

# Elm Wood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100597
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lambeth
<b>Inspection number</b>	307420
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynn Bappa

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Grimwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs C Marshall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2001
<b>School address</b>	Carnac Street London SE27 9RR
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8670 1621
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8761 6316

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is a smaller than average primary school, in a challenging inner-city area. A higher than average proportion of pupils arrives or leaves during the school year. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals is much higher than average. Three-quarters of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups, which is well above average. Around one-in-three speaks English as an additional language. The school is currently led by a joint interim-headship team, in the absence of the permanent headteacher. This team has been in post for a month. The deputy headteacher left in November 2007 and an associate deputy, put into place by the Local Authority, has been working in the school since September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. Standards are exceptionally low because teaching and learning, and leadership and management are inadequate.

Insufficient priority has been given to raising standards. After a sound start in the Foundation Stage, achievement is inadequate across the school. Standards are not as high as those reported at the time of the last inspection. Assessments at the end of Year 2 show that standards have been well below average for several years. These standards are much lower than they should be, even given pupils' weak starting points. Pupils continue to underachieve significantly in Years 3 to 6 in English, mathematics and science. By the time they leave in Year 6, standards in these subjects are exceptionally low.

The school has been reluctant to acknowledge pupils' underachievement. As a result, there has been a lack of urgency to secure improvement. The school's monitoring and evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses have not been sufficiently rigorous or accurate, especially in relation to achievement and teaching. Governors and senior leaders have failed to take decisive action to tackle the school's decline. They are unable to point to a convincing track record of improvement that would suggest that the capacity to improve is anything other than inadequate. Staff morale has fallen because of inadequate leadership and management. Teaching has suffered. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment to ensure that tasks are sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Lessons are, therefore, rarely pitched at the right level for the majority of pupils. The interim headteachers, however, have made a good start to their work. They have already gained an honest and realistic picture of the difficult task facing the school. Their management has already begun to improve staff morale in a very short time. As one parent commented, 'Behaviour has improved greatly since they arrived and I hope they can raise results.' Nevertheless, they have not been at the school long enough to have had an impact on standards and the quality of provision.

The quality of pastoral care is good and pupils benefit from their positive relationships with the staff and the school's caring, harmonious and inclusive atmosphere. As one parent said, 'The teachers care greatly for all the individuals in their class, regardless of culture, creed etc. Each child is valued.' The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and are polite and courteous, especially to visitors. Inspectors enjoyed meeting them and hearing their views of the school.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

When children start in the Nursery, their skills and levels of knowledge are well below what are expected of most three year-olds, with particular weaknesses in communication, language and literacy. In the Foundation Stage, they make satisfactory progress towards the goals they are expected to achieve, although standards remain well below average when they enter Year 1. The school provides a satisfactory activity-based curriculum with an emphasis on personal development and a focus on improving communication skills. This gives children a sound start

to their learning. However, the outdoor area is in need of improvement. Parents say that their children are well cared for and staff are friendly and approachable.

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science and make sure pupils reach their potential.
- Improve learning by ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of pupils and provide achievable challenges to pupils at all levels of ability.
- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels through monitoring and self-evaluation that provide a more accurate picture of teaching, learning, standards and achievement.
- Strengthen governance, particularly in monitoring the school's performance more systematically, so that governors can hold it to account.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

After a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage, achievement is inadequate from Years 1 to 6. Standards are exceptionally low in teacher assessments at age 7 and in national tests for 11 year olds. The overall trend is downwards and the school missed almost all of its targets by a considerable margin in 2007. Standards in English are a particular weakness throughout the school. Pupils' skills in speaking, reading and writing are much lower than they should be. Most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in handwriting and the standard of presentation in most exercise books is weak. Pupils' standards in mathematics rose slightly in 2007, although standards remain low in comparison to national averages.

