

Elburton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113322
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	311210
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Anthony Shield

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frieda Court
Headteacher	David Bradford
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Haye Road South Elburton Plymouth PL9 8HJ
Telephone number	01752 404489
Fax number	01752 484240

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elburton Primary is larger than most primary schools, situated on the outskirts of Plymouth and serving a mixed community of largely private housing. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and on entry most children's attainment is a little above the expected level. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in an atmosphere of trust and good relationships in this good and popular school. The school is ambitious for further improvement and is well placed to secure this. Parents are very supportive. Typical of the many positive comments by parents were: 'a lovely school, very friendly and welcoming. I cannot fault it' and 'Teachers are always smiling, as are the children.'

Achievement and standards are good overall. Children get off to a flying start in the Reception Year. Teaching here encourages an enthusiasm for learning, and many children exceed the expected levels by the time they start in Year 1. Well planned teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures pupils continue to make good progress, so that standards by the end of Year 2 are significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress through Years 3 to 6 remains good, although not so rapid. Standards by the end of Year 6 are significantly above average and pupils acquire confidence in using and applying their skills in English, mathematics and science.

Teaching is good and teachers plan lessons confidently and make pupils' learning interesting and fun. As a result, pupils are keen to do well. Stimulating and attractive classrooms help build pupils' motivation. Good relationships and a purposeful working atmosphere characterise lessons. Whilst marking is thorough, everyday assessment and feedback on how well pupils are doing are inconsistent. Pupils are not always sure how to improve or how to work things out for themselves. Pupils' progress through Years 3 to 6 does not accelerate as whilst much of the teaching is of a high quality, some tasks do not always make enough demands on individual pupils.

The well balanced and effective curriculum has some good features. Whole weeks devoted to one aspect of learning give a strong boost to pupils' understanding and application of skills. There is a good range of enrichment activities and clubs. The school's concern for the individual child is at the heart of its work and ensures pupils feel safe and well cared for. Teachers do not consistently use performance data on pupils' progress and attainment to plan pupils' learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is reinforced by the school's effective curriculum and good procedures for pupils' care and guidance. Pupils show considerable enjoyment in all tasks and take pride in their work. Their keen approach is an important factor in their success. Behaviour is good, and pupils are both thoughtful and polite. The self-assurance and maturity of some of the older pupils are very impressive. They take their responsibilities seriously and their contribution to the school, particularly through the work of the school council, is particularly striking.

Leadership and management are good, and the school has a strong culture of shared values. Collaborative teamwork developed through new management systems is enabling all staff to play an increasingly effective role in monitoring and self-evaluation, although more needs to be done before all staff are confident in using performance data to raise expectations and set challenging targets. While targets are realistic they are not yet challenging enough.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the school, their skills and experiences are at or slightly above those usually found. They get off to a good start because of the close partnership developed with parents

and the well planned and stimulating activities provided. The good curriculum promotes children's development effectively, and children make good progress in all areas. However, the outside play area is limited by its layout. Children explain confidently what they are doing and use language imaginatively. They are keen to get involved and relationships are good. Behaviour is calm. Opportunities for children to make personal choices from the wide range of activities are not sufficiently developed. Children are well cared for and supported, for example by older pupils when they are playing. The Foundation Stage is well led, and there are good curricular links with Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Check pupils' progress in lessons more carefully to set personal learning targets and plan work that meets individual needs more closely.
- Build the capacity of all managers and class teachers to check and evaluate provision, and use performance data to set challenging targets and get the very best out of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are significantly above average throughout the school and although writing remains an area of relative weakness, particularly in Key Stage 1, pupils achieve well in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Achievement is good. Children achieve well in the Reception Year, and this continues through Years 1 and 2 as pupils respond enthusiastically to well planned teaching. Results in national tests in Year 6 have been well above average in recent years, although they dipped in 2006. Decisive and effective action taken since then has ensured standards are now back to their previous level. However, while progress remains good through Years 3 to 6, it is not consistently so because the levels of challenge for individual pupils do not always help them achieve as well as possible. Progress of pupils with learning difficulties is good as a result of carefully considered and well targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident and articulate. They are proud of their school and trust all the adults who work with them. They work together amicably and are well mannered and courteous. Their personal development, a particular focus of the school's work, is a strength. The school's motto, 'Inspiring today's children for tomorrow's world', is a touchstone for much of its work and is reflected in pupils' confident application of basic skills, including computer skills. As a result, they are well prepared for the future.

