

Elliott School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101060
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	307579
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Asyia Kazmi HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1200
6th form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Ferrell
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Pullman Gardens Putney London SW15 3DG
Telephone number	020 8788 3421
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Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elliott school is a larger than average, multi-ethnic, specialist language college. Although a mixed school, there are twice as many boys as girls. Approximately a quarter of students are eligible for free school meals, this is higher than average. Nearly half the students are White British; other predominant groups are Black Caribbean and Black African heritage students. Over a quarter of students speak English as an additional language, although the majority of these students are British born.

A quarter of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is higher than average. The proportion of students with statement of educational need is also high. The number of students joining or leaving the school other than at normal times is higher than average.

The school has a European award for languages, to which was added the International school award in 2006. The school is due for a rebuild under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

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, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress students make between Years 7 and 11, their attendance, behaviour and teaching.

The headteacher provides effective and strong leadership, she has galvanised the staff to work cohesively towards common goals. Senior leaders have strengthened systems to check and improve the work of the school and ensure leaders at all levels are accountable for the work they do. This has resulted in improvements to the standards students achieve, a substantial reduction in the number of exclusions and improved attendance of students. However, despite these improvements, there is still more work to do in each of these areas; exclusions remain too high, attendance is still well below the national average, too many students are late to school and to lessons. Although standards have improved, the progress students make during their time in the school is not as good as it should be.

The school has experienced considerable turbulence in the past few years with several changes of headteacher, compounded by the inability to recruit staff to key departments. The buildings are in a poor state of repair. This has had a marked impact on student's achievement and behaviour. The situation has now stabilised and the headteacher's strong leadership is driving improvements in the school.

Students enter the school with average standards. A focus on developing teaching and learning has resulted in improved progress so by the end of Year 11 standards are now average. However, a significant number of students make inadequate progress and do not reach the standards they should. Standards are low in science, and particularly low in information and communication technology (ICT). Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum, which is satisfactory, and have introduced courses which better match the needs of the students. Standards in the specialist subjects are low but the impact of the specialism on the wider school is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Senior leaders are aware of the strengths and areas for development in the school and target their support pertinently. This is because they have established robust systems to line manage middle leaders; this includes regular meetings and detailed self-evaluation produced by middle leaders. However, these systems are relatively new and although bringing about improvements they need time to make a significant difference. Standards improved because of clear systems to check students' progress and good intervention plans which provide appropriate and well-targeted support in English and mathematics. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve; this is demonstrated by the improvements that have already been made.

Teaching and learning overall are inadequate. There has been a focussed and methodical plan to improve the quality of teaching; this includes coaching, task groups looking at raising achievement in various aspects and external support provided by consultants. There is much good or better teaching across the school, nevertheless there is not enough to ensure students accelerate their progress and too much inadequate teaching remains. Teachers share learning objectives with students and have access to data on students but this does not always inform their teaching. As a result, students are not always set work that matches their needs and

abilities. In a significant minority of lessons, low-level disruption hinders students' progress and teachers are not always adept at managing this behaviour.

The number of parents who responded to the questionnaire was small; however, those who did respond expressed concerns about the lack of homework, the behaviour of students in lessons and inconsistency in teaching which concurs with inspection findings. The school's own survey of parents' and students' views show the majority enjoy school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness and leadership of the sixth form is good. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and speak highly of the teaching, guidance and support that they receive. This results in students who are well prepared to meet the challenges of further study and employment. Students are well-motivated, independent learners. Teachers combine their expert subject knowledge with a willingness to use interactive teaching styles to develop students' thinking skills and foster independence. One student told inspectors, 'I think the teaching quality is great, teachers are always willing to help, even during their spare time'.

Overall, students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress and attain above average standards. Particularly noteworthy are students' outstanding progress in French, textiles, economics, history and physics. There are variations in progress between subjects; although satisfactory, students' progress in biology, physical education and Spanish is not as rapid.

Although students have a limited choice of intermediate and vocational courses, the curriculum is good because it matches their needs. Students benefit from a wide range of extra curricular activities. They feel they belong to a cohesive and supportive community in the sixth form, although some reported they feel separate and cut off from the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate students' achievement between Years 7 and 11 to raise standards.
- Improve teaching, so more of it is good and none inadequate.
- Improve students' behaviour so they are better prepared for learning.
- Work more effectively with parents and carers to improve students' attendance and punctuality, both to school and to lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is average. In Key Stage 3, standards improved in 2007, particularly in science, but remain below average. In English and ICT standards are well below average, and the school's targets in these subjects were not met.

At Key Stage 4, standards improved significantly in 2007 due to focussed work on improving teaching and learning and they are now in line with the national average. Although students make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, the progress students make between Years 7 and 11 overall is significantly below expectation and represents inadequate achievement, particularly for some girls. There is considerable variation between subjects; students achieve

above average standards in art and design and English, however standards are below average in science, ICT, German and Spanish.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those supported by the school intervention plans made good progress in external examinations. However, inspection evidence indicates that not all teachers are adept at managing some students' behaviour and their progress, in these lessons, is inadequate. Teachers' planning does not always ensure these students make satisfactory progress and they do not always have the support they need in lessons.

The school is well supported by the local authority in its efforts to raise standards and improve teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being in the main school are inadequate. Students understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, including taking exercise and having a balanced diet. They feel safe at school and are confident that any incidents of bullying will be dealt with effectively by teachers. Students' attendance has improved as a result of the school's efforts in challenging absence and exploring with students and their parents the reasons underlying it. It is still significantly below the national average and punctuality to school and to lessons is not as good as it should be.

