

Elm Wood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105791
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	308950
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Steve Rigby

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	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric Barber
Headteacher	Mr David Willis
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Elm Street Middleton Manchester M24 2EG
Telephone number	0161 287 0607
Fax number	0161 287 0609

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elm Wood school is much larger than most primary schools. The school has nursery provision, from which all the pupils move on to one of the school's Reception classes. The majority of other children who join the school have had some pre-school experience elsewhere.

The school's population is predominantly White British. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language are below national averages, as is the proportion with 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: 3

Elm Wood is a satisfactory school with some good features. It is improving rapidly under the direction of the headteacher, who is providing the school with a clear sense of purpose and vision for the future. He receives strong support from his senior management team, governors and the local authority. This has created within the school an ethos of commitment to continuous improvement.

The overwhelming majority of parents think highly of the school. One typical comment was, 'I think my child is going to have a very bright future because of Elm Wood.' Overall, they feel that their children are happy and making good progress. However, a minority do express a wish for greater notice of school events, saying that this would help them participate more in supporting their children and the school.

There is good provision in the Foundation Stage. Children's progress is good and they make a good start to their education. Many children enter school with skills that are below those typically expected, showing weakness in areas such as communication, language, literacy and social skills. Foundation Stage staff concentrate their efforts on addressing these weaknesses and this results in children making good progress and reaching average standards by the end of their time in Reception.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Throughout Years 1 and 2 the pupils build on their prior attainment and reach nationally expected standards to the end of Year 2. However, pupils' progress slows throughout Years 3 to 6. This has resulted in standards falling. The school has identified inconsistencies in teaching and learning, linked to the need to track accurately the progress and standards of individual pupils. In response, and working in cooperation with the local authority, a new assessment system and a strong in-service training programme have been put in place. These improvements, although not yet embedded in practice, are beginning to have a positive impact. Current teacher assessments and evidence of pupils' work indicate that standards at the end of Year 6 in 2008 are expected to improve.

Pupil's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Assemblies are used well to develop knowledge and understanding of other cultures in the multicultural society in which they live. Pupils enjoy school, treating one another with respect and kindness. 'I'll miss it when I leave.' reflects the general attitude. Pupils trust adults to take seriously any concerns they have and to deal with them swiftly. The high quality of personal care is another factor in promoting pupils' self-confidence and personal qualities. Pupils behave well in lessons, are well mannered to visitors and have an outstanding knowledge of how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles.

Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their next step in education and their future economic well-being. Their levels of basic skills in English and mathematics, although improving, are not yet as high as they could be.

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. There are inconsistencies in practice in Years 3 to 6, particularly in relation to the level of challenge provided for pupils. There has, however, been a recent improvement in how lessons are being structured and delivered, 'We used to do a lot of listening in lessons but now we are more active and do a lot more talking ourselves. Learning is more fun.' was a perceptive comment summing up pupils' views.

The curriculum is good, broad and varied. The school is refining its use of themed weeks and trips out, for example, to stimulate pupils' interest and extend their literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, a wide range of physical and extra-curricular activities are provided which are well attended by pupils.

The school is well organised and finances well managed. The school's vision and track record for improvement is clear. The school gives satisfactory value for money and is in a good position to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, as is the progress they make. When children start school, their speech, language and social skills are generally below what is typically expected for their age. The school recognises this and has put in place a range of activities which are carefully planned to enable children to make progress in acquiring these and other skills. Regular and accurate measurement of children's progress is a good feature and this information is used well to plan activities that best meet the needs of each individual child. The outdoor provision is utilised very effectively to extend the teaching facilities. Children enjoy the developing range of play equipment and learning activities. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority of children have made good progress in all areas of learning and their skills are broadly in line with expectations for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6.
- Make effective use of procedures for checking pupils' progress so that their next steps in learning can be clearly identified.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall pupils achieve satisfactorily. In Key Stage 1 pupils build on the good start they make in the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress so that standards by the end of Year 2 are average. This is mainly due to the good teaching and learning that takes place. Although recent standards have been below average by the end of Key Stage 2, there is now clear evidence of an upward trend. A range of recently implemented initiatives has begun to have a positive impact on pupils' rates of achievement, which is satisfactory overall and the school's projections indicate improvements in standards in 2008. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress during their time in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are average. Pupils are respectful and kind to adults and to their fellow pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They understand the importance of healthy

