

Elliott School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101060
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	323400
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Joyce HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1004
Sixth form	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Ferrell
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
School address	Pullman Gardens Putney London SW15 3DG
Telephone number	020 8788 3421
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elliott School is a larger than average school with specialist Language College status. There are substantially more boys than girls on roll. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average. Many students speak English as an additional language but few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. A higher proportion of students than usual have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. At the last inspection the school was issued with a notice to improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The overall effectiveness of this school is inadequate but the sixth form is good. Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders have not been successful in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection and many aspects previously judged inadequate remain so. Actions for improvement have not been clearly focused and have not sufficiently involved managers, staff and students. Staff morale is low, and many staff and managers are uncertain about the future direction of the school. The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous and substantially underestimates weaknesses in the quality of provision.

Students' achievement remains inadequate. Students in Years 7 to 11 make inadequate progress based on their broadly average starting points, and many underachieve. Standards are exceptionally low. Teaching and learning are inadequate. Other than in the sixth form, teaching does not enable students to make sufficient progress. Too many lessons do not meet the needs of individual students, and the more able are not sufficiently stretched or challenged. Low-level disruption caused by students' poor or inappropriate behaviour in lessons slows the pace of learning. Behaviour-management arrangements are unclear, and students are not fully aware of the boundaries within which they need to operate.

Students' personal development is inadequate. Attendance levels remain exceptionally low, and inappropriate behaviour by a sizeable minority disrupts learning and adversely affects students' enjoyment of school life. Nevertheless, students adopt safe practices in lessons and they report that they feel safe in school. Incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively, and the school has reduced the number of students excluded from school. However, the number of students receiving sanctions within school has increased. Due to the marked underachievement of students and the many inadequate aspects of personal development that have an adverse impact on their attitudes to learning, students do not adequately develop skills that contribute to their future economic well-being.

The curriculum is satisfactory and the specialist Language College status has a beneficial impact in broadening students' horizons and promoting community cohesion. The curriculum now includes a range of courses that is starting to meet the needs and interests of students appropriately. Healthy lifestyles are promoted satisfactorily, most students are aware of the importance of a nutritious diet, and many take regular exercise. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the community, and the student council enables them to have a voice within the school. Older students act as mentors to support younger students. Fund-raising activities are held for local and national charities, and there are developing links with organisations within the wider community.

Arrangements for providing care, guidance and support are inadequate. While pastoral support arrangements are satisfactory, and students have access to a range of internal and external support agencies, academic guidance and support are inadequate. Students are not always aware of their targets and, in many subjects, marking does not inform students about what they need to do to improve. Students' targets, and information about their current attainment, are not used effectively to plan lessons or to ensure that students make the progress expected.

The accuracy of teachers' assessment is variable. Just under half of the small number of parents and carers that returned inspection questionnaires raised concerns about one or more aspects of the school's performance.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good, and some aspects are outstanding. It operates as a school within a school, and because of its good reputation recruits many students that completed their compulsory education elsewhere. The vast majority of students make very good progress and achieve very well. Value-added scores are very high for many subjects. Standards overall are above average. Many students progress to higher education. Students' personal development is good, and they make an outstanding contribution to their own community. However, they are not sufficiently involved in the wider school community. Teaching is good overall, and teachers engage and motivate students well; relationships are positive and productive. Guidance and support are outstanding, especially with regard to making university applications. The curriculum is good and provides a reasonable range of advanced level courses. Leaders and managers in the sixth form are highly effective and continue to monitor and improve provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching meets the full range of individual needs in all lessons, so that all students are engaged, motivated and enabled to make good progress.
- Devise, and implement consistently, attendance and behaviour management policies in order to improve attitudes to learning.
- Ensure that students' progress is effectively monitored using accurate information, so that all students make at least the progress expected.
- Involve managers, staff and students in clearly focused actions that address areas of identified weakness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The rate of students' progress is slow and, because of ineffective teaching and poor academic guidance, students do not reach high enough standards. Since the last inspection, when the rate of progress and the standards achieved by students were judged to be inadequate, both aspects have declined further.

In 2008, the school's tracking and monitoring data significantly overestimated the rate of students' progress, and predicted attainment levels were not achieved. Arrangements to monitor students' progress have been refined, and the accuracy of data is improving. However, these arrangements are not embedded across the school, and the use of data is not effective in all departments. While current students are starting to make better progress in some areas, school records together with inspection evidence confirm that a significant number of students are still underachieving. Students identified by the school as requiring additional support are, however, achieving better than their peers and are making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Students do not make sufficient progress in their personal development because attendance rates are exceptionally low, and poor or inappropriate behaviour disrupts learning in too many lessons. Whilst attendance levels have improved since the last inspection, and the school has been successful in reducing the number of students persistently absent, too many students still have a poor attendance record. These factors adversely affect students' enjoyment and attitudes to learning. Students do not make sufficient progress in developing literacy, numeracy and information technology skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Students understand the importance of a nutritious diet and the need to take regular exercise in order to stay fit and healthy. They make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the local community. Beneficial links with schools in other countries assist in developing students' understanding of different cultures and values. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most students conduct themselves safely and show consideration for other people. In lessons with an element of risk, such as science and physical education, they follow safety procedures. However, in social areas some do not show enough consideration of the risks that their actions pose to the safety of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The school has reduced the proportion of inadequate lessons, and the quality of teaching and learning is slowly improving. However, too many lessons remain inadequate, and too few are good or better. The managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning and frequently observe teaching. However, the school's view of the overall quality of teaching is overgenerous because insufficient attention is given to the progress made by students when judging the effectiveness of lessons.

