

Elfrida Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100681
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307438
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Joy Considine

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Ron Stockbridge
Headteacher	Ms Barbara Fitzsimmons
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Elfrida Crescent Bellingham London SE6 3EN
Telephone number	020 8698 5755
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elfrida is a larger than average primary school serving pupils who reflect the rich cultural diversity of the local community. Many pupils speak English as an additional language and there is a higher than average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school partway through their primary education is high. Pupils come from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; the largest group, making around half the pupils in the school, are White British. Elfrida offers extended school provision before the start and at the end of the school day.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Elfrida Primary is a good school. It is welcoming and from an early age pupils enjoy coming to school. The headteacher has established a strong team of teachers and support staff who ensure that every child achieves well personally as well as academically. They have created a safe, secure learning environment which is bright, attractive and well cared for. Pupils appreciate the vibrant displays of their work, which enhance classrooms and communal areas of the school. Inclusion is central to the ethos of the school.

Staff work hard to help some pupils overcome significant barriers to learning and this is reflected in rising standards, and the improving quality of pupils' work. Because teaching is good, they quickly develop confidence in speaking and listening and get on well with each other. By the time they leave Year 6, they are reaching standards which, although below average, represent good progress for most pupils. Standards in writing, particularly in Year 2, are not as good as those in reading and mathematics.

The school is aware of the need to raise standards in writing, and has recently developed a creative approach to curriculum planning which has given pupils more purpose for their writing, leading to an improvement in standards. Pupils enjoy learning through topics such as 'Pirates' and the high quality of artwork on display reflects this. Teachers' plans link subjects such as history and geography but they do not show how pupils' skills in these subjects will be developed.

The school places great importance on helping pupils to feel safe, to live a healthy lifestyle and to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and those around them. Pupils feel secure in school and know that if an incident does arise, it will be dealt with promptly. Pupils are prepared for their future economic well-being by being given opportunities to work both in teams and independently as well as by improving their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils speak confidently about the range of enrichment activities and the special projects that enable them to develop new interests.

Teachers make learning fun by choosing characters from popular culture, such as Doctor Who, to stimulate writing and to explore mathematical problems through puzzles based on the magic of Harry Potter. Although teaching has improved, and is now good overall, there are still some inconsistencies between classes. In most lessons, teaching is good, pupils enjoy learning and are keen to take part. They make good progress because they know what is expected of them. In a few lessons where teaching is satisfactory, pupils make less progress because the targets set for them are too limited and do not challenge the more able. Governors know the school well and have a good working relationship with it. Effective self-evaluation has given staff and governors an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and has enabled them to set clear priorities for improvement. The school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the school in the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are exceptionally low. Many lack the confidence and emotional development to work alongside other children and talk about their ideas. Until 2007, children had made steady progress in the Foundation Stage but this has improved in the last year and is now good. The recent improvements reflect good leadership and clear assessment of children's progress. In particular, there is now a very clear focus on basic communication, social and emotional development. Teaching and learning are

