



# Elstow Lower School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109448  
**LEA** BEDFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 278198  
**Inspection dates** 21 November 2005 to 22 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Dr. Anna Coyle LI

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

|                                    |                    |                           |                   |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | Primary            | <b>School address</b>     | Abbeyfields Road  |
| <b>School category</b>             | Community          |                           | MK42 9GP          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 4 to 9             |                           |                   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 01234302300       |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 238                | <b>Fax number</b>         | 01234307300       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> | Mrs.Eileen Carter |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | Not applicable     | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Mrs. Carol Watson |

|                            |   |                                    |
|----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b><br>4 to 9 | <b>Inspection dates</b><br>21 November 2005 -<br>22 November 2005 | <b>Inspection number</b><br>278198 |
|----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Elstow Lower School serves the local village and the recently developed surrounding residential area. The school relocated to the new purpose-built premises in March 2004. Just over half of the children are from White British backgrounds. Many others are from a widely diverse ethnic mix, including Asian, Irish and Chinese, and most speak English fluently. A significant proportion of children from Afro-Caribbean families receive specialist support for learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than nationally; their needs include moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural needs, speech and communication, visual and hearing impairment.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstandingly effective school. It provides an excellent education for its children, who do very well as a result of the highly competent teaching and excellent curriculum. From a low starting point, children increase their skills rapidly due to the high quality provision in the Foundation Stage. They make very good progress in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 so that they achieve very well in relation to their capabilities by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1. Standards have matched the national averages in the tests for reading, writing and mathematics over the last few years and have been above those of similar schools. In Years 3 and 4, children continue to do well and reach the levels expected for their age in English and mathematics. Children could do better in science where standards are below the national levels overall because their lack of technical vocabulary holds them back. The ends of lessons are not used well enough to draw learning to a close. Standards of behaviour are excellent. Children enjoy school because the adults provide an exciting range of activities that promote learning and prepare them very carefully for life in the community. Elstow is a school in which every child really matters and it provides outstanding care, guidance and support for them, especially for the most needy and vulnerable children. As a result, most parents support the school's efforts and are keen for their children to attend. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has been a key factor in ensuring that the school has improved considerably since the last inspection. She is admirably supported by the two assistant headteachers, the chair of governors and the staff. They all know how good the school is because the systems for evaluating its work are very well established. It gives very good value for money and is very well placed to make further improvements.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the standards in science by increasing children's use of vocabulary and speaking skills. - Develop the final sessions at the ends of lessons to draw all points of learning together and help children to know how well they have done

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children in the reception class start school with below average attainment on entry because their knowledge and skills are weaker than those of most four-year-olds. They make very good progress and many reach the expected standards by the time they transfer to Year 1. Learning accelerates from this good start so that by the time children reach Year 2, standards are in line with the national picture. In 2005, standards were above those of similar schools in reading, writing and mathematics but they were below the national average in the teachers' assessments for science. The school has already pinpointed the areas upon which to focus as being children's need to increase their technical vocabulary. Children in Years 3 and 4 keep up the progress they make in earlier years and they regularly meet the challenging targets that the school sets. By

the time they leave, most attain the levels expected for their age. Standards in English and mathematics have risen in recent years as a result of good teaching and children's willingness to learn. In 2005, standards at the end of Year 4 were similar to other schools and a significant proportion of children exceeded the nationally expected standards. The most capable children make good progress because teachers plan effectively to meet their needs. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities do well and those who learn English as an additional language are very well supported to help them achieve their best. Good standards are attained in information and communication technology (ICT).

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attendance is good. Children have excellent attitudes to learning and most behave exceedingly well. They show great enthusiasm for learning and take immense pride in their achievements. They are courteous and polite towards each other and adults. Children are building excellent foundations for later adult life in the community and for their future economic well-being. There are exceptional opportunities for children to develop into responsible individuals. They learn to play a full part in school life by taking part in the school council and offering their ideas to improve the environment and available facilities. Children know about healthy lifestyles and they particularly enjoy making delicious apple crumble and rock cakes during cookery club. They munch on healthy carrots and fruit at snack time and relish the appetizing home cooked lunches prepared carefully by the kitchen staff. Children learn how to keep safe when near water and roads. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good because the school helps them to be sensitive to the feelings of others. They understand right from wrong and appreciate some of the features of cultures other than their own, such as why Hindus celebrate Diwali and how Afro-Caribbean people celebrate festivals. Children are cared for and supported very well by each other within a very caring school community where vulnerable children are provided for extremely well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is very good and occasionally outstanding. In the best lessons, the pace of teaching is lively; teachers use a range of interesting teaching methods and resources to capture children's interests. Children respond very positively to teachers' skilful questioning. Where there is outstanding teaching, children make excellent progress because they are interested and keen to learn. Children have excellent relationships with all staff and one another because all adults make them feel special. As a result, the school is a very happy and caring place. Where the teaching is satisfactory, children are not given enough opportunities to talk about their work. For example, in a science lesson observed in a Year 3/4 class the teacher missed

