

Elmgrove First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102211
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	307933
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Helen Fleetwood
Headteacher	Mrs Denise Cawthorne
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Kenmore Avenue Kenton Harrow HA3 8LU
Telephone number	020 8909 2992
Fax number	020 8907 3413

Age group	3–8
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2008
Inspection number	307933

© Crown copyright 2008

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

This is a large multilingual and multi-ethnic first school educating pupils from Nursery to Year 3. Over three quarters of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage from a wide range of Asian, African, Caribbean and European heritages. Half of its pupils speak a language in addition to English, most often Somali, Arabic and Gujerati. Around a third of pupils are at early stages of learning English when they join the school, whether this is in the Foundation Stage, at the beginning of Year 1, or increasingly at other than these normal times of admission. More than a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than average. The school is additionally resourced to meet the needs of children with severe and complex disabilities within a mainstream setting. As a result, a much higher proportion of pupils have statements of special educational needs than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Elmgrove First is a good school with many strengths. Chief among these are its high expectations of all pupils and staff. This means that no-one at the school is content with 'good enough'. Staff are committed to continually raising the standards of pupils' academic and personal achievement through the education they provide for pupils of all different backgrounds, abilities and interests. This shows in the excellent care, guidance and support that staff provide. The impact is seen in the outstanding progress that pupils make in their personal development as they go through the school, as their confidence, maturity and respect for each other improves in leaps and bounds.

The thoughtful and dedicated headteacher, working with the able deputy and the enthusiastic senior team and staff, regularly re-thinks how the school can provide each of its pupils with the best possible start to their education. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has continued its excellent work with children with complex disabilities. It has also worked hard to address the changing needs of its pupils. Over the past five years, the mix of pupils has become more diverse and more pupils now join the school other than at the normal times of admission. The good teaching has enabled the school to meet these pupils' needs well and they make good progress as a result. Whilst standards in national tests in Year 2 are a little below average, the large majority of pupils meet national expectations. However, not content with 'good enough' the school has rightly identified that further opportunities to learn independently would enhance pupils' experiences and skills from the Foundation Stage onwards. Similarly, although pupils benefit from the good curriculum, staff know there is more to be done to recognise the particular needs of, for example, pupils at early stages of learning English as an additional language, those who have missed out on some social and educational experiences or those with particular talents in mathematics. This means that the school has laid out almost all of the right 'next steps' in its development plan, and work on some of these areas is already well underway. This well led and managed school has maintained its strengths, improved in some areas and demonstrates daily its good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the school's Nursery with skills below those expected for their age, with many of them not having had opportunities to play in a structured way with other children. Their English language skills are significantly below those expected, particularly where this is their first experience of an English-speaking environment. They thoroughly enjoy their experiences in the Nursery and as a result of some very good teaching, they make good progress. By the time they enter the Reception year, they have made particularly good progress in their personal development and in mathematics. Continued good teaching helps them to make further progress in their learning, including their English language learning. They are keen to join in the wide range of activities and try hard. They do not yet have consistent opportunities to pursue their own interests, make choices and become more independent. The team work in the Foundation Stage is strong and staff plan well together, with an emphasis on practical activities to develop pupils' social and language skills. Sensitive support for children with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to make similar progress to their classmates. The Foundation Stage is well managed and provides a happy and safe environment which children enjoy a great deal. The school has made improvements to its outdoor classroom, which is

currently more effectively used in the Nursery. This is because Reception children do not have as frequent, nor as independent, access to the outdoor areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- Adapt the curriculum to closely meet the needs of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils reach standards which are a little below average overall in national assessments at the end of Year 2 and in school assessments at the end of Year 3. However this represents good progress when pupils' starting points are taken into account. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils make good progress although mathematics is a relatively weaker area. Pupils who have statements of special educational need do well, as their parents' comments and their individual education plans demonstrate. The school quickly identifies pupils who are not making the expected progress and checks on the impact of small group programmes to provide extra challenge or to help pupils who struggle with reading, writing or numeracy. These checks show that these pupils also make good gains in their learning.

On occasions, there are differences between the attainment of different groups of pupils. For example in the most recent national assessments, pupils from Black African and White British backgrounds did not attain as highly as others. Whilst these differences are not statistically significant, leaders and governors have rightly identified the need to promote equality by further planning to address any gaps between the performance of pupils with different abilities, genders, and backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The very good opportunities which pupils have to get to know and share their school life with pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds with different strengths, languages and abilities has an outstanding impact on their personal development. The inclusive ethos of the school means pupils learn to relate very well to each other and form supportive friendships. A typical example during the inspection was the thoughtful way that older boys were observed coaching a pupil with physical disabilities on how to throw a football so that he could join in their playtime games. Play is generally happy and harmonious, and pupils readily accept guidance over their behaviour, both from adults and from the respected Year 3 'buddies'. Older pupils act as school councillors, organise assemblies, choose charities to support and organise equipment for younger pupils at lunchtimes. Over time, pupils develop a heightened sense of responsibility and respect for others and carry out their 'duties' around the school with a maturity in advance of their years.

Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school enormously and comment very favourably on the interest and fun they find in lessons. They know a great deal about healthy living and enjoy extra fitness breaks in class. They demonstrate good attitudes to work although there are a few pupils who find behaving well much more difficult. On occasions this distracts others, but staff manage this well. Pupils are very conscious of the importance of education to their future. They encourage good attitudes in each other and wholeheartedly approve of the 'green card' approach to rewarding good behaviour.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school monitors teaching regularly and as a result, it has remained good over time. Work is mostly matched to the wide range of needs of pupils. In nearly all lessons, relationships are very good. Learning assistants, especially when working with pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, make a significant contribution to the progress that pupils make. Interactive white boards are used effectively to help explain ideas such as the use of graphs. Even the youngest children use laptops well to support their learning. Pupils' behaviour is managed with calm consistency so nearly all pupils show good attitudes to work. However, where the pace of a lesson stalls, pupils can get bored. They are not yet encouraged enough to follow their own lines of enquiry or work independently. Assessment to check progress over time is well managed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum offers pupils a wide range of opportunities for learning, including French. Basic skills are well taught and there are good links between subjects. The school is rightly proud of its range of curriculum awards. An excellent range of visits and visitors enlivens the curriculum, giving pupils access to first hand, practical and memorable learning, such as day visits or visitors illustrating life in Victorian times. The school is aware of the need to further adapt the curriculum to reflect the changing needs of children at the school. For example, while older pupils at early stages of learning English are included well in daily activities and extra help is well-organised, opportunities to develop their language skills systematically are relatively limited. Homework is regularly set for the full range of abilities. The school hosts a wide range of clubs which help improve pupil's knowledge and skills in a range of subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides high quality care, guidance and support for all its pupils. Health and safety arrangements make the school a safe place and proper checks are made on adults who work in the school. Recording and reporting of incidents of poor behaviour keep the staff well informed and they take effective action if these occur. Consequently pupils feel safe, secure, and trust their teachers. As the parent of a child with disabilities commented, 'Even when things are not going so well, my child always knows that there will be one, if not more, adult that he feels comfortable with and can talk to'. The school has excellent links with specialists, particularly to ensure that pupils with disabilities make good progress. In addition, the care and support given to parents of these and other pupils who have difficulties or are vulnerable is excellent. Many parents wrote to the inspectors to explain their admiration for how the school had helped them and their children. Pupils get good academic advice through the well understood system of target setting.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There are very well organised systems for sharing responsibility for continuing to improve the school. For example, 'raising achievement leaders' develop teaching and learning in year groups or areas and monitor teachers' planning and pupils' work. This has shown that, at times, staff have focused more on teaching than on learning. As a result, this is a

new and very useful focus for the school. This is just one example of the school's extremely thoughtful, thorough and accurate self-evaluation. Governors make a good contribution, keeping leaders and staff 'on their toes' by probing questions but also by working in partnership with them.

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.

Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmgrove First School, Harrow, HA3 8LU

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. It was lovely for us to meet such friendly and helpful children. You told us how much you like your school and all the things you enjoy doing. We were very impressed with how much you care for each other and how grown up you become. Well done!

You go to a good school. The adults at the school do a good job. They make your lessons interesting and they often work with you in small groups to help you learn even more. They take excellent care of you so that you are happy and can do well. They also spend a long time thinking about how they can make things even better for you. They have some very good ideas about this, such as giving you more chance to investigate and find out things for yourselves. Your teachers talk to you about how everyone is different. We have asked them to think about this when they are planning what you are going to learn.

All the inspectors really enjoyed meeting you, answering all your questions and hearing about all the good things that happen at your school.

With best wishes

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector