

Eldene Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132229
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	315979
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Green
Headteacher	Heather Kellett / Susan Joslin
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Colingsmead Eldene Swindon SN3 3TQ
Telephone number	01793 525908
Fax number	01793 487245

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an above average sized primary school which includes a special resource provision (SRP) unit for pupils with complex learning difficulties. Pupils are drawn from a wide area, some parts of which are recognised as being socially disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Although increasing, the proportion of pupils whose home language is not English is below average. Virtually all pupils are fluent in English. When children first enter Reception their level of skills is typically below what is normally expected and, for a variety of children, well below.

The school holds both the Healthy School, Artsmark and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, not just because pupils are happy but because they make good progress. 'The school is warm and welcoming. My children have been given fantastic support and are growing in ability and confidence.' This was one parent's comment and sums up the overwhelming support for Eldene. Although standards are still below those expected at the start of Year 1, good provision in Reception gives children a secure basis for what they will learn higher up the school. Despite variations in progress rates in some year groups, most obviously where some middle ability pupils are not always challenged enough, pupils achieve well. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science; no mean feat considering their low starting points. Nevertheless, some aspects of writing and mathematics are below average. Dealing with this already forms part of the school's development planning.

Good personal development is demonstrated by pupils' very positive response to the school's good care, guidance and support. Pastoral and physical care for pupils is outstanding. Pupils behave well, show enthusiasm and are committed to keeping healthy. They play a responsible part in the running of the school and are satisfactorily prepared for the future. The school welcomes pupils of all abilities and backgrounds and supports them well, particularly through the very effective SRP.

Teaching is typically good and increasingly focuses on what pupils need to learn. This is rooted in a relevant curriculum, good assessment and record keeping, and effective use of target setting to raise standards. There is a small residue of less than satisfactory teaching where expectations are too low and pupils are not stretched enough. However, this affects only a very few lessons and is counterbalanced by some outstanding features of teaching which result in pupils making rapid progress.

Successful leadership and management mean that self-evaluation is good and that the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The new arrangement, whereby there are joint headteachers, is proving effective, particularly in making active use of assessment information, setting a good example to staff and maintaining strong links with parents and the community. Improved, and now satisfactory, governance makes a positive and growing contribution to the way the school is run. On the basis of its obvious commitment to making improvements, its recent track record and the systems already in place, the school has a good capacity for future development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents have nothing but praise for the way their children are introduced to school life and how well they are cared for. Children make good progress in Reception because they are well taught and given plenty of opportunities to learn through hands on activity. They have a good diet of activities they can choose for themselves and those that are directed by staff. The school is very successful in helping children to learn to be considerate, take turns and share.

Relationships are good; children enjoy school and behave well. Good assessment, monitoring and record keeping make sure that children gain experience in all required aspects. Provision is well managed. Staff are well aware of strengths and what needs to be improved, most notably improving resources for, and the use of, outdoor space.

Despite good progress, most children do not reach all the goals expected of this age group before joining Year 1. Standards are below average, notably in terms of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing at Key Stage 1 and mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching; making sure that staff always provide work that challenges pupils to do their best, especially those in middle ability groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from below average starting points to reach average standards at the end of Year 6. Most pupils achieve well for their ability and experience, building on the good start they make in Reception. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language also make good progress throughout the school.

Standards are broadly in line with the national average overall at the end of Year 2 and this represents improvement on previous years. However, they are below average in writing and some aspects of reading. That school results are not higher is because too few pupils in middle ability groups manage to reach above average levels. The majority of pupils make satisfactory overall progress in Key Stage 1, but progress is good in Year 2. Good progress continues into Key Stage 2. The most marked progress is made in Year 6 as a result of strong teaching. Predicted results, backed up by inspection evidence and the school's now detailed records, show that standards will be better this year than last, with science once again being the most successful subject. Despite a likely improvement in mathematics scores, which reflects the school's increased efforts to address weaknesses, pupils' problem solving skills remain underdeveloped.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are prepared to listen. They usually behave well and get on well with each other. They are courteous and show consideration for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils work well, both independently and in groups. They respond very well to opportunities to take responsibility, for example as playground mediators. They are eager to play their part in the running of the school as a community. There is an active school council and a commitment to being involved in charity fund raising. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with clear strengths in pupils' appreciation of right and wrong and their ability to work together. Pupils' awareness of multicultural issues, although satisfactory, is an area for further development.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and demonstrate that they can use tools and equipment safely. The Healthy School and Activemark awards demonstrate pupils' growing awareness of positive lifestyles. This is a happy school where pupils are keen to join in activities. Attendance is average rather than good because of illness and holidays in term time and not a lack of enthusiasm. Despite some weaknesses in basic literacy and numeracy skills, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future study and life in general. Mini enterprises, such as 'grub club' where pupils make cakes and sell them for charity, encourage practical application of what is learnt, as well as being great fun.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is typically good, but it does include a range of qualities from inadequate to outstanding. Because work is well planned and prepared, pupils respond positively, listening and behaving well. Teachers pay good attention to presenting learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson and referring back to them at the end to show what progress has been made. Marking is good with growing use of targets to help pupils appreciate how they can improve. Good team work amongst teachers and teaching assistants results in good support, especially for those pupils who find learning difficult, and underpins the good relationships that are to be found throughout the school. Teaching for those based in the SRP is good and ensures that pupils make good progress.

