

Elson Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116162
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338741
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	David Marshall

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 of pupils on the school roll	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Gratton
Headteacher	Celia Rich
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching and support staff, governors, parents and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school raising attainment plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, provision for those pupils identified as more able or having special educational needs and/or disabilities, minutes of governors' meetings and 57 questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and level of achievement of the current pupils, especially the more able, and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the school's provision for pupils' personal development and their guidance, support and safeguarding procedures
- the effectiveness of the school's assessment and tracking procedures in informing teaching and the effectiveness of planning for individual needs
- how the curriculum and extra-curricular activities meet the needs of all pupils
- how effectively leaders, managers and governors are enabling improvements in achievement.

Information about the school

Elson is a larger-than-average junior school located within a densely populated suburb. The majority of pupils have White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. These mostly relate to language, literacy and communication, and emotional difficulties. In addition, there are a number of pupils with statements of specific special educational needs such as autistic spectrum disorder. Since the last inspection, there have been significant staff changes. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and the leadership team has been changed significantly.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Elson Junior is a good school. It has a number of considerable strengths. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with the new deputy headteacher, has initiated many changes and steered the school forward very effectively. The wide range of systems and strategies put into place to address the school's well-identified priorities has been successful and the school's overall effectiveness has risen from satisfactory, at the time of the last inspection, to good. The school's view of itself is accurate and its track record of raising achievement and implementing change shows it is very well placed to build on its strengths and has a good capacity to sustain improvement. One parent summed up the views of many by writing, 'My child (and her sister before her) love going to Elson Junior School. It offers an excellent atmosphere, and learning is made fun. The school in my opinion cannot be praised highly enough.'

From their average starting points, because of effective organisation and very careful assessments, pupils are enabled to make good progress. Individual improvement targets and very good support consistently raise pupils' levels of achievement considerably. Provisional national test results in Year 6 in 2009 exceeded the school's carefully formulated and challenging targets, and were above average overall. Achievement is good throughout the school due to the rigorous systems now in place that track the progress each pupil makes and identifies where additional teaching will be most beneficial. Although teaching and learning are often outstanding, this quality is not yet found consistently throughout the school. There is more still to do to ensure that the use of assessment means pupils are always provided with activities that challenge them. In particular, the work of the excellent challenge leader has to be embedded so that the more able pupils make maximum progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress overall. They are consistently encouraged by the excellent support staff and have access to a curriculum that helps them all to achieve their potential.

The school curriculum promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning exceptionally well. It has been revised to promote creativity and practical learning experiences. These approaches are continuing to be developed to include art, drama and technology to increase cooperation, greater enthusiasm and support from the community. The stunning music sessions observed are a good example of the benefits pupils are already enjoying.

The school does much to promote their place in the local community and works

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effectively with many local schools and local businesses. The work of the parent–teacher association is also very effective and much appreciated by the school. However, the governors' recent audit of community cohesion clearly illustrates that there is more still to achieve in other aspects of this provision. While links with the local community are good, pupils' awareness of, and preparation for, living and working in a culturally diverse Great Britain are not developed sufficiently well. As they have identified, the links with organisations in other areas need to be implemented.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use the school's current monitoring systems to raise the percentage of high quality teaching by July 2010 through focusing on:
 - the use of assessment to provide appropriate activities at all times
 - ensuring more able pupils are consistently challenged.
- Enhance pupils' understanding of their place in a culturally diverse Great Britain and extend the provision for community cohesion by:
 - building on the findings of the recent analysis of community cohesion
 - implementing the plans for twinning with schools in other localities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils join the school with attainment that is broadly in line with expectations for their age. The school's extensive records show that pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Observations of lessons during the inspection confirmed that all groups of pupils are now making at least good progress, and in some lessons even better. Pupils' attainment observed in Year 5, and in the current Year 6, is higher than last year. Across the school, pupils' rates of progress have improved recently, particularly in writing, which has been a focus of school development. Pupils do exceptionally well in a range of subjects but especially in art, music and physical education. It came as no surprise to the school to learn that Elson Junior School pupils had won all three prizes in a local art competition related to 'snow' involving hundreds of pupils from different local schools.

Pupils have good levels of independence, listen attentively, work hard and show great enthusiasm. They respond well to opportunities to reflect on their work as teachers make success criteria clear. Pupils are proud of their school and are enthusiastic about many aspects of its life. They thoroughly enjoy lessons and the extra-curricular activities, trips and visits that contribute well to learning and social development. In lessons, pupils' impeccable behaviour and their mature skills in working either independently or with their classmates help create the high-quality climate for learning that is evident in all classes. Attendance is satisfactory and it is improving because most pupils really want to come to school. Pupils' contribution to

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the local community is good, particularly in their support for a range of charities and local activities. The school council has been responsible for important initiatives, such as the promotion of better sporting activities in the school. These efforts, and the healthy schools initiative, have ensured that pupils have a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils assert that the rare incidents of bullying or poor behaviour are dealt with very well and they feel very safe in school. They say that there is always someone who will listen to them. Pupils’ attainment in literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) has improved, and pupils work well in groups and teams. These aspects give pupils a good preparation for their next school and adult life.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers’ relationships with pupils are exceptionally good and their management of behaviour is excellent and unobtrusive. Lessons are planned well and generally cater for the needs of different abilities. The experienced teaching assistants enable all pupils to participate at their own level. The marking of pupils’ work is exemplary, with very clear points for development, which help them to know how well they have done and how to improve.

In most lessons, teachers promote pupils’ skills in reading and comprehension, so pupils understand tasks quickly. They also encourage high levels of discussions for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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pupils to justify the choices they make. These teaching approaches ensure pupils’ excellent attitudes towards their studies and desire to learn. This was obvious in an outstanding lesson in Year 6 where pupils had to choose from a carousel of real-life activities where they thought they might need help, and then say why. This they did with unerring accuracy. As well as opportunities to talk and exchange ideas, teachers make sure that pupils are given occasions to listen with care and learn to focus. This was very evident in an outstanding Year 5 mathematics lesson, where pupils had to listen to a number of statements and then decide on which calculation method they would employ to solve a problem. Music is also a strength of the school and pupils are given many opportunities to listen carefully and develop their musical talents. The standard of singing witnessed during the inspection was outstanding, and reflected the enthusiasm and skill demonstrated by the outstanding part-time teacher in an excellent lesson observed with a Year 5 class.

The curriculum is used very well to speed up pupils’ progress in English, mathematics and science. There has been a very strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills in the last few years. As a result, pupils’ achievements in reading, writing and mathematics in particular have consistently risen. The school has also developed its curriculum to improve pupils' learning even further by adding extra relevance and enjoyment. The wide range of clubs and activities organised after school is enjoyed and adds significantly to pupils’ development and appreciation of school.

Guidance for learning is good. Assessment information collected about pupils is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and those pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable make very good progress. This is achieved by providing excellent support from the very experienced teaching assistants wherever it is needed. The nurture groups are particularly effective. They are so appreciated by pupils that an after-school club, Blue-Bird Explorers, has been arranged to cater for all pupils’ requests. Throughout the school, pupils are very familiar with their learning targets and develop skills of self-assessment. They are proud to discuss ‘class points’ earned for either good work or effort and are able to explain how teachers’ comments in their books have helped them further improve their work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The exceptional headteacher combines a caring approach with a very clear focus on

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raising standards. She is given great support by the very effective deputy headteacher, and a knowledgeable, hard-working team of managers and subject leaders. As a result, management at all levels is good due to the staff's enthusiasm and the effective systems that are in place to monitor pupils' progress. Their recent focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning has been particularly effective. They are already aware that some developments need to be embedded and have identified this as their main priority for improvement. Teamwork is of the highest quality. All staff play a valuable part in moving the school forward. The administrative team, mid-day supervisors and site manager are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned.

The excellent governing body is fully involved in all developments. Through the example set by the outstanding Chair of the Governing Body, they support the school effectively and bring a wide range of experience and skills to bear. They act very effectively as critical friends and request explanations where this is judged to be necessary.

The school takes its duty to promote equal opportunities seriously and is effective in this. It values the opinions of parents and pupils and acts upon these. Procedures to safeguard pupils' well-being, safety and health are rigorous and all members of staff are well trained. The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is satisfactory. A plan and clear actions are in place for promoting pupils' understanding from a local perspective. Links with other local schools and agencies are harnessed exceptionally well. The need to expand these links to provide a national perspective is well understood by the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team are very happy with the school. They consider that the school has a dedicated team of staff and the headteacher leads and manages the school very well. They agree that the school has a very warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere and that their children make good progress. Inspectors fully endorse these views. A small number of criticisms from parents and carers were offered constructively, and were discussed with the headteacher. There were no particular trends in the very few negative comments received by inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elson Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 272 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	61	20	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	63	19	33	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	32	56	22	39	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	47	22	39	7	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	49	24	42	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	40	28	49	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	42	27	47	3	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	40	28	49	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	23	40	29	51	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	30	27	47	7	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	26	30	53	8	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	35	30	53	5	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	27	47	28	49	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elson Junior School, Gosport, PO12 4EX

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently. We did enjoy our visit. Yours is a good school with many strengths, and we agree with what you told us; it is a really fun place to learn. Here is a list of some of the things that are really good.

- The school looks after you well and you all make good progress in your learning.
- You behave extremely well, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- You all have very good ideas on how to make things better and the teachers always listen to what you need.
- You have a good understanding of how to live healthily.
- You find lessons interesting and really enjoy school.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do both in school and on visits and in clubs.
- The headteacher and staff manage the school well.

Even in good schools there are some things that can be made better, and we have asked your teachers to make sure that no matter which class you are in the teachers make sure you are all given work that will help you make the best progress you can, especially those of you who sometimes find the work quite easy. We have also asked your headteacher and staff to make sure you are given the chance to look at and understand about how children and adults live in places that are different from where you live. You can help by continuing to listen carefully and take note of what they say.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall
Lead Inspector

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