



Elmhurst Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110286
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 288621
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Vanessa Ward

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Dunsham Lane
School category	Community		Aylesbury
Age range of pupils	7–11		HP20 2DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01296 481380
Number on roll (school)	153	Fax number	01296 481380
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Watson
		Headteacher	Mr John Hoile
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2002		

Age group 7–11	Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006	Inspection number 288621
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: 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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elmhurst Junior School is smaller than average. It has an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) department for 12 pupils. Pupils come from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds, the largest proportions being of White British or Pakistani heritages. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high, although few are at the early stages of speaking English. Almost half of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Elmhurst Junior School provides a satisfactory quality of education and has strengths in the way it cares for, guides and supports its pupils. This promotes good personal development, and pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Its good links with other agencies are used effectively to provide specialist help where it is needed. Parents greatly appreciate all that the school does, expressing the view that 'the school provides a friendly atmosphere in which my child enjoys learning'.

Standards on entry have fallen in recent years and at the same time the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities has increased. The school has implemented several strategies to raise standards. These have met with partial success, although standards by the end of Year 6 remain significantly below average. There has been a slight improvement in English, mathematics and science year on year since the previous inspection. Achievement is satisfactory, with a few pupils, especially the more able and those with severe learning difficulties, making good progress. This is also the case for those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Whilst external factors have a significant impact on pupils' achievement, there is more that the school should do to accelerate progress. Teaching is satisfactory, but does not consistently challenge and motivate pupils to achieve well, especially in English, mathematics and science. The monitoring of teaching and of initiatives in the school development plan lacks sufficient rigour.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy and staff. A recent whole school focus on pupils' personal development and a review of the curriculum have led to improved behaviour and an increase in pupils' enjoyment of learning. Through participation in the numerous sporting activities and daily opportunities to eat healthily, the pupils gain a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Their comprehensive knowledge of how to keep safe is regularly increased through the curriculum and by effective procedures for managing behaviour. They readily take on responsibilities around the school. Activities such as fund raising and running stalls at fetes provide pupils with satisfactory skills for life beyond school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by improving the consistency and quality of teaching so that all pupils are challenged and motivated to achieve well.
- Increase the rigour with which those leading and managing the school monitor and evaluate both the quality of teaching and the progress made towards targets in the school development plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with standards that are significantly below average, and even these standards are declining. Almost half of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities and this has an impact on overall performance in national tests. Most pupils initially lack confidence in putting pen to paper and this hampers their progress. Efforts to overcome these barriers and to improve pupils' self confidence have met with some success. Although standards have risen slightly in recent years, they remain significantly below average overall.

The school has introduced more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. Their progress is monitored regularly against targets, and additional support is provided for pupils whose progress is slower than expected. This is contributing to some improvement. A recent initiative, throughout the school, to improve pupils' creative writing skills has increased their interest and motivation, but has yet to have an impact on standards at the end of Year 6.

Most pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. Those with more severe learning needs make good progress towards their individual targets. The few more able pupils, and those at the early stages of learning English, achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'I really like coming to school because everyone is friendly and we get to meet children from around the world,' said one girl. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Positive qualities are reflected in the absence of racist incidents and the caring way in which pupils treat each other. They show much pride in learning to greet one another in different languages. Behaviour is mostly good. Pupils say there is very little bullying and any incidents are dealt with quickly. They enjoy taking responsibility, representing their classmates on the school council and acting as buddies to newcomers. Attendance is satisfactory and is improving. Pupils say they enjoy school, especially creative and practical work, but in some lessons, especially in English, they sometimes lose interest because the tasks are not challenging enough.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and they enjoy exercise. The school is working to increase pupil uptake of healthy eating. Pupils know about keeping safe and are careful when using the Internet. They are satisfactorily involved in the community beyond school and the more able thoroughly enjoy the opportunities provided through the 'Excellence in Aylesbury' project. Although they have good social skills, the weaknesses in pupils' literacy and numeracy mean they develop satisfactory basic skills for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and account for the satisfactory progress that pupils make. There are some particular features that enhance the pupils' learning, such as good relationships, which encourage positive attitudes. Pupils who were identifying descriptive words in a passage from Cinderella were keen to contribute their ideas. The pupils are very willing learners, and teachers try to make lessons interesting, but this is not always successful. As a result, some lessons are far less motivating than they should be. At times, learning slows and then pupils make less progress than they should. This occurs when the introduction to a lesson is too long or when work is not matched accurately to pupils' needs, and is then either too hard or too easy. Support staff work well and successfully with small groups of pupils, often helping those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers are using assessment information with increasing effectiveness to help them keep track of how well each pupil is doing, and to provide additional support where necessary.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in extra curricular activities which enrich their personal development and enjoyment of school. Visiting speakers and educational visits enhance learning. A particular success has been the raising of pupils' awareness of the dangers of certain drugs, which has resulted in the production of some lively and well written raps.

The provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities and in the ASD department is good and enables these pupils to participate fully in the school's activities. There is good provision for those at an early stage of learning English. Although links are being forged between the different subjects, staff do not capitalise on extending pupils' literacy and numeracy skills sufficiently. This is seen in the overuse of undemanding worksheets and in the limited opportunities available for pupils to apply their skills in extended writing in history and geography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good. The school includes pupils from the ASD department wherever possible and this helps to build relationships between pupils of different backgrounds and abilities. The school provides very well for pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Systems to ensure the health, safety and well being of pupils are effective. Parents express confidence in all that the school does to support their children. The pupils say that the staff are easy to talk to. Several said how they trusted their teachers and praised them for sorting out any problems. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Academic

guidance is satisfactory. In some classes the teachers' marking gives the pupils guidance on what to do next to improve, but this good practice is inconsistent. All teachers keep accurate records of the pupils' progress and senior staff monitor them. Targets are set for groups of pupils, but the involvement of pupils in evaluating their own progress is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Teamwork among leaders and managers is good and there is commitment among staff and governors to raise standards. Subject leaders contribute effectively to developments in their subjects. The coordinator for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very effective. Priority is given to the professional development of all staff and is linked to school improvement. The school's process for self-evaluation and subsequent improvement planning satisfactorily involves staff and governors. As a result of analysis of data, the school takes suitable action to raise standards. However, procedures to evaluate the success of initiatives and to improve teaching and learning, lack sufficient rigour.

The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities, and governors are supportive of the school. The chair of governors has good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As several members of the governing body are new, they are currently being trained in their roles. Improvements since the previous inspection, combined with the success of recent initiatives, such as revising the curriculum, indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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.

Inspection judgements

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

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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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 feel welcome when we visited Elmhurst recently and for talking to us about your school. It was very useful to listen to what you had to say about what you enjoy doing.

Your school is a happy place and your parents and carers speak very well of it. They think that you are well cared for in school and we agree with them. You told us that you enjoy being in school and feel safe there. You know that the adults will always help you if you are upset or worried.

Although you try hard, you are not as successful in tests as children in some other schools. We have asked your teachers to help you to do better, especially in English, mathematics and science. You can help by working hard and trying your best.

Your headteacher and teachers work hard to introduce new ways to help you learn. We have asked them to check regularly to see how well new ideas are working so that they can be really successful.

The school is good at helping you to grow up and to take on responsibilities. Caring for new pupils and helping them to settle in happily is a good example. You eat fruit and vegetables in school and are involved in many sports. Keep on doing these things because they help you to be healthy. You behave well and this helps all of you to enjoy learning. We are pleased that you enjoy sharing your ideas for making your school better through your school council.

We hope you carry on enjoying school and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Ward

Lead Inspector