eating and try hard to reflect this in their every day lives. They also know about the beneficial effects of physical activities, with large numbers participating in the extensive range of sporting enrichment activities provided by the school. The pleasure so many boys and girls gain from vigorous dancing is plain to see. The school council and Eco Club enable the pupils to play an active role in the school community. This has recently been recognised with the school achieving the Silver Eco-School Award. The pupils have improved facilities by planting the grounds with flowers and vegetables and by providing a new covered area for the many bicycles pupils use to come to school. Pupils develop into confident youngsters by the time they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving in response to a rigorous programme of monitoring and in-service training. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and much is good, especially in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching and learning is more inconsistent, although, again, none is less than satisfactory. Teachers prepare their lessons well. They establish positive working relations with their classes with the result that behaviour is never less than good. Good teaching involves pupils actively in their learning. This encourages them to think for themselves and become independent learners. Lessons contain a wide variety of activities and clearly stated objectives, which make learning interesting and meaningful. In some classes, however, teachers talk for too long. This results in pupils becoming frustrated and a drop in the pace of learning. Teachers are starting to match tasks to pupils' needs with greater focus, as the impact of improved procedures to check on pupils' progress starts to show. However, there is still some inconsistency in matching tasks closely to pupils' needs and levels of ability. Consequently, the level of challenge is too high for some and too low for others. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively in group work. Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly. Their comments are usually helpful in indicating what pupils need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school is working hard and successfully to broaden its curriculum to match more closely the needs of its pupils. There is a strong focus throughout the school on raising levels of pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Resources in information and communication technology are used effectively, so that pupils are competent users by the time they leave in Year 6. There are many opportunities for learners to take on responsibilities. These develop their levels of self-confidence and esteem. Pupils say they value the programme of personal, social and health education. It helps them understand the importance of personal safety and the dangers of substance abuse, for example. There is an exceptionally wide range of enrichment activities which add significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school. Older pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 enjoy learning foreign languages. There is an abundance of sporting opportunities including archery and cheerleading. Dancing and singing are part and parcel of everyday school life for the majority of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good with some outstanding features, such as the dedication of staff and the very caring ethos which is at the heart of this school. An exceptionally high priority is placed on supporting pupils' varying needs. Vulnerable pupils, those for whom English is an additional language, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are extremely well supported. Child protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and good accident and medical reporting systems are fully in place. There are early signs of success in the use of new assessment systems, designed to improve the tracking of pupils' progress. The vast majority of parents who completed the questionnaire are very supportive of the school and a typical comment was, 'A fantastic school with very approachable staff.' Pupils are usually aware of what they need to achieve in lessons, but the use and effectiveness of individual targets for improvement is not yet consistently in evidence across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher is providing the school with a strong sense of purpose and a clear vision for the future. He is well supported by governors and other staff in the school. This has allowed the school to create a new leadership and management structure, which has meant that resources can be more effectively and efficiently deployed. Staff roles and responsibilities have been redefined and team work has been encouraged. The school has begun to identify what it does well and what needs to be improved. The information gathered has been used to help create a clear and focused school development plan. This has been instrumental in sharpening the school's focus on raising achievement and standards. The governing body is very supportive and knowledgeable and is increasingly effective in holding the school to account.

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

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	1
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?	3
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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Elm Wood Primary School, Rochdale

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and having the opportunity to talk to some of you about how you felt about your school. We particularly enjoyed your dance production and whole host of clubs you attend as well as your wonderful eco work. Congratulations on receiving your Silver Award during the inspection.

We think your school is satisfactory and is getting better all the time. You tell us you feel safe and happy. Your knowledge of how to keep healthy impressed us, as did your behaviour towards one another.

We have seen some good teaching in the school. We have suggested that the school works to ensure that the teaching you receive is always as good as it can be. We also think that the standards you reach by Year 6 could be higher, so we have recommended that the staff help you to make faster progress in English, mathematics and science. We have also asked staff to track your progress and encourage you whenever possible to be involved in understanding the next steps you have to take to improve.

Once again thank you for making our visit such a memorable one.