

Elliott Park School

Independent School

Inspection report

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| DCSF Registration Number | 886/6057 |
| Unique Reference Number | 119005 |
| Inspection number | 341852 |
| Inspection dates | 29-30 June 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jill Bainton AI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Elliott Park School is an independent non-selective school for boys and girls aged 4 to 11 years of age. It opened in 1985 and is located in purpose-built premises in Minster-on-Sea on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent. There are currently 65 pupils on roll who all attend full time. There is an Early Years Foundation Stage class of 12 children. The school aims to teach children how to grow into positive, responsible young people, who can work and co-operate with others while developing knowledge and skills to achieve their true potential. The school was last inspected in 2007 when there were a number of regulations which it did not meet.

Evaluation of the school

Elliott Park School provides a good quality of education through teaching a relevant curriculum, good teaching and effective assessment, so that pupils make good progress. The provision is effective in meeting the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is a welcoming, friendly school where pupils, and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, report that they are very happy, have made lots of friends and enjoy coming to school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Much of the school's success is due to the dedication and commitment of the headteacher, who has ensured that the school has made good progress in addressing the regulations it did not meet on previous inspection. As a result it now meets all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the pupils. The children in the Reception class are taught the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). Specialists teach music, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and French from the Reception class onwards. The school also values highly what they call their 'hidden curriculum', or what the children learn from the way they are treated and expected to behave, and the pupils benefit from the very positive staff role models. The curriculum is well documented and staff use this effectively to plan their lessons. In addition the school prepares pupils to take the 11-plus selection test and entrance examinations to local independent schools. For such a small school there is a great emphasis on sport, for example all pupils were encouraged to try a new sport during inspection week in aid

of National Sports Week. The school excels at local tournaments, especially in cricket and swimming, with both boys and girls participating enthusiastically, under the expert tutelage of the PE specialist. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of visits outside school and by visitors such as the police, fire brigade and prison service. The pupils have the opportunity to visit a range of places of interest which recently included Hever Castle, Greenwich Museum and an outdoor adventure centre, which the school is planning to extend into a residential visit next year. Pupils who need additional help are assessed carefully and are given very good support both in class and individually.

The teaching and assessment are good overall. Children are helped to make a secure start in the Early Years Foundation Stage by satisfactory help with their learning and development. The experienced staff know all the pupils and children very well and put this knowledge into good use through their supportive teaching, enabling the pupils to work hard and make good progress and the younger children to begin to achieve satisfactorily from their starting points. Most of the lessons are well planned and have a good pace. The pupils have notable success in national tests and in the local 11-plus and entrance examinations to independent schools. The pupils say that they were not concerned about taking the tests as they had been well prepared. Most of the teaching is thorough, well prepared and interesting for the pupils. They report that they enjoy their lessons, as one commented 'my teacher tries to make the lessons interesting and fun.' For example in a history lesson for the older pupils the teacher's enthusiasm for the period in the 1960's which included the Beatles arrival, was accompanied by renditions of their songs which captured the pupils' attention. ICT is used effectively to support pupils' learning, as with the recent introduction and good use of an interactive whiteboard and when younger pupils used a programmable toy to plot a path around an alphabet board. The pupils respond in lessons by listening attentively, behaving very well and joining in class discussion willingly, demonstrating their developing speaking and listening skills. These were evident in a literacy lesson where pupils read and then added a new ending to a well-known fable, where the rabbit ate the wolf instead of the usual ending. In the less effective lessons the pace was too slow and the planned lesson content did not follow the lesson plan to engage the pupils sufficiently. Homework is used well to re-inforce and extend pupils' learning. Their work is marked regularly but there are few comments which give them guidance on how to improve their work, despite some good verbal feedback given during lessons. The assessment of pupils' learning is thorough with very regular testing in lessons and systematic tracking of their progress during the year. Parents are kept very well informed both through informal meetings with the teachers and two written reports and parents' consultation meetings. Most of the reports are detailed, but some lack sufficient information about what the pupils have learnt and what they could do next to improve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The pupils, and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, come eagerly to school, their attendance is very good, they are eager to learn and they report that school is fun. As one pupil commented, 'I think this school is a homely place', while another concluded 'everything here is nice and normal, its quiet and I can get on with my work.' There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the school and all pupils are very well known to the staff and each other and treated as individuals. They are carefully nurtured by the kind and caring staff. The pupils know the difference between right and wrong and understand the simple school rules. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and their economic well-being is supported effectively through the curriculum. The older pupils are given tasks of responsibility; the head boy and girl take their roles very seriously and wear their badges with pride, as do the house captains. Since the last inspection a school council has been formed and the pupils felt that they now had the chance to make suggestions which have been followed up.

