

Elangeni School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110353
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310269
Inspection date	28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Dooks
Headteacher	Mrs Jeanette Puzey
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2005
School address	Woodside Avenue Amersham HP6 6EG
Telephone number	01494 721436
Fax number	01494 728409

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. He investigated the school's evidence to show that pupils make outstanding progress; how well the school provides for its most able pupils; and the extent to which leaders at all levels enable the school to maintain high-quality teaching and learning. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, scrutiny of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, and discussions with the headteacher, staff, the chair of governors and pupils.

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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils at this popular, larger-than-average school are from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being those of Other White or Indian heritage. An average proportion speaks English as an additional language, although few are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the percentage in receipt of a statement of special educational need is similar to that found in most schools. Pupils' needs relate mainly to dyslexia or moderate learning difficulties. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has a number of nationally recognised awards and hosts an after school club that is managed by a private provider.

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 because pupils make excellent progress in their academic and personal development. Most parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are pleased with what it offers. One parent, echoing the views expressed by many, notes, 'The school sets high standards academically but also gives a lot of pastoral care and has worked hard to provide excellent classroom and playground facilities. We feel extremely fortunate to have our children at Elangeni.' Pupils' high levels of enjoyment are exemplified in attendance rates that are regularly well above the national average.

Pupils' attainment when they first join the school in Year 3 is above average. A combination of excellent teaching, support and leadership enables pupils to achieve outstandingly well so that, by the time they leave, standards are exceptionally high. One of the keys to the school's success is the ethos of high expectations that permeates all of its work. All staff, including the excellent headteacher, have high expectations of themselves, each other and pupils. This is appreciated by pupils, one of whom proudly stated that the school 'pushes us to our limits'. Pupils are quick to point out, however, that these expectations are never unreasonable. Indeed, staff ensure that they adapt the work carefully to meet pupils' specific needs. In lessons teachers are adept at posing open-ended, challenging questions that reveal pupils' understanding and prompt them to think imaginatively. They are also skilled at giving the right amount of help to those who need it, and very capable teaching assistants support this process very well. Because staff are aware of pupils' differing needs, and meet them successfully, pupils of all abilities, and those learning English as an additional language, make very rapid progress.

High standards are reflected in the school's consistently strong performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 6. Pupils of all abilities do well. The high level of challenge given to those who are more able, for example, results in many more pupils reaching the higher Level 5 than seen nationally. In addition, pupils with much lower starting points often go on to reach, and sometimes exceed, the nationally expected Level 4. Excellent links with local secondary schools enhance the school's wide-ranging provision for the most able, including those identified as gifted or talented. There is no complacency, however, and procedures to check that high standards and quality are being maintained are very robust. Senior leaders monitor lessons methodically. They analyse the data produced by test results and other assessments carefully to ensure that pupils are making the progress expected of them and to give a boost to those who might need it. Subject leaders check pupils' work and teachers' planning regularly and governors, too, play an important part through their links with classes and subjects. In addition to this formal monitoring, staff evaluate their own work thoughtfully and are very self-critical. Consequently, the school knows itself very well. Staff understand which strategies are working successfully, identify areas for improvement, even among aspects of provision that are already strong, and devise clear plans of action to tackle them. For example, staff decided that aspects of pupils' writing could be better and they have worked determinedly and successfully to secure improvement. They share their expertise well with colleagues to help them to reflect on and improve their practice. There are plans, rightly, to extend opportunities for them to observe each other's lessons, to enhance their professional development still further.

The pursuit of academic excellence in the core subjects is not achieved at the expense of pupils' all-round development. They benefit from, and enjoy immensely, a broad and exciting range of activities in other subjects. The work in pupils' books reveals high-quality experiences in subjects such as history and geography. They enjoy the annual 'theme days', where pupils learn

about different countries, and the Victorian day for Year 6 pupils was very popular. There are many examples of first-class artwork and models on display around the school and modern foreign languages have been taught for some time. The school provides an excellent range of opportunities outside of lessons; music is a particular strength and pupils also enjoy a wide range of sporting activities. A very strong focus on their personal development means that pupils make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has a considerable impact on pupils' learning and pupils' excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes mean that lessons invariably run smoothly. The school operates as a very cohesive community. Pupils of all backgrounds get on very well and have a strong sense of their school's community and beyond through, for example, regular citizenship awards and work with local and national charities. Outside of the UK, their understanding of the global dimension is enhanced by themed weeks and links with a school in Ethiopia. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and they welcome the imminent reward system for bringing healthy lunchboxes.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and they appreciate very much the help and kindness they receive from staff. Every step is taken to check on the suitability of adults to work with children and to assess the potential risk of activities in and out of school. Procedures for protecting and caring for those who are potentially vulnerable are very secure. As a result, pupils feel very safe in school - as one put it, 'Your parents can rely on the adults who work here.' Staff provide very strong academic guidance, too. Pupils are set clear, challenging, but realistic targets for their learning and there is a very consistent approach to providing high-quality marking in their books. Consequently, pupils understand how well they are doing and where they might improve. Older pupils, in particular, are very evaluative of their work and often set themselves targets beyond those agreed with their teacher.

The headteacher, staff and governors are determined that high quality and standards should be maintained and that provision should improve further. Their track record shows they are exceptionally well placed to do so. Pupils thrive and are valued, whatever their background or ability: as one parent put it, 'I could not wish for better for my son.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement plans for teachers to observe and evaluate each other's lessons.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elangeni School, Amersham, HP6 6EG

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I was pleased to be able to visit your classrooms and to speak to you as you worked. A special thank you goes to those who met with me to give me your views. You are rightly very proud of your school and you gave me lots of helpful information.

Many of you and your parents told me that you go to an excellent school and I agree. Your school is outstanding because you are able to make excellent progress in everything you do. Your work is of a much higher standard than in most schools. There are many reasons for this. Your headteacher and staff work very hard to make sure that lessons are interesting and challenging. Some of you told me that a lot is expected of you, but that teachers are fair in what they ask you to do. Teachers and teaching assistants give lots of help to those who need it, but they also make sure there is harder work for those who find learning easy. This means that you are all given a chance to do your best.

I was very pleased to see how hard you work in lessons, and this is another reason why you do so well. Your behaviour is excellent, you listen carefully to your teachers and there is some beautiful work in your books. Well done, and please keep this up because it is very important. I could see for myself how much you enjoy school and many of you told me about the exciting things I could not see for myself. Your new adventure playground looks fantastic - it is a pity that it rained, so I could not see you use it! Well done to the school council for helping to get some great equipment.

Even though your school is outstanding, your headteacher, staff and governors are determined that it will continue to improve. They work hard to make sure that their skills improve just like yours do, and they are planning to watch each other teach so that they can get even more ideas. I know you will want to help by carrying on working hard in every lesson and I wish you good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Keith Williams

Lead Inspector