opportunities to develop children's use of scientific language. Teachers do not always use the time at the end of lessons to review children's work and move them on to the next steps in their learning. Teachers make good use of formal procedures to check on children's learning in English and mathematics to guide their planning. As a result, work is closely matched to children's needs and this leads to good progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an outstanding range of activities to help children learn. There is a strong emphasis on developing children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They learn about many different topics during the school day. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed celebrating Carnival during Black History Month. In art, they made vibrant costumes and in music they learned Afro-Caribbean songs. African drummers visited the school to perform and talked to children about their work. There is an impressive range of out-of-school activities and clubs, including fun games, art, recorder and cooking. These opportunities help children to maintain high levels of motivation and develop their self-confidence. Visits to museums, residential centres and other local places of interest enrich children's learning. The school makes outstanding provision for children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Children who are gifted and talented are encouraged to develop their skills and participate in a range of challenging activities to help them achieve their full potential.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This aspect is outstanding. Teachers and support staff know the children very well and work hard to provide an excellent level of care for them. They work very successfully with a specialist assistant, known as a 'learning mentor', and outside agencies to ensure that all children receive the support that they need. Children who require additional help with their social skills attend special sessions called 'emotional literacy' and this works well because they settle quickly and do very well. This first-rate level of care makes children feel very well looked after and they know they have someone to talk to if they have any concerns. Child protection arrangements are very well established and fully understood by all staff. Younger children are helped to settle in very quickly when they join the school. Older children are well prepared for their move to the middle school so they feel very positive and confident about the change. The provision for children who learn English as an additional language is very well organised and managed to make sure that all children benefit from the support they are given.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has successfully led and managed the school since the last inspection and is very well supported by the staff. Her exceptional commitment and lively sense of humour encourage an excellent ethos for

learning. The assistant headteachers and senior managers work in superb harmony with her to make sure that they all keep the interests of the children at the forefront of everything they do. As a regular visitor, the chair of governors is an excellent role model for promoting exceedingly high levels of courtesy and good manners amongst the children. The school knows itself very well. Self-evaluation procedures are very well established and effective, though the school is occasionally modest in its views. It regularly consults the governors, staff, children and parents to take account of their views. The school provides extremely well for all children and makes sure that they all have equal opportunities to participate in every activity. The extensive development plan makes very clear references to the school's priorities for improvement. Staff have successfully dealt with the issues arising from the previous inspection, but science is still an area to go on improving. The outstanding teamwork and superb focus on children puts the school in a very good position to go on improving further.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 1   | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage  | 2   | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | NA |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 | NA |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 | NA |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 1 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 | NA |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 1 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 | NA |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 | NA |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 1 | NA |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review      | 2   | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 1   | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money  | 1   | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected  | Yes | NA |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily  | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise  | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse   | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health   | NA  |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements                                   | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place  | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism                                | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships   | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them                   | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills  | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams                                  | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form          | NA  |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy               | NA  |

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We really enjoyed being in your school recently. Thank you for making us so welcome and for talking to us. Here are some of the things we found out. We think you go to an excellent school where the teachers are helpful and very kind. You benefit from the good teaching, and some of it is outstanding. All of the adults work very hard to make sure that lessons are exciting so that you enjoy learning. This means that you make very good progress and do well in the tests you take in Years 2 and 4. The teachers and teaching assistants take extremely good care of you and encourage you to take care of each other. We were impressed by the way you all look after each other and act as 'buddies' at playtimes. Your behaviour is excellent. The headteacher is outstanding. She works very hard with the other teachers so that you can learn in a happy, friendly and welcoming place. Because you go to such a good school, there is very little that we could find that could be better. The teachers are making some changes to the way they teach science and we think that they should go on doing this, and also give you more time to think about the things you have learnt at the end of lessons. We wish you every success in the future.