Most pupils, regardless of their gender, background or ethnicity, have made inadequate progress in many aspects of their work for a number of years. This is the consequence of weak leadership and management at all levels, low expectations of what pupils can achieve and inadequate checks on their progress. The new interim leadership team recognises that this situation is unacceptable and has firm plans to tackle it.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most pupils are happy in school, although attendance is well below average, despite the school's efforts to improve it. Behaviour is satisfactory because teachers provide pupils with clear boundaries and expectations. Fixed-term exclusions are low. Pupils know how to keep safe and who to ask for help. They are keen to take responsibility and contribute well to the school community through initiatives such as the school council and the peer mediation system. As one pupil commented, 'It is our enjoyable duty to be peer mediators'. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and try hard to do the right thing. They participate enthusiastically in sports and show a good understanding of why it is important to take part in them. They can explain which foods are good for you. One group of pupils, for example, would like a fruit tuck-shop for older pupils. Pupils leave school with many positive personal qualities but their exceptionally low standards in basic skills mean that, overall, they are poorly prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate so that pupils are making insufficient progress. Teachers are keen to improve and develop their skills. The relationships in most classes are good and pupils are willing to learn; teachers manage their pupils' behaviour well.

Although there are some strengths in the teaching, there is not enough good teaching to make an impact on pupils' longstanding underachievement and there are too many instances of inadequate teaching that hinder pupils' progress. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what they expect pupils to learn and the pace of lessons is often slow. Pupils are willing to work hard but rarely show much excitement in their lessons which often lack challenge. Teachers mark work conscientiously but too rarely give pupils constructive feedback on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Insufficient use is made of technology such as interactive white boards. Teaching assistants work hard to help pupils understand the lesson activity but do not do enough to help them to work independently.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 4

The curriculum provides good support for pupils' personal development but it is inadequate overall because it does not enable them to develop satisfactory skills in the basic areas of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Not enough emphasis is placed in curriculum planning on how pupils learn. There are too few challenging activities to extend pupils' learning or to develop independent learning skills. Opportunities for pupils to develop specific ICT skills as well as on integrating ICT into learning in other subjects are inadequate. This was a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection and still has not been successfully resolved.

The school provides children with a satisfactory range of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities, such as after school clubs. It also helps them to learn how to lead safe and healthy lives and to understand the responsibilities of being a citizen.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are inadequate overall. The school is good at supporting the social and emotional needs of its pupils. It is rightly proud of its caring ethos, and all adults show a high level of commitment and competence in promoting the health and safety of the pupils. Requirements for child protection are in place. Pupils are known and treated as individuals and this contributes well to the school's welcoming ethos. The school works well with outside agencies and with parents.

Although the quality of pastoral care and guidance is good, the academic guidance given to pupils is unsatisfactory. Too few are given feedback to help them improve or to know and understand their targets for improvement. When targets are set, they do not take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning. This hampers their progress so that the standards they reach are too low.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

The school judges leadership and management to be satisfactory, but it is inadequate because it has not been successful in raising pupils' achievement. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in staffing and leadership at the school that have hindered its improvement. The checks that the school makes on its own performance are not sufficiently rigorous. Approaches to checking the quality of teaching are weak and insufficiently focused on pupils' learning. Subject leaders are not involved enough in the monitoring process and do not show a clear enough understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas. The governors have supported the school but have not acted as critical friends. They have not been rigorous enough in challenging pupils' poor achievement and exceptionally low standards. They have also allowed a situation to develop where the school has had a substantial financial surplus despite a shortage of crucial resources such as library books. Governance is therefore inadequate. Improvement since the last inspection is inadequate. The new interim headteachers, in post for only one month, cannot yet show that their actions have had any significant impact in raising pupils' achievement. At present, therefore, the school lacks the capacity to improve.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

21 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elm Wood School, London, SE27 9RR

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently. We are writing to tell you what we found out. By now, you have probably heard that we think your school needs some extra help; we call this 'special measures'. This means that there are some important things wrong with your school and it needs help to put them right as quickly as possible. Your teachers will have help to make the improvements and more inspectors will be visiting you regularly to check on how well the school is making progress.

These are the things that need improving.

- Your teachers need help to plan lessons so that you learn as quickly as pupils do in other schools like yours. This should help you get much better results in tests when you are in Year 6.
- Your teachers need to explain to you exactly what you do well and what you need to do to improve your work.
- You also need more chances to do things for yourselves instead of watching teachers doing them for you.
- The headteacher and other staff need to check more carefully on how well you are doing.
- The governors should make sure that all these things are sorted out.

You can play your part by coming to school regularly, by behaving as well as you can and by working hard in lessons. We know that there is a lot about your school that you should be proud of. The adults in the school work hard to take good care of you. You try hard to behave well and do your best in lessons. You are kind, helpful to each other and polite to adults in the school.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector