

Elmridge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106291
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	309086
Inspection date	10 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Payne
Headteacher	Mrs J Appleyard
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Wilton Drive Halebarns Altrincham Cheshire WA15 0JF
Telephone number	0161 980 4941
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, care guidance and support and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data, school documents and parents' questionnaires. In addition, there were discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors, pupils and parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average size school is situated in a relatively advantaged area, but draws its pupils from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. Some one third of pupils are from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds, but few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds the Activemark, Artsmark, Basic Skills, Eco Schools and Healthy Schools Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils of all levels of ability achieve exceptionally well. The key to the school's success is the constant search for improvement. This is driven by the headteacher's expectation that all in the school will work to make it an even better place to learn. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school, 'because it's fun'. The school has gained the support of the vast majority of parents, summed up in a typical comment, 'A truly fantastic school with a team of dedicated, caring staff'.

From their broadly average starting points when they enter the Reception class, pupils make excellent progress through the school. They build on their flying start in the Foundation Stage so that by the end of Year 6 standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been maintained at high levels for a number of years. It is commendable that a significant proportion of pupils reach levels higher than that expected for their age in all three subjects. High standards are also found in other subjects, notably art, where work throughout the school shows the progressive development of skills in a wide variety of media. Pupils of all ages make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. For example, children in the Foundation Stage use computer games to develop their independent learning skills and their understanding of number. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with exceptional, sensitive support by teachers and classroom assistants so that they make similarly excellent progress to their classmates. This is also the case for pupils at an early stage of learning English. Work in lessons, in books and on display shows that standards and achievement remain high.

Personal development is outstanding and underpins pupils' excellent progress. Behaviour is impeccable both in and out of lessons. Attitudes to learning are first-rate in response to teachers' consistently high expectations of work and behaviour. Consequently, there is a remarkable learning atmosphere in classrooms, pupils work exceptionally well together and no time is wasted. They are aware of the needs of others and show care for each other. Enjoyment of school is reflected in very high levels of attendance. Pupils are proud of their school and seize on every opportunity to make a contribution to it by taking on responsibilities. They have a voice in school affairs and are confident that they are listened to, not least because a member of the governing body attends school council meetings. Pupils are well aware of the benefits of healthy lifestyles, sensible eating and lots of exercise. Everyone, including staff, takes part in the 'wake up shake up sessions' before school three times each week. It is in many such small but effective ways that staff build very positive relationships and generate pupils' enthusiastic participation in all the school has to offer. The school's very effective celebration of the cultural diversity of pupils' backgrounds makes a significant contribution to personal development. As they move through the school, pupils gain self-confidence. They reach high standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT so that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that they are looked after very well and that any difficulties they have will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Parents appreciate the high quality of care that the school provides. Notes from parents indicate that the all-round care is extended beyond the school to support families in crisis. Pupils receive clear guidance and support in their emotional and social development. Great emphasis is placed on guiding pupils in their moral, spiritual and academic development and as a result they are very well prepared for life in a multicultural

society. One of the principal factors in pupils' outstanding progress is the school's excellent system of setting individual, challenging targets and regularly checking progress towards them. Consequently, pupils know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and have a good grasp of what they need to do to improve. Teachers make very good use of the information they have about pupils' progress to match work to individual needs. Very good arrangements are made to ease the path of pupils joining the school at other than the usual times so that they settle in quickly. The school's data show that the great majority of these pupils make excellent progress. The school works hard and successfully to make sure that the transition between classes is managed so that progress is uninterrupted.

Classrooms buzz with activity. Teachers plan work that is challenging and, in the great majority of lessons, matched closely to pupils' needs. They build upon warm relationships to encourage and support pupils. Consequently, pupils develop confidence in their capabilities and respond exceptionally well to consistently high expectations of work and behaviour. Lots of practical activities engage pupils' interest and help to motivate them. For example, work in science has been reorganised to stimulate curiosity and a spirit of enquiry. Teachers are good at asking questions that make pupils think for themselves. Classroom assistants are usually fully involved in lessons so that they can provide the support necessary to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same excellent progress as their classmates. Occasionally, teachers try to do too much for pupils. Lesson introductions are planned to go on too long so that support staff are underused and are unable to make their usual effective contribution. As a result, for some of the time in these lessons, the needs of all pupils are not fully met.

One of the most important factors in the school's success is the headteacher's excellent leadership. With strong support from the senior leadership team, she has been able to engage all staff in seeking continual improvement in performance. The result is teamwork of a high order. The way that responsibility for subject leadership is shared among staff means that teachers' individual expertise and interests are deployed to the school's best advantage. It also means that accountability for standards and achievement is clearly defined and shared by all. Excellent systems for checking quality in all aspects of the school's work, linked to staff development and training, give everyone a clear picture of what is working well and where improvement might be managed. For example, improvements in writing are the result of changes to the curriculum to make better use of opportunities in all subjects to promote progress. The impact of changes is carefully monitored. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and reliable. The governing body plays a full part in the school's evaluation process and consequently is able to hold the school to account for its performance. Governors provide excellent support for the school. They are well informed through regular reporting and the school benefits from their professional expertise. The issues from the last inspection have been tackled rigorously and the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Exceptional leadership and management of the Foundation Stage ensures that children are provided with an outstanding start to their education. Children enter the Foundation Stage with a very wide range of previous experience, their skills are broadly at the levels expected for children of their age. A substantial number have difficulties in communication, language and literacy. Their needs are assessed and met exceptionally well so that they make rapid progress and their overall achievement is outstanding. The children's skills in linking sounds and letters and writing are not as strong. However, school data show that, because of the clear

focus on improving this aspect of the children's knowledge and understanding, this is where the most progress is made. Teaching of communication, language and literacy is excellent. Standards in writing have particularly improved over recent years and this is contributing to better progress and higher standards in Years 1 and 2. By the time the children leave Reception their skills in most of the areas of learning are above the levels expected for children of their age. Children are cared for very well so that they make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They develop confidence through the many opportunities for both supported and independent learning. The immediate impression in both classes is of how much children are enjoying their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons are planned to make the most effective use of support staff to meet the needs of all pupils.

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Annex A

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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of Elmridge Primary School, Altrincham, WA15 0JF

I really enjoyed my day in your school because of your friendly welcome. It was good talking to so many of you, some even before 'wake up and shake up', and hearing how proud you are of your school. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you that yours is an outstanding school. What impressed me most is the excellent progress that you make from the moment you join the school. There are lots of reasons for this, but the most important are these.

- The school is run exceptionally well so that everyone can get the best out of it.
- You receive excellent teaching that helps you to do well.
- You make a great contribution to the school by behaving so well and getting on together - you are a credit to your parents, the school and of course to yourselves.
- Your targets let you know how well you are doing and what to do to improve.
- The school provides you with lots of activities that are interesting and fun so that you enjoy learning and become confident in yourselves.
- Everyone in the school knows and cares for you very well so that you feel safe and looked after.

Part of my job is to suggest things that will help to make the school an even better place to learn. I have asked your teachers to make sure that they make the best use of their support staff so that everyone always gets the help that they need.

Thank you again for helping me with my work. I wish you well for the future and hope that you will all continue to play your part in making Elmridge an excellent place to learn.