

Elmlea Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108991
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	324874
Inspection date	25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	270
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Craggs
Headteacher	Inge Fey
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Elmlea Avenue Westbury-on-Trym Bristol BS9 3UU
Telephone number	01173 772352
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The impact of strategies to improve opportunities for writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The impact of the work done to close the gap in the attainment of boys and girls in literacy.
- Ways in which the curriculum has been enhanced through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and enrichment opportunities.

Evidence was gathered from observations in lessons and around the school, scrutiny of pupils' work and records of their progress and a range of documentation. Parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

This is a large infant school with three classes in each year group. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are in three Reception classes. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are from a variety of minority ethnic groups. A small proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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. Pupils throughout the school benefit from a rich range of experiences in lessons and additional activities such as visits and special events. As a result, they thrive both academically and personally. Most parents are delighted with all aspects of the school's work, making comments such as: 'My son loves school and is encouraged to do his best and be a happy pupil.' Another commented: 'I could not wish for a better, more supportive environment for my child.'

Children generally start school with a good base of skills and knowledge. They make very good progress in the Reception Year and are well prepared for the move to Year 1. Progress continues at a rapid rate in Years 1 and 2 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are exceptionally high. However, this is not at the expense of practical and creative subjects. Art work is of a very high quality, with many Year 1 pupils, for example, showing a good eye for detail in their studies of SS Great Britain. Pupils have good opportunities to get involved in a wide variety of clubs and sporting events. Music has high status and there are good opportunities for pupils to participate in school and local events.

The curriculum is of exceptional quality so that pupils' interest is engaged and extended. Teaching is characterised by high expectations and a good level of challenge so that pupils' interest is channelled into purposeful learning. Key to the rapid progress that pupils make is their understanding of the skills they bring to specific tasks. So, for instance, when Year 2 pupils were discussing a variety of paintings in preparation for their descriptive writing, they were reminded that their learning strategies were 'to notice things' and 'to work with other children to learn things.' All lessons are well organised and carefully structured to build on pupils' previous experiences. Teaching and learning support assistants are used well to work with individuals or small groups who need extra help, so that pupils of all abilities succeed at their tasks. Teachers make good use of ICT for planning and through the use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. Displays are enhanced through attractive word-processed captions and prompts to support learning, such as the key targets that pupils need to work towards during a lesson. However, use of ICT by pupils is limited and, as a result, opportunities are missed to enhance their learning across a range of subjects.

Although the school has a strong track record in terms of the standards achieved, there is no complacency. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are continually engaged in evaluating their successes and identifying where there is scope for improvement. Data is thoroughly analysed and individual pupils' progress is carefully tracked to identify where provision might need to be adjusted or where pupils need extra attention. Such analysis recently led to the school identifying an increasing gap in the attainment of boys and girls in literacy, particularly in writing. An audit of provision led to adaptations being made to the curriculum in order to promote better engagement of boys. The range of opportunities to write has been broadened through work on topics such as 'space' and through researching and writing about the lives of favourite authors such as Roald Dahl. A group of boys who had the potential to make quicker progress have been involved in specific targeted activities. These have included researching exciting vocabulary through interviewing parents and other members of the school community. The result of these initiatives has been a marked increase in the proportion of boys working at higher levels in Year 2. Boys are on track to do as well as girls in statutory assessments in writing at the end of the year.

Pupils work well together and greatly enjoy discussions with their 'talk partners'. They have a clear understanding of their targets and often check for themselves how successfully these are being met. They develop an excellent understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and have a thoroughly secure understanding of safe practices. Attendance is excellent because the school works hard to discourage families from taking holidays in term time. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, taking on responsibilities and contributing their views through questionnaires and the school council. They are exceptionally well prepared for the move to junior school and for later life. Behaviour in lessons is often exemplary and the vast majority of pupils also behave well in the rather cramped conditions in the playground. Just occasionally, a few find it difficult to meet the high standards of behaviour expected and there is the odd incident. The school deals with these quickly, involving parents where appropriate. Most parents are happy with the way that any issues are dealt with, but a significant minority feel that aspects of communication could be improved. The inspection found that parents are given detailed information through, for example, newsletters and curriculum evenings. Any specific concerns get an individual response. Governors regularly canvass parents' views through questionnaires and are exploring ways in which communication could be strengthened further.

The school makes excellent use of parents and the local community as a resource for learning. Recently, for example, a variety of visitors talked to pupils about their experiences of life in different countries. Work on celebrations such as baptism and Eid has been used to raise pupils' awareness of the practices of different faiths. The school has identified that there is scope to further raise pupils' awareness of the diversity of cultures represented in Britain and there is a clear action plan to address this.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an outstanding start in the Reception Year through the very good progress they make in their work and the excellent all-round development of their personal qualities. Good links are made with parents through home visits and a well-structured induction programme so that children settle quickly in school. Provision has significantly improved since the last inspection so that children have access to an exciting range of experiences. These include good opportunities to write independently in a variety of situations, such as in role play. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. All children have regular access to a spacious outdoor area that is well equipped to support learning across all areas.

Children's progress is carefully tracked through learning journals that include photographs and observations of their achievements. Staff work very closely as a team so that there is remarkable consistency in the quality of the activities offered. There are very good opportunities for children to work in small groups supported by an adult. Planning is detailed and includes key vocabulary to be used and questions to pose in order to extend children's thinking and ideas. Parents are extremely positive about the way that their children are cared for and the progress that they make. One expressed the views of many when she explained: 'My child loves school and enjoys learning. She is already starting to read and write, which is fantastic.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of ICT so that pupils have opportunities to use their skills to organise and present their work across a range of subjects.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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	2
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?	2
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**

27 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmlea Infant School, Bristol BS8 3UU

You may remember that we visited your school a little while ago to see how you are getting on. Many thanks to all of you who talked to us about your work and what goes on in school. We could see that you thoroughly enjoy your lessons and all the exciting activities that you get involved in. We found that your school is outstanding.

You do exceptionally well because the staff and governors work hard to make your learning exciting and purposeful. You have lots of opportunities to visit different places and learn about the work of famous people such as Isambard Kingdom Brunel. You know how very important it is to stay healthy and safe. You work well together, particularly when you are discussing things with your talk partners, and you understand how important it is to share ideas and help each other. You also know exactly what you need to do to improve your work. We were impressed with how clearly you explained your targets and the way that you decide whether to aim for the stars, sun or moon in a lesson!

We looked carefully at how the school is helping you to improve your writing. We could see that children in the Reception classes do lots of writing, even when they are working outside! Those of you in Years 1 and 2 are learning to write for different purposes, such as describing something or making a list of instructions. We looked at your books and could see how much your writing has improved this year. Well done!

Even the best schools have things to work on. This is what we have suggested the school does now.

- Give you more opportunities to use your ICT skills to organise and present your work in different subjects such as science and history.

You can help by suggesting when it might help you to use ICT in your lessons.

Thank you again for all your help.

Yours faithfully

Shirley Billington

Lead Inspector