

Elmstead Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115260
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290181
Inspection dates 16–17 October 2006
Reporting inspector Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (school)	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001

Holly Way
Elmstead Market,
Elmstead Market
Colchester,
Essex
CO7 7YQ

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Chair	Mr Andrew Dickerson
Headteacher	Mr Clive Middleditch

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elmstead Primary is an average sized primary school serving the local village and surrounding area. Almost all pupils are White British. A quarter of the pupils live out of the school's catchment area. The numbers of children eligible for free school meals and who have learning difficulties are much lower than found nationally. When they start school, children's attainment is wide ranging and in some year groups is below average but is average overall.

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. The school had been over-cautious in its judgement that it is good. Pupils receive a very good education which combines attaining high standards with the enjoyment of a wide range of learning opportunities. The headteacher took over a 'very good' school and, through outstanding leadership and management, has developed its provision further and sustained high standards. His attention

to encouraging all staff to undertake further professional development has ensured excellent teaching from a very competent and confident staff who share his vision that 'every child counts'. This vision is evident in the outstanding care, guidance and support provided. Pupils are known well by all staff and are totally confident that someone will 'sort out' any concerns. Attendance is good because they love coming to a school where they feel happy and secure. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent. Through their membership of various committees and the school council, pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community. Pupils' achievement is excellent. They attain very good standards in literacy and numeracy which, coupled with very good social and team-work skills, prepare them extremely well for their future lives.

The excellent curriculum means that teachers link subjects to make learning relevant and fun. Consequently, pupils are very keen to learn and through a good programme of personal, social and health education, develop a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. There is an outstanding range of clubs and sporting opportunities which contribute significantly to pupils' fitness. The school provides high quality extension opportunities for more able pupils and well organised support for those with learning difficulties. Consequently, pupils of all abilities make extremely good progress as they move through the school. Achievement in the school is outstanding and standards are significantly above average. The exception to this is in standards of handwriting and presentation at the top end of the school. The academic guidance provided is exemplary. Individuals have time with their teacher to discuss their targets for improvement and how they are going to achieve these. Exceptionally good teaching and assessment of work ensures pupils' progress is tracked carefully and they are congratulated for achieving targets or given more help to meet them. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage (Reception) because the care, teaching and curriculum are outstanding. Standards in Reception are wide ranging but are slightly above those typical for the age group.

The school's evaluation of its work and planning for further improvement are accurate. There is no complacency and the capacity for further improvement is very good. As one parent wrote 'improvements are sought, not to achieve 'results' but rather to give the children the best primary experience possible'. Self-evaluation and the resulting improvement planning is extremely detailed and comprehensive. It is not yet outstanding because it is burdensome and therefore difficult for the school to gain a crystal clear picture of the impact of its planning. The school provides exceptionally good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further:

- Improve standards of handwriting and presentation, especially in the classes for older pupils.
- Refine school self-evaluation and improvement planning so that it is easy to track the impact of initiatives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Analysis of data shows attainment on entry is average but this masks the fact that within the intake there are usually similar numbers of very able children and children who have learning difficulties. Due to proficient support and challenging teaching, over their time in school, pupils of all abilities make exceptionally good progress so that standards are significantly above average by Year 6. In 2006 the progress pupils made between Years 3 and 6 was in the top 25% of the nation.

Standards attained by Year 2 until recently have been well above average. In 2006 standards were well above average in mathematics, above average in writing but around average for reading. Pupils' progress was good from a broadly average starting point.

Children get off to a flying start with reading and writing as a result of accomplished teaching of letter sounds (phonics). Their books show impressive progress since the start of the school year. Handwriting skills are taught thoroughly in the younger classes but the policy of allowing older pupils to develop their own style has not been successful. Standards of handwriting and presentation in Year 6 are not good enough and do not reflect pupils' abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy coming to school and involve themselves enthusiastically with all that it has to offer. They flourish as a result of the respect, care and consideration shown to them by adults and consequently they show outstanding levels of respect and care towards each other. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe exceptionally well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils gain an extremely good understanding of being part of a wider community when they take part in the 'Elmstead in Bloom' project and raise funds for charities such as Water Aid. In their school community, through membership of the Health and Safety and Eco Committees, older pupils have a very well-developed capacity for assessing risk and a good understanding of the need to re-cycle and the benefits it can bring.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent. It is consistently good with some outstanding lessons observed. Classroom visits show very clearly that teachers enjoy their work and how much they are committed to providing extremely interesting and well-planned learning experiences for all. Highly skilled classroom assistants play a vital part in the smooth running of classrooms and the good support provided. Relationships are excellent and through the individual pupil/teacher target setting interview, each pupil is well aware of what they need to learn next. Teachers mark pupils' work very well, letting them know how well they are doing and congratulating them if they are meeting their target. Teachers assess their pupils' work thoroughly and keep a close eye to make sure they are making enough progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and complemented by an impressive range of clubs. It meets pupils' needs exceptionally well because it offers a much wider range of interesting and exciting activities than is usually found. The school achieves this in part by linking subjects. An excellent example was noted in Year 6 where pupils had been exploring people's basic need for shelter. They had designed and built their own shelters from waste materials on the school field. After a windy weekend they had great fun evaluating their efforts! A presentation from a representative of a charity helped them in their understanding of the reasons for homelessness and the need for shelter. The curriculum for the Reception children is outstanding as is the provision of enrichment activities for more able pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and underpin the work of the school and pupils' success. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and comply with the latest government requirements. The exceptionally good liaison between the on-site nursery and Reception staff means that children build quickly on the good work started in the nursery. Similarly, good links with local secondary schools ensure a smooth transition for Year 6 pupils. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is used extremely well to make sure they reach challenging targets and make consistent, particularly good progress. Extremely good links with parents means that they are well informed about school events, how well their child is doing and what they can do to help at home.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Under the guidance of the current headteacher, many aspects of the school's work have improved further from the very good levels noted at the last inspection. High standards have been maintained. The deputy headteacher is relatively new to her role but is already having an impact on the provision for information and communication technology. Key features of the leadership and management of the school are attention to detail and the commitment to ensuring each pupil achieves their best, regardless of their starting point. The provision of an outside play area was noted for improvement at the last inspection. Attention to detail is very evident in the resulting excellent outside play area for the youngest pupils. The school funds an extra part-time teacher to take extension groups to help more able pupils achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties also have extremely good support. Subject leaders and the headteacher monitor teaching and pupils' learning rigorously and effectively. Each week the headteacher spends time with a pupil from each year group to look at their work and talk about how well they are getting on. From these activities the headteacher and senior team have a very clear picture of what goes on across the school and what needs to be improved. Self-evaluation is good but it is not as concise as it could be. Governors discharge their responsibilities extremely efficiently. They give the headteacher and staff their full support and challenge them to strive to do even better.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate

School Overall

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

How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? 1

The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage 1

The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation 2

The capacity to make any necessary improvements 2

Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last Inspection Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve? 1

The standards 1

reached by learners 2

How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners 1

How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make Progress 1

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.

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? 1

The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 1

The behaviour of learners 1

The attendance of learners 2

How well learners enjoy their education 1

The extent to which learners adopt safe practices 1

The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles 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 the 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 2

How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets 1

How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can 1

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 18 October 2006

Dear Children

Elmstead Primary School, Elmcroft, Holly Way, Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex. CO7 7YQ

Thank you for being friendly and making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed the time we spent with you.

We think your school is outstanding. Mr Middleditch, the teachers and all the adults in the school work very hard to make your school an interesting place to be. You told us that you feel safe in school and we noticed that everyone takes good care of you. Your teachers organise exciting lessons so that you enjoy learning and have fun. We were very impressed with how well you behave in lessons and around the school. Having targets to help you improve your work is a very good idea and it helps you reach high standards in English, mathematics and science - well done. There was one thing we noticed which we feel you can help with. The standards of handwriting and presentation in the older classes are not as good as they should be and do not always show off how clever you are. Could you try to be neater and join up your writing?

We thought Mr Middleditch and the senior teachers are doing an excellent job running the school and we have asked them to do one thing to make their job a little easier. We have asked them not to include so much in the improvement planning so that it makes it easier for teachers and governors to pick out the important details.

Thank you again for your helpfulness.

All good wishes,

Cheryl Thompson - Lead inspector
Phil Hewett
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