

Elmbridge Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115487
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311947
Inspection date	2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Anthony Shield

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	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vernon Godden
Headteacher	Glen Tharia
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Elmbridge Road Gloucester GL2 0PE
Telephone number	01452 523632
Fax number	01452 523632

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether above average standards and good achievement have been sustained, especially in the light of falling standards of attainment on entry; the impact of initiatives to improve the writing of more able pupils; and the effectiveness of monitoring in ensuring consistency and the involvement of all staff in self-evaluation and school improvement. Evidence was gathered from national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies, minutes and other school documentation. Observation of the school at work, interviews with governors, members of the teaching staff and pupils, and parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire also provided evidence. 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

Elmbridge Junior School serves the north-eastern suburbs of Gloucester and is bigger than most junior schools. Most pupils are of White British origin, and have attended the adjacent infant school. On entry, most pupils' attainment is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is just below average. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for just eight weeks.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Elmbridge Junior is a good school and is deservedly popular with parents. 'My child has spent a very happy time at Elmbridge, he has enjoyed every minute', is typical of many comments by parents. This enjoyment of school is a particularly outstanding feature, and reflects the time and energy put in by all staff to make sure all pupils feel valued and respected. Good relationships are at the core of the school's work and the school thrives on its motto, 'Working and Learning together'.

The recently appointed headteacher has brought fresh energy and drive to an already good school. His vision is widely shared amongst staff and governors, and he is already a hit with many of the pupils. Parents also acknowledge that home/school communication, an issue which concerns a significant minority of parents, has already improved. Overall, parents are very supportive and are particularly pleased with the progress their children make and the enthusiasm with which they join in all activities.

Pupils are confident and charming. Their good personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is carefully nurtured. Assemblies are thoughtful occasions in which serious moral messages are introduced with humour and conviction. All join in the singing which is both musically accurate and joyous. Music is a particular strength and the opportunities provided for all pupils to learn an instrument are especially valued. Pupils are polite and friendly. They are considerate of others, and feel safe in the trust of all adults in the school. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are tolerant of differences in others. Behaviour is consistently good and pupils are keen to do well, trying hard to do their best. The school's recent award of healthy schools status is a reflection of the pupils' excellent understanding of a balanced diet and the importance of regular exercise. Sports have a high profile and, from Wake 'n' Shake first thing in the morning to Playmania at lunchtime and football club after school, there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity. Pupils relish the opportunity to contribute, and the work of class and school councils is valued. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

A purposeful hum typifies the working atmosphere in lessons. Teachers are well organised, have high expectations and make the pupils work hard. They also make learning enjoyable. Clear instructions, well-planned activities and good support from teaching assistants characterise the teaching. Pupils' independent learning skills, such as their confidence to ask as well as answer questions and their ability to solve problems without asking the teacher for help, are not so well developed. Mostly, work is well planned to meet individual pupils' needs, but this is not consistently so. In particular, feedback on how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next is patchy. This in turn leads to a lack of appropriately matched work for individual pupils. Not all pupils know their personal learning targets or can talk confidently about how they might improve their work. There is already much good practice in this area, but this needs to be shared more widely. Pupils say that they like it when learning is practical and made to seem meaningful. Increasingly, the school's already good curriculum is being adapted to ensure greater relevance through cross-curricular links and a greater emphasis on encouraging creativity. Basic skills are increasingly being taught through other subjects, and improvements in the use of computers to support learning since the last inspection have been significant. Residential visits play a key part in the curriculum and pupils speak warmly of how much they gain from them.

Good teaching leads to good progress. Standards have been consistently above average in Year 6 national tests in recent years in English and mathematics. In science they have been exceptionally high. This good achievement is reflected in all years through the school. A drive to improve mathematics has seen a rising trend of results in each of the last four years. A more recent focus on writing has also been successful in raising the proportion of more able pupils reaching higher levels and in ironing out dips in progress in earlier years. Some well-planned and imaginative writing, showing the extent of the challenge being offered, was observed during the inspection. School data indicates that challenging targets look likely to be met and, in some cases, exceeded in 2008.

The school takes care to ensure the care and welfare of pupils is paramount. A strong ethos of care for the individual child is woven through the school's procedures. Despite the school being bigger than many primary schools, individual children are known well by staff. Adults are attentive to pupils' needs. Their health and safety, including child protection and safeguarding procedures, are given high priority. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties are particularly well cared for. Senior staff use performance data effectively to track pupils' progress and plan intervention programmes where possible underachievement is identified.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection and is poised to make significant further strides forward. Staff morale is high and there is ambition to improve further. Accurate and realistic self-evaluation gives the school a good platform on which to move forward. Self-evaluation is based on regular monitoring of performance and this has led to greater consistency of good practice. Whilst all subject leaders are involved in monitoring, the focus tends to be on the quality of provision rather than how this affects standards and learning in their subjects. Targets are used well to raise expectations and drive improvement. Governors provide well-informed and challenging insights into the school's work. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen feedback to pupils on how well they are doing so that they know their personal learning targets and work is planned to more consistently meet their individual needs.
- Improve pupils' ability to organise their own learning, ask as well as answer questions, and solve problems independently of the teacher.

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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?	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 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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

3 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmbridge Junior School, Gloucester GL2 0PE

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you and especially liked the friendly welcome you gave me. You do a lot of good work and reach above average standards. Elmbridge Junior is a good school.

These are the most important things to say about your school:

- You clearly enjoy school and get on well with your teachers.
- You take an active part in lessons and join in clubs enthusiastically.
- There is a strong sense of belonging to a community in which you respect and value each other.
- You work hard in class and teachers make your learning interesting and fun.
- You are very well behaved, friendly and polite. You are growing up into sensible and mature young people.
- The school takes good care of you and helps you do your best.
- Residential visits make an important contribution to school life and your good personal development.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are working successfully to make your school even better.
- While most of you make good progress because of good teaching, I have asked teachers to make sure that they give you more regular feedback on how well you are doing and set work which matches your learning needs.
- Not all of you know enough about what you need to do to get better. I have asked your teachers to make sure that you all know your learning targets.
- I have also asked the school to teach you to be more confident in working on your own without help from the teacher.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection.

With best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Tony Shield Lead Inspector