good. Staff interact actively with the children and constantly talk to them and ask questions, which helps pupils to develop their speaking skills. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are improving well, although they remain slightly lower than would usually be expected. Children enjoy writing, but there are some missed opportunities for them to write as often as possible in their play and when doing more formal activities. The accommodation has improved greatly since the last inspection and the new outside learning area, which is shortly to be finished, will give the children increased space for play activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in writing by setting more challenging targets for pupils, particularly for those who are more able.
- Ensure plans for subjects such as history and geography set out clearly the skills pupils are expected to learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress. By Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain below average. However, current attainment is much better than in previous years and more pupils are reaching higher levels. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in reading and mathematics and are now reaching standards appropriate for their age. Progress in writing has been slower with few pupils reaching the higher levels. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school but this is sometimes uneven between classes. Standards in writing are improving as a result of the whole school focus on this and there is now a more systematic teaching of phonics (linking sounds with letters). Pupils at an early stage of learning English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because they receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They develop positive attitudes and grow in confidence as they move through the school. Staff have high expectations for pupils and personal development is given high priority. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of right and wrong. Within this culturally diverse community, pupils have respect for the rights and responsibilities of others. They know what is expected from them morally and socially from a very young age and this is reinforced in assemblies so that their personal development is good and there is a strong sense of community within the school. The 'Going for Gold' system of tracking and rewarding behaviour inspires pupils to behave well and this is reflected in classrooms as well as in the playground. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles and are able to make healthy choices. They say they feel safe and secure in school because there is always an adult who will help them. In the playground, they show consideration to other pupils when playing ball games and are aware of the need to take care when moving around the school. Although behaviour is good, there are occasional instances of racist name-calling. These are few in number and are taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Although bullying is rare, pupils and parents say that it is always resolved quickly and fairly. Attendance is just below national levels but older pupils attend well because they enjoy school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers generally have high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour and they plan an exciting range of activities to meet their interests. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs and abilities of most groups of learners. Teachers place strong emphasis on discussion work and the development of a wide vocabulary. This is good practice as it helps pupils to express their ideas and to develop their thinking skills. Teachers inspire many pupils to write with enthusiasm, although there is scope for further challenge for the most able pupils in Key Stage 1. Reading skills are promoted and enhanced by an interesting range of books and recent improvements in the way that letters and sounds (phonics) are taught. Occasionally there are missed opportunities to challenge some groups in guided reading activities. In mathematics, pupils are being encouraged to do more problem solving activities which is helping to raise standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school aims to make learning 'irresistible' by providing pupils with an enriched curriculum to motivate and challenge them. The curriculum is well planned and makes good use of innovative methods to inspire pupils to write. For example, in Year 4, teachers structured a writing lesson using the Dr Who Tardis as a stimulus. This approach is having a positive effect on standards, especially for boys. The school has responded to pupils' requests for more drama and this enlivens literacy lessons. The curriculum is built around topics that bring together learning from different subjects and this has led to a recent rise in achievement. However, plans are mainly focused on English and mathematics and do not show how pupils will develop their skills in subjects such as history and science. Visits and visitors enrich the learning for pupils but sometimes these take place too late to extend learning. There is a good range of extra curricular activities for pupils to enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is very good and this reflects the staff's sensitive approach to pupils' needs. Pupils quickly gain confidence and are willing to talk about their worries due to the good support and encouragement they receive. Parents agree that care is good. As one parent put it, 'The school meets the emotional needs of children and teachers are kind'. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and, despite their often troubled lives, they make good progress. Assessment systems have improved considerably in the last year. Leaders carefully review the progress made by pupils and this is resulting in improving achievement. Pupils know what they have to do to improve their learning and often exceed their targets. In this respect, targets could be more challenging especially for writing. Helpful marking enables most pupils to understand how to improve their skills but this is not always consistent across all classes. Leaders are working hard to raise attendance and they have clear procedures in place to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Nonetheless, too many holidays are taken in school time and leaders could be firmer about this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

'Growing leaders for the future' is the philosophy underpinning the school's approach to all that it does. All staff and governors are fully included in self-evaluation and as such have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the need to further raise standards and achievement for all pupils. There is a collaborative approach to improvement which places the needs and aspirations of all pupils at the heart of its work. Leaders have recently put into place a number of significant improvements which are now impacting on the progress that pupils make. Inclusion is central to the values that the school promotes and steps are being taken to ensure that all pupils can access the range of activities offered by the school. Resources are carefully planned for, and the school secures good value for money by sharing facilities and personnel with the group of schools with which it collaborates. Relationships with external agencies are good and these are effectively used to develop pupils' understanding of their role within the wider school community. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and the school is enjoying an improving reputation in the local community. Governors are fully involved in the work of the school and they have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. They provide a good balance of challenge and support to the school.

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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 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	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

07 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Elfrida Primary School, London, SE6 3EN

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to your school. We enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many of you and to see you in your lessons. We particularly like the way in which your teachers make lessons interesting by asking you to write about things such as Dr Who and by having a Tardis in your classroom. From what you say, teachers are very kind and they help you to feel very safe and extremely well cared for while you are in school. We were delighted to see how well you behave in your lessons and in the playground. It helps to make the school a happy and friendly community. We were pleased to see that you are given the opportunity to learn about your own and other's cultures and that you are able to visit places outside school such as the Charing Cross Bookshop.

We think Elfrida Primary School is a good school. Most of your lessons are interesting and the classrooms are bright and attractive. Most of you work hard and are well prepared to go on to the next stage of your education. However, we think there are two improvements that teachers could make to make Elfrida an even better school. We think that some teachers could make your work more challenging by giving you harder targets to work towards, particularly in writing so that one day some of you might even be writing your own books. We also think that although teachers have made the curriculum more interesting for you, they need to be careful and make sure that they know what progress you are making in other subjects such as history and geography.

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine

Lead Inspector