The lunch playtimes are happy, social occasions with pupils of all ages able to play together. The pupils participate in regular fund raising for both local and national charities. They take an active role in local community events. Through planned RE lessons, whole-school and house assemblies and circle time, the pupils have the opportunity to experience spiritual awareness, are given time for reflection and join together to sing hymns and say prayers. The cultural differences between pupils are celebrated with a very regular programme of festival celebration, the study of world religions and through art, drama and history. The pupils are given a clear picture of British institutions and services, for example during an assembly recently the Queen's Official Birthday was acknowledged and older pupils were set the task of trying to learn all the words to the National Anthem, with considerable success.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It has devised and implemented a range of suitable policies which include anti-bullying, safeguarding pupils, health and safety on visits outside school, and behaviour. The member of staff responsible for safeguarding has trained in accordance with recent guidance and has trained the rest of the staff. There is a qualified paediatric first aider on the staff. The school is vigilant about fire safety, holds regular documented fire drills and has carried out a fire risk assessment. Risk assessments are undertaken for all visits outside school. The pupils are very well supervised. Pupils' are encouraged to eat healthily and they undertake a considerable amount of planned exercise, which they thoroughly enjoy. The attendance and admission registers meet the regulations. The school has begun to implement its three-year plan to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks the suitability of staff to work with children and holds the information on a single central register. The staff appointment procedures are robust and meet the regulations.

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises and accommodation enable pupils and children to learn effectively and safely. The school building is attractive and welcoming, with displays of pupils' work celebrating their achievement. The large grassed and hard surface grounds at the rear are used well for outdoor activities. The school also makes good use of local facilities for games and swimming. The classrooms are pleasant learning environments. The building is in a good state of repair, although some room decoration and flooring is showing signs of wear.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents, carers and others are given a good range of information through the prospectus, newsletters and notice board. A large number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed a very high degree of satisfaction with the school, making comments such as 'my child is happy and making great progress...Elliott Park has helped her to see the value in learning.'

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear, written and fair complaints procedure which meets the regulations.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The good provision is effective in meeting childrens' needs in a warm, friendly environment where they are treated as individuals and made to feel valued. They are helped to learn and develop through a planned range of activities. On entry some of the children's attainment is above that expected for their age while others are in line with the national expectation. Most make satisfactory progress while others make good progress. The teaching is satisfactory with some good features, especially the positive relationships evident between the staff and children. Assessment procedures are not yet used rigorously to inform future planning in order to provide more challenging tasks for all children. Childrens' personal development and well-being are effectively promoted, they behave well and are enthusiastic about their learning. Children from all backgrounds and cultures work and play well together. They are happy, work collaboratively and persist at tasks, demonstrating independence in their self-chosen activities. Children respond with great enjoyment to the learning environment, which offers a range of appropriate activities to develop their skills and knowledge. They have access to the outdoors to support their physical development

and to promote their physical health. However, there is no free flow from the indoor and outdoor areas to extend children's learning through the use of the outdoor area.

The adults work closely together as a team, providing practical activities which allow children to explore resources and tools. Staff attend to their professional development to learn and to improve their practice. They are sensitive to the children's needs and support their personal development and safeguard their welfare in many ways, working very well with parents and providing a smooth transfer of children into the life of the school. The provision is led and managed well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations").

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- include more detail in the reports and in the marking of the pupils' work to show what they have learnt and what they can do next to improve
- use the assessment information more rigorously to inform future planning to challenge the higher attaining children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- increase the use of both the indoor and outdoor areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage to give the children additional opportunities for free flow between activities.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

| | | | |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | | ✓ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | ✓ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | ✓ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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|--|---|--|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | ✓ | | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | ✓ | | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | ✓ | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

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|--|--|---|---|--|
| How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop? | | | ✓ | |
| How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities? | | | ✓ | |
| How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | | ✓ | | |
| What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | | ✓ | | |
| How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed? | | ✓ | | |
| What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare? | | ✓ | | |

School details

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|-------------------------|--|-----------|-----------|
| Name of school | Elliott Park School | | |
| DCSF number | 886/6057 | | |
| Unique reference number | 119005 | | |
| Type of school | Primary | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | 1985 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 4-11 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll | Boys: 38 | Girls: 27 | Total: 65 |
| Annual fees | £3,897 | | |
| Address of school | Marina Drive Minster-on-Sea Sheerness Kent ME12 2DP | | |
| Telephone number | 01795 873372 | | |
| Fax number | 01795 873372 | | |
| Email address | elliottparkschool@tiscali.co.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Mr Richard Barson | | |
| Proprietor | Dr Farid Nouri | | |
| Reporting inspector | Jill Bainton AI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 29-30 June 2009 | | |