

Elmhurst Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123663
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327957
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	David Shears

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Shepherd
Headteacher	Hilary Powell
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	Elmhurst Lane Street BA16 0HH
Telephone number	01458 442979
Fax number	01458 448496

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Elmhurst is a larger-than-average junior school. Most of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning or behaviour and emotional difficulties is higher than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils enter Year 3 with broadly average standards. The school's own assessments show that there are elements of language development that need to be addressed before the pupils can move on. As a result of effective interventions that focus successfully on these issues, pupils make good progress and are achieving well. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6 they attain average standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mirror this picture so that they make at least good progress in relation to their abilities.

Pupils progress well because good teaching effectively supports all pupils. Lessons are well planned and work is set, taking into account the abilities of the pupils. In particular, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by capable and considerate teaching assistants. Although there are assessment opportunities for both teachers and pupils to gauge how well they are performing, this information is not always used well enough to ensure that there are consistently high expectations of all pupils.

Pupils enjoy school because the good curriculum is becoming more creative, enabling them to learn practical skills, whilst learning about the world around them. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used well as a cross-curricular tool that links subject areas together. In particular, the activities afternoon is much enjoyed by pupils, who engage readily and experience a broad range of interesting activities. A highlight of the year is the school production, which engages pupils not just in performing, but also in making props and scenery, involvement in publicising the event, technical support and the selling of tickets. This is a good example of how pupils are being prepared well for their future economic well-being by working together, using a variety of talents, to produce something of quality that is enjoyed and appreciated by others.

Pupils demonstrate good behaviour, both in school and in the playground, and are learning to care for each other. This is because all staff treat them with respect and this is reflected back. Relationships are very positive because pupils are well cared for and they feel safe and secure. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. The pastoral care of pupils with specific needs is a particular strength. These pupils are exceptionally well supported along with their families. As one parent commented, 'The school is happy to adapt in order to accommodate my child and meet her needs.' All procedures for the safety of pupils are in place, including risk assessments. A number of staff are trained in first aid and procedures are in place to support any pupils with medical needs.

The effective leaders and managers use data successfully to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. Areas of development are addressed effectively through carefully chosen initiatives to improve progress. For example, writing was identified to be an area that needed improvement. Subsequent initiatives have been successful because the overall progress of pupils in writing has improved, although this has not been sufficiently analysed to demonstrate the degree of success for all pupils and build on this for the future. Leaders and managers are successful in promoting community cohesion both in school and in the local community, although this is at an early stage of development in terms of the national and global context.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use formative assessment more effectively to ensure that all lessons have consistently high expectations of pupils and consequently maximise progress.
- Evaluate the impact of specific interventions, such as community cohesion, to inform future planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and leave the school reaching standards that are broadly average. This is because time is spent ensuring that they have a sound grasp of basic skills, which are then successfully built on. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress in relation to their starting points because their individual needs are well catered for. For example, these pupils have access to good quality practical resources. These enable them to learn through activities that improve their understanding of key concepts such as the value of numbers. All pupils have made good improvements in their writing skills recently as a result of a clearly identified need and subsequent effective interventions. This is having a positive effect on achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above the national average. Their behaviour is consistently good and sometimes outstanding in lessons. If any behavioural problems do occur, pupils say that they 'get sorted out quickly and it doesn't stop them from learning'. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although the school recognises that more needs to be done to support their understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in Britain. An effective school council has formal meetings where members discuss suggestions that have been made by pupils to improve the school, such as composting and cycling proficiency. If pupils have any concerns, they are able to talk to a member of staff or put a note in the 'worry box'. Pupils express confidence in their teachers to help them solve their problems. Pupils also make a good contribution to the local community in various ways. For example, pupils entertain elderly residents at a local care home and raise money for a number of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers create a positive environment that enables pupils to learn effectively. Lessons are carefully planned with learning objectives in mind. Subsequent activities, tailored to pupils' abilities, help them to achieve these objectives. In particular, teaching assistants are usefully deployed to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, either within the classroom or in a separate classroom, where nurture groups enable individual attention. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about learning. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards as a teaching tool, making lessons more interesting. Pupils reported that what helped them most in their learning was the encouragement to 'have a go'. For example, pupils in a numeracy lesson were all very enthusiastic to participate in a mental arithmetic game

based on 'Countdown'. Pupils are regularly assessed, although these assessments are not always used well enough to ensure high levels of challenge in future lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has successfully adapted the curriculum to make it more creative. This has been well received by both parents and pupils who say they enjoy practical activities. The enrichment of the curriculum through visits and visitors to the school, a residential visit and the wide variety of extra-curricular clubs is excellent and they are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils. Parents are also invited to take part in some activities alongside the pupils, such as the science fair and the French café. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to practise their basic skills in writing and numeracy, fulfilling the issues from the previous report. The curriculum successfully supports the personal and social development of pupils. However, more needs to be done to improve the provision for science and, in particular, the acquisition of scientific vocabulary.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care of pupils is a strength of the school. There are good induction procedures for pupils, including visits to the school prior to starting. New pupils are given a 'buddy' to help them settle in and make them feel welcome and safe. Pupils with emotional and behavioural needs receive outstanding care. A Family and Parent Support Advisor is available to assist and encourage parents in helping their children to succeed in school. Pupils respond well and develop a more positive attitude to school and learning. All are welcomed and included because the school values each individual. Expert advice from external agencies is sought to complement the school's own actions. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and given appropriate support. They have specific targets to help them make appropriate progress. Indeed, all pupils have a good knowledge of their literacy and numeracy targets. However, although marking is completed it does not always refer to these targets consistently, to help pupils to know the next step in reaching them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A strong senior leadership team has a good knowledge of the school. Through data they are able to correctly identify areas that need improvement. In particular, they have given support to a number of pupils who were in danger of underachievement in numeracy. As a result, these pupils have made better progress this year, although the school has not analysed the initiatives sufficiently to ascertain what has been most successful to help inform future actions. Nevertheless, this overall success, coupled with effective initiatives to improve writing, demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to improve. Appropriately challenging targets are set for pupils and are invariably reached, showing that the school provides good value for money. The management of pastoral care is a strength of leadership. However, although there is good community cohesion in terms of the school and local community, ensuring effective equal opportunities, knowledge of the wider community both nationally and internationally is at an early stage of development. The governors have a good understanding of the school and are proactive in their support and challenge. A duty governor is available each week to work

with the headteacher and staff. Governors are keen to have a higher profile and plan to produce a newsletter for parents and introduce links with the school council. A very small minority of parents expressed concern about pupil behaviour at lunchtime and the seeking and taking account of their views. However, only good behaviour was evidenced on the inspection and a variety of opportunities for parents to express their opinions was noted. An example of this is a recent initiative called Effective Partnership with Parents where members of the group are available each week to listen to the views of parents and to communicate these 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 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elmhurst Junior School, Street BA16 0HH

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your good school.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and we can easily see why. There are lots of opportunities for you to learn new skills and we know that you particularly like the clubs. You said that you feel safe in school because you know that your teachers look after you well. Your behaviour is good and you work well together. Well done. We particularly enjoyed hearing about your school productions. They sound very exciting and lots of fun!

We are very pleased to see that you make good progress in your lessons. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they expect the very best work from all of you. You can help by always trying your hardest in every lesson.

To make your learning better, sometimes the school tries new ideas and we have asked that they review the idea after you have tried it out to see how successful it has been and whether they could make it even better for the future. You could help by letting them know what you think too.

Thank you for a very special two days spent with you all. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Shears

Lead inspector