Consistently above average attendance reflects how much pupils enjoy school. Older pupils talk about their love of coming to school and feel that it is an especially welcoming environment for new children. Pupils feel that their views and ideas are listened to and acted on. The school council is justifiably proud of their contribution to the new school lunch menus and the purchase of solar panels for the swimming pool. They are now developing ideas for playground development and are working alongside external consultants. Pupils' moral and social development is good. Spiritual and cultural development is also well developed although pupils show limited understanding of living in a multi-faith and culturally diverse Britain. The school has recently achieved the Healthy Schools award and pupils know how to eat healthily and keep fit. They feel safe and free from harassment, and know that bullying is dealt with speedily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is well informed and confident. It inspires pupils to do their best and to work purposefully in lessons. Lessons are characterised by good relationships and a quiet, determined air of activity. Classrooms are attractive and colourful environments, and pupils respond well to the thoughtfully planned activities that challenge and interest them. Pupils are constantly encouraged to share ideas with each other through their 'talking partners', which makes a significant contribution to their confident speaking and listening skills. High expectations of behaviour and well established classroom routines ensure pupils concentrate well. At its best, the pace of learning is brisk, and is reduced to short bite-size pieces enabling teachers to check progress and pupils to know exactly how well they are doing. Whilst marking offers praise and challenge, feedback in lessons is not consistently effective, nor is it always used to identify the next step in pupils' learning. As a result, in some lessons pupils all do similar tasks and some pupils could tackle more challenging work. Although pupils know that teachers and teaching assistants will help them if they get stuck, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to work things out for themselves or to organise their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Alongside a strong emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills, the curriculum provides good balance. An emphasis on nurturing pupils' social and emotional growth is effective and weeks devoted to one theme offer added interest and opportunities for cross-curricular approaches. 'The school was buzzing all week with the Vikings!' was how one member of staff described a week devoted to history. The school is rightly considering how it might extend this thematic approach further to make learning more meaningful. Pupils speak excitedly about their involvement in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the choir sings with energy and enjoyment. The curriculum is mostly well planned to cater for the range of abilities, including pupils with learning difficulties, but tasks do not always build on learning effectively enough or meet the needs of individual pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A strong culture of caring for one another characterises the school. Teachers know pupils very well and ensuring their care and welfare is pivotal. Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place and pupils know the school is a safe and caring place, where adults can be trusted. The school is vigilant in ensuring the safety and welfare of all pupils. Child protection procedures are fully in place. Comprehensive systems for tracking pupils' academic performance are in place, but are not used confidently by all teachers to track progress and set targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads with commitment and clear vision. His vision is widely shared and the school thrives on the dedicated hard work of all staff. The culture of trust and inclusiveness

encourages both staff and pupils to feel pride in belonging to a caring community. Good teamwork has been a crucial part of the improvements. The effective contribution of staff to school review and improvement is increasing. Curriculum 'pods' (small teams of teachers with subject responsibilities) are encouraging greater collaboration. Annual reviews of progress encourage self-review by all staff and enable the school to know itself reasonably well. However, analysis and use by all members of staff of comprehensive performance data to identify strengths and weaknesses and spot trends, is less confident. Realistic targets are being set to raise standards but these are not sufficiently challenging.

Monitoring by the leadership team is regular, focuses particularly on performance in English and mathematics, and is leading to consistently higher expectations. Work to support pupils at risk of underachievement has proved effective in improving their performance. The school responded effectively to the dip in national test performance in 2006 and introduced a more robust system for tracking pupils' progress. Given this response and the school's recent improvements, it has good capacity to improve even further. Governors play a strong role through their links with subjects and regular visits to school. Their thoughtful insights into the school's work make a valuable contribution to strategic planning and monitoring.

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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?	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?	2
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	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

3 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Elburton Primary School, Plymouth, PL9 8HJ

Thank you for welcoming us in to your school, and for playing such an important part in its inspection. We particularly enjoyed meeting you and your teachers and watching you learn. You answered our questions and spoke clearly and sensibly about your school. Elburton Primary is a good school and you can be proud to attend it.

What we liked most about your school:

- The enthusiasm with which you take part in lessons and out of school activities.
- You are well behaved, friendly and play well together.
- Your teachers take very good care of you and help you to become mature and responsible.
- Good teaching is giving you a chance to learn lots of exciting things and make good progress.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are working successfully to make your school one of the best.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure that the teachers check your progress carefully and plan work that helps you to do your very best.
- Make sure that all staff know what they have to do to make your school even better.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Good luck in the future!

Yours sincerely

Mr Tony Shield Lead inspector