Strengths in teaching throughout the school include good use of questioning to encourage pupils to express themselves and continual efforts to make work interesting and enjoyable. Where teaching is at its best, pupils make rapid progress, for example at the end of both key stages, in Years 2 and 6. Weaknesses feature in some lessons where pace is slow, pupils are not challenged enough and where expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. At such times some pupils, most notably those in middle ability groups, do not reach the standards of which they are capable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced by a good range and number of visits and extra-curricular activities. A review of planning (which is still underway) has resulted in most work being interesting and enjoyable. All but one response to the Ofsted questionnaire noted that pupils enjoy school. There is a good curriculum for those in the SRP and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most lessons are appropriately pitched at the various ability levels in each class, and initiatives to teach pupils in Years 3 to 6 in ability groups are proving successful. However, in the least effective lessons, work is not challenging enough particularly for middle ability pupils. Big improvements to Foundation Stage planning ensure that young children are given the chance to learn through structured play and are beginning to develop independent learning skills. There is a good programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education that successfully promotes pupils' good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's pastoral and physical care of pupils is outstanding. Procedures to ensure pupils are safe and well are rigorous and effective. There is excellent consideration of safety during the current building programme. Pupils are well aware of whom to turn to if they have a problem and clearly have confidence in staff.

Academic guidance is good, founded on much improved assessment and record keeping. The recently established systems for setting targets for individual pupils, groups and the school as a whole are driving up standards. However, the full impact of these initiatives is yet to be seen

in writing and mathematics. Pupils respond well to guidance from staff which shows them how they can do even better.

The good overall profile of care, guidance and support has a strong influence on pupils' personal development. Unsurprisingly, parents are extremely pleased with the school's efforts to care for their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well run. The partnership of the joint headteachers is effective in giving the school educational direction, whilst at the same time ensuring that pastoral care is particularly well managed. Parents and staff talk enthusiastically of leaders' approachability and improvements to organisation. Good teamwork, the sense of corporate responsibility, and pupils' good progress are testaments to the success of the school's leadership and management. There is effective delegation, which successfully encourages middle managers to play a part in monitoring the quality of provision. Self-evaluation is accurate. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses which it uses to plan for improvements. Good examples of how well this works are in how assessment information is used to generate challenging targets and how a cross-curricular thematic approach to learning is being developed. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and in particular support for pupils in the SRP, is managed well. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are given equal opportunities throughout the school.

On the school's own admission, governance has only recently become effective in contributing to strategic planning. Governors are beginning to have an impact as critical friends, by virtue of greater involvement and improved awareness of what is happening in the school. There is still more to do, but improving governance has not been raised as a major issue of this inspection because there is convincing evidence that improvements are well under way and a strong commitment to making them work.

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 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?	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	3
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	3

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	3
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

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eldene Primary School, Swindon, SN3 3TQ

A big thank you for your help during the inspection. We were very impressed by the way you were keen to tell us about your school and by your good behaviour. Talking with the school council was a treat! We can see that you are all proud of Eldene and so you should be. It is a good school.

Here are some of the highlights.

?Teachers do their job well. They usually make work interesting and help you to make good progress. ?Both your headteachers make sure that the school is well run. ?Staff take particularly good care of you and are helping you to grow up as considerate and sensible people. ?Those of you who find learning difficult are well supported, especially in the special resource provision (SRP) unit.

In order to be even better the school should:

?help you to improve the quality of your writing and how well you can solve problems in mathematics ?make sure that teachers always set work which challenges you (especially those of you who are in middle groups) to do your best.

You can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart Lead inspector

Annex B

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Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart
Lead inspector