questionnaire they would like further opportunities to enhance their professional development.

Planning is based on teachers' in-depth knowledge of each pupil's learning needs and additional support is provided for those requiring individual teaching. The special educational needs coordinator works effectively throughout the school to assist pupils.

Assessment arrangements are in place throughout the school and are generally used effectively. Lessons are suitably challenging for the vast majority of pupils and targets are set to ensure each pupil achieves well. However, some areas of the assessment procedure lack rigour. For example, marking in pupils' books does not always clearly help pupils understand how to move to the next level. Occasionally, targets for a few pupils are not as challenging as they could be. As a result, all children make good progress, but some have the potential to make outstanding progress. Closer monitoring of the system is required to ensure that all pupils consistently fulfil their own potential.

Pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their education. Strong support is provided to assist pupils in preparing for the 11-plus assessment and all pupils are prepared effectively for completing common entrance examinations. Consequently, pupils achieve well and the vast majority move on to local grammar schools and high schools of their parents' and carers' choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are very proud of the school and benefit from the family atmosphere. The head boy and head girl are key figures within the school community who work sensitively to improve the school environment and set themselves as strong role models for their peers. Pupils show excellent respect, empathy and consideration for others and have very few concerns about school and actively look to make improvements. For example, in a meeting with pupils from Year 1 and Year 2, members of the school council voluntarily told inspectors the quality of pupils' packed lunches should be improved.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is outstanding. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage, children develop good social skills and work and play together effectively. All pupils are kind to one another and respect is shown between all age groups. Older pupils are very caring towards the younger pupils. Consequently, break times and whole-school activities are very positive, as pupils feel safe and well looked after. Pupils confirmed to inspectors how safe they feel at school and know they could approach any adult for help if they needed it.

Pupils' spiritual development is very well supported through meaningful and thoughtful assemblies, religious education lessons and visits to the local church and citadel. Pupils gain a good understanding and appreciation of different faiths and cultures through well-planned lessons. For example, during the inspection, all pupils were involved in activities associated with Diwali.

Pupils develop excellent skills for the future. The recent 'Enterprise Project' enabled each pupil to generate a profit from £1.00. This resulted in highly imaginative fundraising and entrepreneurial activities that generated an overall profit across the school of over £500. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community through the school council and this provides a highly effective forum for pupils to be actively involved in key decisions about the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Promoting pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to all staff and comprehensive policies are in place to ensure all pupils remain safe and are looked after well. Staff are particularly kind and caring towards pupils and there is a strong nurturing environment evident within the school. Regular checks throughout the premises ensure the safety of the school buildings and grounds. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid and child protection, and regular evacuation drills ensure all pupils and staff understand appropriate emergency procedures.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The procedures for vetting staff meet all requirements. Recruitment procedures are rigorous and regular checks on staff are carried out to ensure that they remain

suitable to work with children. The school has a single central register, which contains all the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's premises are maintained to a good standard and provide a safe and secure environment for pupils. The recently opened Little Sunbeams Nursery class provides a bright and welcoming space for children and a positive introduction to school for the youngest pupils. Specialist rooms, such as the library and music room, extend the learning environment and provide additional teaching space.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided or made available to parents, carers and others. There are regular opportunities for parents and carers to receive information about their child's attainment and progress through reports and parents' meetings. The school operates a highly effective open-door policy and the headteacher is particularly welcoming and accessible to all parents and carers. The school's website is updated regularly and gives a clear indication of pupils' activities.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedure meets requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Apply more rigour to the school's assessment procedures to ensure closer monitoring and sharper target setting to enable each pupil to fulfil his/her own potential and to consistently make at least good or better progress.
- Increase the range of professional development opportunities available to staff.

Inspection judgements

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|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
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The quality of education

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | | ✓ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | ✓ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | ✓ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | ✓ | | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | ✓ | | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | ✓ | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|

School details

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| School status | Independent | | |
| Type of school | Primary | | |
| Date school opened | 1985 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 years | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 29 | Girls: 20 | Total: 49 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils) | Boys: 2 | Girls: 5 | Total: 7 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs | Boys: 0 | Girls: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Number of pupils who are looked after | Boys: 0 | Girls: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £4,212 | | |
| Address of school | Elliott Park School Marina Drive Minster-on-Sea Sheerness Kent ME12 2DP | | |
| Telephone number | 01795 873372 | | |
| Email address | elliotparkschool@btconnect.com | | |
| Headteacher | Mr Richard Barson | | |
| Proprietor | Mr T Allsworth | | |

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.

15 November 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Elliott Park School, Sheerness, ME12 2DP

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited recently. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and would like to share with you what we found out about your school. We judged that Elliott Park School is a good school with some areas which are outstanding.

These are the main reasons why we judged the school to be good.

- You all behave so well and develop strong relationships with your friends and teachers. This has a very positive impact on your learning and your obvious enjoyment of school.
- There are so many ways in which you develop your knowledge and skills, as teachers plan a good range of lessons and interesting outings and visits.
- You make good progress in your learning as your teachers know you very well and support your individual needs in classes.
- Your parents and carers say how much they appreciate the way in which the school looks after you and helps you to enjoy your learning.
- Good procedures are in place to support your health and welfare and staff are very caring towards you and provide a safe environment.

All schools need to develop and improve and I have asked the headteacher to provide more ways for you to understand how you can improve your work even further and make even greater progress than you are now. Also, some teachers told inspectors they would like to have more opportunities to develop their skills and professional knowledge. We have asked the headteacher to look at ways to develop these issues as they will have a very positive impact on how you learn at school and the progress you make.

Thank you once again for all your help. It was a pleasure meeting you all and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jo Caswell
Her Majesty's Inspector