



Elmwood Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101721
Local Authority Croydon
Inspection number 286162
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Madeleine Gerard

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Lodge Road
School category	Community		Croydon
Age range of pupils	3–7		CR0 2PL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8689 7681
Number on roll (school)	411	Fax number	020 8665 1751
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Gill Douglas
		Headteacher	Mrs Julie Harris
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average Infant and Nursery school in a deprived area of outer south London. It educates a high number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds with Indian, Black African and Black Caribbean being the largest groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. There has been a very high turnover of headteachers in recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is improving because of good leadership and management. Following a long period of considerable instability, the appointment of the current headteacher has set a clear direction for the school, focused on raising standards and achievement. New appointments and a revised management structure have resulted in improvements in standards and behaviour in the last two years.

Achievement is satisfactory. The attainment of children entering the school varies considerably and is lower than average overall. By the time they complete the Foundation Stage, most have made satisfactory progress, but standards are still below average. Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved considerably since 2004 when they were exceptionally low in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils now make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards have risen, as a result of improvements in teaching and learning, although they are still below average overall. Standards in writing have improved the most and are broadly average. This is because of targeted support and well-managed changes to the way writing is taught. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities progress well. Pupils who speak languages other than English at home make good progress as a result of the effective support they are given. Across the school, pupils behave well and they have good attitudes towards learning. One said, 'We learn lots of things.' Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils are accurately assessed but this does not always lead to work being well suited to individual needs in all lessons. More able pupils who could achieve higher standards are hindered from doing so as a result. Whilst they meet national averages, some are not attaining the higher levels expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics.

Parents hold the school in high regard and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for. One parent commented, 'The school as a whole is improving every year.' The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning, for example through literacy and numeracy workshops and mathematics games for use at home.

Attendance, an issue at the time of the previous inspection, is below the national average. Although the school has procedures in place to encourage regular attendance and punctuality there is too much absence and lateness, which has a negative impact on some pupils' learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and raise standards in all aspects of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure teachers set work that is well matched to all pupils' needs, especially for the more able.
- In partnership with parents and outside agencies, make a determined and uncompromising effort to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are now closer to the national average and, given their below average skills when they join the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and their standards are still below average standards by the start of Year 1. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall although boys achieve less well than girls. Classroom assistants work well with teachers to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities effectively which helps them to progress well. Committed support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds ensures that Indian, Black African and Black Caribbean pupils make good progress. However, too few more able pupils reach the higher levels by the end of Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils have a strong awareness of how to eat healthily. They eat fruit daily through the National Fruit Scheme and speak enthusiastically about the healthy dinners they choose at school. Through well-planned physical activities, pupils understand the benefits of exercise and appreciate the opportunities they have to play football and other sports. In the Foundation Stage, children's physical development improves when they use the recently improved outdoor learning area. One parent said, 'The playground has greatly improved making a much more stimulating environment.' Behaviour is good. Pupils respect one another and relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils understand about various religious beliefs and customs through celebration of different cultures. For example, in assembly pupils enjoyed learning the Chinese New Year story. Pupils' contribution to the school is limited because they are given few opportunities. Attendance is inadequate. Systems to tackle this issue are not rigorous enough to ensure that parents are constantly reminded about the importance of arriving to school on time and attending regularly. Pupils develop satisfactory skills equipping them for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is a good balance between listening to the teacher and opportunities for pupils to talk about their work in pairs, which develops their personal and social skills. Pupils behave well and relationships between pupils and adults are good. Where available, teachers make use of new interactive white boards to enliven teaching and hold pupils' attention well. Assessment is used satisfactorily, but in a number of classes marking does not make clear to pupils what to do in order to make their work better. Planning for the higher attaining pupils is

insufficiently challenging, which results in low level demands being made of these pupils. In the Foundation Stage, adults do not always intervene when they should to support children's learning effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides pupils with a broad and interesting range of work. Good features include computing and music. Recent developments to the curriculum, such as the introduction of 'big writing' and guided reading in literacy are improving pupils' learning. Reviewing the curriculum has led to the development of links between subjects making learning more meaningful. A significant weakness is that work does not always meet the needs of all learners.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about visits to local places of interest, which enrich their experiences. There is a satisfactory range of activities out of lessons. The choir is particularly popular and pupils enjoy opportunities to sing in assembly and in the local community. The school acknowledges that the focus on raising standards in English and mathematics has meant that other subjects have received too little attention. They are now moving towards providing more creative activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of the care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The school works well with outside agencies to involve them in helping pupils to make progress. Child protection procedures are secure and all staff are aware of them. Appropriate checks are made on all staff working at the school to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils who join the school with limited understanding of English are assessed and appropriate support provided. Procedures for supporting other pupils such as refugees and asylum seekers are sensitive and effective. For example, a lunchtime club runs to help these pupils make friends and settle easily.

New systems for tracking pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 are already having an impact, as shown by the improvement in Year 2 results. However, teachers are not using assessment data effectively to plan appropriately challenging tasks for all pupils. There are inconsistencies in the use made of assessment information to guide pupils on how to improve their work. In the Foundation Stage, the tracking of individuals' achievement is not used well enough to ensure that children make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good and are improving provision and raising achievement. The headteacher is a good leader and has worked hard in close partnership with her deputy to introduce a culture of teamwork and a shared vision for the school's future. The role of Year Leaders is well defined and includes team

planning, teaching demonstration lessons and monitoring of teaching and learning. Literacy and numeracy co-ordinators work closely with class teachers to ensure the impact of new initiatives. Actions taken by the school's leaders during the last two years have raised achievement by improving the quality of teaching and learning. They have made significant improvements to the school premises, especially the playground, which are having a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development and improving behaviour. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Given its recent track record, the school's capacity to improve is good.

Governors are supportive of the school and their strengths are used effectively. Some are actively involved in the life of the school, for example by supporting pupils with reading. There are effective systems for tracking and controlling expenditure and the school no longer has a budget deficit.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching lessons. We would like to tell you what we found.

- You behave well and get on with each other and the adults
- The school works hard to involve your parents and carers in your learning by inviting them in to school to find out more about the work you are doing and how they can help you.
- Those of you that find things difficult receive some good quality support and make good progress
- The headteacher and the other staff work hard together to make the school better.

There are some things that could be better, though:

- We have asked the school to improve your level of reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- We have asked teachers to make sure that all of you, especially those of you that find work easy, are given harder problems to solve. You can help by telling the teachers if the work is too easy or when you finish quickly.
- Too many pupils miss school for no good reason. This means some of you miss important learning. We are asking your parents and the school to work together to make sure you go to school every day.

Thank you again and best wishes for the future to you all.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine Gerard(Lead inspector)