There remains a considerable amount of low-level disruption in classes and behaviour is not always well managed, which slows the pace of learning. In too many lessons, teaching does not take full account of the needs of individual students, and the more able are not adequately stretched or challenged. While lesson objectives are displayed consistently, students are not always sure of exactly what is expected from them during the lesson, and often their progress towards meeting the lesson's success criteria is not properly measured. In more effective lessons, and particularly in the sixth form, students are engaged and motivated by a range of different teaching methods and they willingly participate in interesting, memorable and enjoyable activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Students across the school have access to a broad curriculum enhanced by a good range of additional modern foreign languages. Since the last inspection there have been some improvements to the curriculum. The range of courses offered is now better at meeting the needs and interests of students. The personal, social and health education programme, including citizenship, helps students to understand their rights and responsibilities. However, this programme is not timetabled effectively, and the quality of teaching is too variable.

The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities that students enjoy. However, not all students benefit from the range of activities provided and participation rates are variable. The specialist Language College status has a positive impact, enabling opportunities for students to participate in residential journeys abroad and to gain accreditation in a variety of different languages. The curriculum promotes good cultural and religious awareness, and this helps to promote satisfactory community cohesion.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

While arrangements to provide pastoral guidance and support are satisfactory, academic guidance and support are not effective in ensuring that students in Years 7 to 11 make adequate progress and achieve to their potential. The school's arrangements for providing pastoral care are enhanced by links with external agencies, enabling appropriate referrals to be made for students requiring more specialist support. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate support to help them make satisfactory progress.

Academic guidance and support are inadequate except in the sixth form where they are outstanding. Arrangements for the setting of targets for students and for using assessment data to aid their progress have recently improved, but are not consistently used across the curriculum. The reliability of the information is too variable. The marking of students' work does not always inform them of their progress or of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leaders and managers have failed to make sufficient improvement to the quality of education provided and have not demonstrated sufficient capacity to improve. Students' attendance rates remain exceptionally low, and behaviour within the school is not well managed. Insufficient priority has been given to the urgent need to raise standards. The current management structure is ineffective, and lines of accountability are unclear. Many staff have recently left the school, and strategies to address persistent staffing difficulties are unsuccessful. There is insufficient confidence or clarity among managers and staff about the future direction of the school. Very recently, and following the appointment of two temporary deputy headteachers, improvements have been made to aspects of the school. However, these measures have yet to have a positive impact by raising students' achievement. Governors are supportive of the school and have a vision for its future; the chair of governors has a clear understanding of what improvements are necessary, and has positively influenced and supported a revised management structure. However, governors have not sufficiently held the school to account for its performance over time, and do not question or challenge the headteacher sufficiently about decisions that are made. The school meets the current requirements with regard to procedures for safeguarding children, fulfils its statutory duties relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity, and promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. The school's accommodation remains in a poor state of repair. Taking the overall performance of the school into account, it provides poor value for money.

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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	16-19
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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?	4	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

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?	4	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	4	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	4	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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

12 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Elliott School, London, SW15 3DG

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the outcome of the inspection. Before I do, I would like to thank you all for your help during our visit. We found what you had to say very helpful in making our judgements about the school, and we enjoyed meeting you.

We were pleased to hear that you feel safe in school. You also told us that the curriculum has improved, and that you have a wider range of courses to choose from. Most of you told us that you take regular exercise and understand the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. In the sixth form you told us that the guidance and support you receive from teachers is excellent, and that you enjoy the sixth form and make good progress.

We looked in detail at many aspects of the school, including the sixth form, which we found to be good overall. Most of you achieve very well in the sixth form, and you value the outstanding guidance and support you receive. However, in the main school we found that leaders have not made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of concern identified at the last inspection.

Many of you still do not make the progress that you should, because teaching is not always as effective as it should be. We found the curriculum to be satisfactory, but we identified that you do not receive sufficient academic guidance and support to enable you to make progress. Attendance and behaviour management policies are not consistently enforced and these aspects of school life severely disrupt your learning and personal development. As a result, we have put the school into 'special measures' and asked it to:

- ensure that teaching meets the full range of individual needs in all lessons, so that you are all engaged, motivated and enabled to make good progress
- devise, and implement consistently, attendance and behaviour management policies, so that these aspects do not disrupt your learning
- ensure that your progress is effectively monitored using accurate information, so that you make at least the progress expected
- involve managers, staff and all of you in clearly focused actions that address areas of identified weakness.

You can help the school staff to improve the school by concentrating and working hard in all of your lessons. We wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Paul Joyce

Her Majesty's Inspector