

The Elmgreen School

Elmcourt Road, London, SE27 9BZ

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is typically good and some is of high quality. Leaders have taken positive action to improve the quality of teaching and all staff are ambitious to make it even better.
- Achievement in the school is continuing to rise. Attainment is above average in many subjects. All groups of students are now making good progress across a range of subjects and key stages.
- The sixth form is good. Effective collaboration arrangements provide a range of subjects and courses which meets students' needs well.
- The headteacher's vision and impact are valued by the whole community. Outstanding leadership inspires staff and students to do their very best. Governors are robust in challenging leaders to continually improve the school.
- Relationships between teachers and students are respectful. Students are appreciative of the hard work of their teachers and the ways their teachers support and help them to achieve their best. Consequently, behaviour is good.
- The school is a highly inclusive community. A positive ethos permeates all aspects of the school's work. A pupil remarked, 'Whatever level you are, everyone is connected.'

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not always plan lessons that support students' individual needs as effectively as they could in aiming for the best.
- In some lessons, teachers are not clear enough about their expectations of students' engagement in how they expect students to participate.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 48 lessons, including 16 joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons and tutor periods, and looked at samples of students' work. A shorter visit to lessons was made focusing on the school's literacy work.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of subject departments, pastoral leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation, school-development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing-body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 47 questionnaires returned by school staff, together with the 129 responses submitted by parents to the online Parent View survey. In addition, 37 letters from parents were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Hugh Betterton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Davies	Additional Inspector
Samuel Ofori-Kyereh	Additional Inspector
Jo Stuart	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Elmgreen School is an average-sized community comprehensive school. It opened in 2007 as the first ever parent-promoted school and moved to a new building in September 2009. The school has specialist status for humanities, including English.
- A sixth form opened in September 2012 and is part of a collaboration with four other schools in the local area.
- Of the numbers on roll, nearly two thirds are boys.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority, is twice the national average.
- Students come from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, and the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language and who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above that found nationally.
- The percentage of disabled students and those with special educational needs, supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of educational needs, is above national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A small number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend a range of off-site provision to support their learning for some of the week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students are supported in making the best possible progress by improving the quality of teaching from good to outstanding through ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan work that is exactly matched to the differing needs of groups and individual students
 - all teachers rigorously check students' understanding of what they have learnt
 - high expectations of students' attitudes to learning are always made clear.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good. Students are making the progress they should, and improved teaching is making sure that standards are rising. In 2012, the school's first year of results were in line with national averages. GCSE results in 2013 were higher than those seen nationally.
- From starting points that are in line with national averages students, including those who attend off-site provision, make good progress, across a wide range of subjects and qualifications. The school has particular strengths in English, art, history and French. Performance in mathematics and science subjects improved markedly in 2013 from 2012. However, not enough of the most able make progress expected of them.
- The school's detailed analysis of the current Year 11 students' performance provides convincing evidence that their progress promises further improvement in overall GCSE results.
- In 2013, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieved well compared to similar students nationally, gaining half a grade higher, as a result of small-group sessions, in-class support and revision classes. Recent data shows that the gap between their performance and that of others across the school is now closing.
- The achievement of disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language is in line with that of other students in the school, usually enhanced by good support from knowledgeable teaching assistants. Students who attend off-site provision achieve well because of the specialist support they receive.
- Those in Year 7 eligible for the catch-up premium receive targeted literacy support from mentors and tutors which enables them to keep up with their peers. Literacy is promoted well, through opportunities for extended writing in different subjects. Students' literacy skills are improving well, as is seen in the quality of their writing, speaking and reading.
- The school makes good use of early entry in mathematics to support students' confidence. As a result, in 2013 students achieved better results than they might otherwise have achieved.
- Students in the recently opened sixth form started courses in the lower sixth with below-average attainment in 2012. They make good progress to achieve standards that are in line with national averages. Progress observed during the inspection on courses in the upper sixth is also good overall, particularly in English, where a growing number make rapid progress.
- Inspection evidence confirms the views expressed in the online parent questionnaire in which at least nine out of ten parents agreed that their child makes good progress at this school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and improving in most subjects, including English and mathematics, as it is for those receiving additional support. An increasing proportion is outstanding because of the school's focus on learning and progress as well as a programme of monitoring and support, using formal observations and learning walks.
- Teachers generally have high expectations, supported by their good subject knowledge, allowing them to identify the best resources and address any misunderstandings. On a few occasions, teachers do not make their expectations of students' performance clear enough.
- Questioning is used skilfully to deepen students' understanding and knowledge, as illustrated by classroom discussions. Students are confident in holding a dialogue with their teachers. The effect is that in the majority of lessons observed, including English, mathematics, history and biology, discussions enabled students to learn independently. Positive relationships with the students are very evident.
- Lessons are well planned with consistent 'Do Now' starter activities which consolidate previous learning in many cases. On a very few occasions, students are not clear about what they are expected to learn and lose attention. Very occasionally teaching is not well planned because not all students' learning needs are accounted for.
- Most marking is exemplary. It is regular and focused and consistently identifies strengths and

areas for development, which supports pupils in making good progress.

