

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Elm Court School

Elm Park, London SW2 2EF

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

Outcome

Elm Court School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students get an education that is second to none. Everything the school does is driven by a passion for pupils' success. There is a razor-sharp focus on what is best for each pupil and on making sure that they are prepared for adulthood. These two principles run through the school like the writing on a stick of rock. As a result, pupils leave school with the skills, confidence and self-awareness they need to take their place in the world.

Pupils are proud of what they achieve. They are full of praise for the way they have been helped to overcome their personal difficulties and for the staff who support them. This is the result of a carefully designed curriculum. It is tailored to each pupil's needs and put into practice with skill, sensitivity and a steely focus on learning.

Pupils' personal development, including the skills needed for adulthood, is woven through everything the school does. Helping pupils to understand how to take control of their lives is quietly but effectively built into the curriculum. Whether this is through the many trips to places of interest, learning new skills, or classroom work, the impact is consistently strong. This includes pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This is a school where excellence is built into all that it does. From promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being, and helping them manage their own behaviour, to the curriculum, everything is centred on the preparation for adulthood. The promoting of pupils' achievements in subjects, good behaviour and personal skills go hand in hand.

A fundamental element of this work is the curriculum. A great deal of thought is put into what is taught and how it is taught. In English, for example, the curriculum is highly ambitious and exposes pupils to a broad range of authors and texts. Pupils read increasingly fluently as they move through the school. Work in art, and design and technology, is similarly aspiring. For example, the work of Matisse is used to help pupils develop their knowledge of artists and their skills in using different techniques. In digital media, real-life examples make learning relevant to pupils' everyday experiences.

Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are highly motivated and achieve extremely well. Staff know their pupils well. They modify and tailor the curriculum skilfully so that the work is at the right level for pupils to succeed. Pupils' education, health and care plans are adapted to make them clearer. Teaching encourages pupils to follow their interests and develop their talents. As a result, nearly all pupils in Year 11, and students in the sixth form, achieve accredited awards in a range of academic, vocational and practical subjects. This includes GCSE qualifications for some.

The personal, social and health education programme is an integral part of the curriculum. It helps to prepare pupils, and students in the sixth form, for adulthood most effectively. For example, developing pupils' understanding of citizenship and how to keep themselves safe are key components of the programme. Woven into the programme are opportunities for pupils to understand their emotions and how to manage their behaviour. Behaviour, and the level of respect between staff and pupils, is particularly strong. This helps to create an exceptionally calm and positive atmosphere. This is one of the reasons why the school is successful. Pupils and students leave school with the social and emotional tools they need to take their place in society.

The curriculum is complemented and enhanced very effectively by trips, visits and experts who come into school. These are always linked carefully to the work pupils are doing in lessons. A project with the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, extends work in art about fashion design and patterns. Every Wednesday, sixth-form students spend the day learning a range of vocational and practical skills. For example, the visit to a local horticulture project helps pupils to learn how to grow plants, as well as developing their confidence in using public transport. Pupils learn how to cook and sell the results at breaktime, giving them valuable experience in running a small business. Again, helping to prepare pupils and students for adulthood is a key element of this work.

The governing body is integral to the school's work. It challenges and supports the school in equal measure. This is helped by the school's clear analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. Staff contribute significantly to the school's continuous improvement. The school's openness helps to ensure that staff's workload and well-being are considered fully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in February 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	100659
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	10326036
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Jenner
Executive headteacher	Joanna Tarrant
Website	www.elmcourt.lambeth.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have learning difficulties and associated social and communication needs. Many pupils have autism.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Elm Court School is part of the Elm Court Livity Federation. The federation consists of two SEND schools in Lambeth: Elm Court School and The Livity School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector accompanied staff and pupils to the Roots and Shoots project.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteachers. Inspectors also met with teachers and other staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View survey, including the written comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucy Bruce

Ofsted Inspector

Michelle Bernard

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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