In lessons where teachers are more adept at managing behaviour students demonstrate good social skills and work well collaboratively. They have opportunities during the school day to reflect on wider issues. Many students enjoy coming to school, and behave well in lessons and around the school, however the behaviour of a significant minority adversely affects their own progress as well as that of other students in their classes. This disrupts the pace of learning and means that achievement is not as good as it should be.

Students do not all receive sufficiently good preparation for further study and employment because their development in ICT skills is insufficient. The poor punctuality and attendance of a significant number of students also does not support preparation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are inadequate because in too many lessons students do not make the progress they are capable of. The quality of teaching is improving; there is much teaching that is at least satisfactory and often good. In most lessons, teachers have supportive relationships with students and good subject knowledge. Outstanding practice was observed; in these lessons, teachers use well-focused questioning to help develop students' understanding and technology such as interactive whiteboards to make tasks interesting and challenging. In these lessons, students enjoy learning, take pride in their work and make good progress. However, in a significant minority of lessons, teachers are not adept at engaging all students in learning and do not challenge lack of attentiveness, poor punctuality or unacceptable behaviour. A few

teachers do not have high enough expectations of students and do not use teaching styles which allow students to apply the knowledge they already have and develop independence in their learning.

Methods for assessing and monitoring students' progress are satisfactory and improving. Teachers usually mark work in a constructive and helpful way, although practice is not yet consistent across subjects. Students are sometimes given opportunities to assess their own progress. Teachers have detailed information about students' progress available to them but do not always use this information to ensure teaching meets the needs of all learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum has been reviewed and updated. From September 2007 several vocational courses have been introduced which means that there is now an appropriate range of courses available to meet the needs of all students. The specialist language college status is reflected not only in the choice of languages available but also in an increasingly wide range of curriculum links that have been established. It is also seen in the good links with the local community. Developmental work in Key Stage 3 in languages is also helping to improve standards in this area. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which students enjoy.

Although satisfactory, senior leaders recognised the need to strengthen provision for students' personal development. They have recently made significant changes through a restructuring of the personal education and citizenship programme and a strengthening of the teaching skills needed to effectively deliver this programme. There is a school wide focus on developing students' literacy skills and there have been much needed improvements in the provision of ICT. These changes have still to fully impact upon the outcomes for students but there is evidence of progress being made.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory because senior leaders have established effective systems to bring about improvements, which now need time to embed. Learners at risk of underachieving are identified early and effective intervention plans, which are specifically targeted to meet varying needs, are in place. Groups, such as girls, identified as causing concern are monitored carefully. Transition from Year 11 into the sixth form is closely monitored, and students report they receive good advice and guidance on careers and pathways to further and higher education. Much effort has gone into significantly reducing the number of exclusions. A new system to monitor attendance is providing senior leaders with much better data to tackle persistent absence. This involves working with parents and supporting disaffected learners to become engaged. This has helped to improve attendance however, it remains well below average.

Arrangements for safeguarding students are satisfactory and meet government requirements. There are good links with other agencies to provide care and support. Detailed data and regular analysis by senior leaders enables teachers to provide support, including mentoring, for underachieving students. Many, but not all, students are aware of the levels at which they are

working and steps necessary to improve. However, in lessons, some teachers do not use the school's data to provide academic targets for all students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is now more stability at senior leadership level and middle leaders are driving improvements. Staff work as a cohesive group and are focussed on commonly shared priorities, that of raising standards. Effective systems have been established to check the work of the school and middle leaders are held to account through line management systems for the work of their departments.

The headteacher provides strong leadership. Her calm but determined approach, with the support of senior leaders, governors and staff is producing much needed improvements. The headteacher has taken tough decisions in tackling weaknesses in teaching. Senior leaders know the school well and are developing a sound evaluation of teaching and learning which informs training for staff. There are regular subject reviews including monitoring of students' books.

The turbulence in leadership also limited the progress on areas identified in the previous inspection. Despite recent successes, senior leaders are very aware that more work needs to be done in improving attendance, punctuality, reducing exclusions and raising standards. This includes the need to ensure consistency in the application of school policies by all teachers. The governing body is well informed and now provide satisfactory challenge and support to the headteacher. A plan has been agreed with the local authority to improve the financial position of the school.

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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	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	2
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?	4	2
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	4	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
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	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

07 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Elliott School, London, SW15 3DG

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for the welcome you gave us. We valued the discussions we had with you and I would like to take this opportunity to share our findings. We found that in recent years there have been many changes of headteacher and staff, this has had a negative impact on your progress and the behaviour of some of you. Recently this has improved because your teachers and senior leaders are checking carefully the progress you make and putting in place strategies to help you achieve better. We were very pleased that results improved in 2007. You have many opportunities to be involved in a range of trips and activities. The sixth form is good and in some A Level subjects, students achieve outstanding results.

Despite the recent improvements, your headteacher agrees with us that there is more that needs to be done to ensure that you all make as much progress as you should. In some lessons, a small number of students do not behave in a way that helps them or the rest of you to learn. Senior leaders in your school know that there is good teaching in the school; they are taking the right steps to make sure that more teaching is good. However, at the moment, you do not make enough progress in some lessons and because of this we have given your school a notice to improve.

To continue the improvements that have already started we have asked your school to:

- accelerate your achievement between Years 7 and 11 and improve standards further by improving teaching so more of it is good
- help you to improve your behaviour so you are better prepared for learning
- improve your attendance and punctuality, both to the school and to lessons.

Inspectors will visit your school again to check how the school is progressing against these areas for improvement. You need to play your part in improving your school by making sure you attend regularly, are punctual and that your behaviour helps you to learn. We wish you and your school every success in the future as it strives to be even better.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi

Her Majesty's Inspector