- Outstanding teaching is characterised by a rapid pace in learning, a pronounced emphasis on students taking responsibility for their learning and teachers checking and re-directing learning as necessary. In a highly successful Year 10 English lesson, students showed deep understanding of how some characters in *An Inspector Calls* placed money above people in relationships, linking their ideas closely to the play, no matter what their prior ability.
- The quality of teaching observed in the sixth form was good during the inspection, with good identification of and support for any sixth form students who are underachieving.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and correctly believe that students are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say they feel safe in school and display a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. This is demonstrated by their good standards of behaviour around the site and in lessons. When teaching is not planned in sufficient detail to meet all students' needs fully, they can become distracted from their learning.
- Students throughout the whole school are very positive about their school and are appreciative of the hard work and support of their teachers in helping them learn. They recognise that their behaviour is good, with respectful relationships evident between all in an atmosphere of trust.
- The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has rapidly decreased in the last year because of the school's effective behaviour-management policies. Attendance has also improved markedly in the last year. While most students arrive on time to lessons, a few sixth form students are too casual about their punctuality.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. They have positive relationships with each other and adults and value the vertical tutoring system. They describe this as a contributory factor to defining the school as a cohesive and inclusive learning community. Students enjoy leading charity work such as fundraising.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that any bullying or harassment is dealt with discreetly and effectively.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership team, dynamically led by the headteacher, is driving the ambitious vision in all aspects of the Elmgreen Way, 'committed to the highest standards in everything' it does. This vision is robustly shared by leaders at all levels, the governors and the wider community, all of whom believe the school will achieve excellence. This ambition has been recognised in the marked improvement in GCSE results in 2013 and the continuing improvements evident across the school.
- The school evaluates its work very accurately. Subject leaders are held to account and recognise their responsibilities for continual improvement. The headteacher has not hesitated to take action where staff performance and standards of teaching have not improved rapidly enough. A clear performance-management system is in place, closely aligned to salary and progression. A very effective training programme for staff is linked to whole-school and individual developments. Teachers are set challenging targets which they say they are fully supported to achieve.
- The curriculum has been carefully developed and is continually reviewed to prepare students well for progression to higher or further education, training or employment. It successfully balances academic and vocational options to meet all needs and aspirations, including through an effective partnership with a local college. The extended curriculum provides a wide range of sports and performance opportunities, as well as additional classes and revision sessions for students needing extra support.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection who helped set up the school judge that it has exceeded their expectations. Additionally, from parental letters and Parent View, all responses expressed complete satisfaction with the work of the school. Equally, replies to the staff

questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the school and leadership. One comment reflects many others: 'This is great school to work at. I believe in the school as it matches my own ethos for life. We are valued and appreciated completely.'

- The school's highly effective prioritising of equality of opportunity is seen in the increasing progress made by all groups of students and the narrowing of the attainment gap between those eligible for pupil premium funding, across the school.
- The local authority correctly judges that the school is well able to drive its own improvement and provides good, but light-touch, support.
- Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements. Staff training and rigorous follow-up of absence are of high quality.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors make a strategic impact on school improvement. Effective use of progress data allows thorough checks on the impact of teaching on students' progress. The headteacher and senior leaders are diligently held to account. Governors have challenged underperformance where it has occurred, for example, in the progress of boys in 2012 at GCSE. They use their knowledge about the quality of teaching to ensure that its quality relates directly to pay increases and progression through performance-management procedures. Members of the governing body have received the relevant training, enabling them to fulfil their statutory duties effectively, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Governors are knowledgeable and informed. They review their own effectiveness and training, ensuring that they keep up to date with national developments and initiatives. They have the expertise required to oversee the school's finances and ensure that financial and other resources are managed properly, especially in the use of pupil premium funding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	129649
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	425574

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,050
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Ward
Headteacher	John Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	29 February–1 March 2012
Telephone number	020 8766 5020
Fax number	020 8761 2312
Email address	admin@the-elmgreen-school.org.uk

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