

Elm Court School

Elm Park, London SW2 2EF

Inspection dates

26 to 27 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide excellent leadership. Staff are very supportive of leaders' vision for the school.
- Leaders are rigorous in their evaluation of the school's effectiveness in all areas and in the planning for improvement. As a result, the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- The school is highly inclusive. Leaders are providing a rich curriculum that enables all pupils to make excellent progress.
- Pupils are ambitious and almost all pupils in Year 11 now stay on into the relatively new sixth form.
- In the sixth form, students take on leadership roles which strongly support their personal development. The curriculum offer includes useful work-related qualifications.
- Pupils are challenged to make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy, and in their other subjects. These combine to support pupils in achieving their ambitions.
- Teaching is outstanding. It interests and engages pupils so that they want to learn.
- Teachers make regular and thorough checks on pupils' work. Teachers use their checks to help pupils make excellent progress in acquiring deep knowledge and understanding.
- The development of the curriculum and highly effective teaching in the sixth form means that almost all students complete their courses.
- Strong links with other organisations and colleges help students to move on to suitable courses at the end of their time in the sixth form. Students are extremely well supported when deciding on their next steps.
- Staff and pupils work very well together. The high quality of these relationships promotes excellent behaviour and attitudes.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. They help to keep pupils safe in school and in knowing how to stay safe out of school.
- The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a strong understanding of British values, such as tolerance, democracy and the rule of law.
- Attendance has improved because pupils enjoy school. However, there are still a few parents and carers who do not understand the importance of their child attending school regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' attendance, focusing particularly on working with those parents who have not yet accepted that it is important for their child to attend school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and the senior team provide very strong leadership and have had a highly positive impact on the school's effectiveness. As a result, there have been improvements in all areas, but most noticeably in teaching, the quality of the curriculum, behaviour and in the wider opportunities for pupils.
- The strength of teamwork is a significant factor in the success of the school. Adults work together in the best interests of pupils. They help to remove barriers to learning and support pupils highly effectively, very many of whom experience success for the first time in their school lives.
- Leaders have the highest ambition. There is no sense of complacency and nothing less than outstanding is good enough. To meet these high expectations, leaders provide excellent help, support and encouragement to staff and pupils.
- Leaders are clear about their roles and the importance of their work in maintaining high standards and promoting further improvement. Staff are very supportive of the headteacher and leadership team and have confidence that the school's improvement is secure and sustainable.
- The senior leadership team has worked hard to establish a high degree of consistency in relation to expectations for behaviour, attendance and attitudes as well as for teaching, learning and assessment. Staff, pupils and parents are clear about expectations and about the support and guidance which is available to help pupils.
- School leaders use rigorous systems to evaluate the curriculum, teaching and the way in which pupils' work and progress are assessed. Leaders use this information effectively in order to improve what is included in the curriculum so that the outcomes for pupils are outstanding, both academically and in their personal development.
- Leaders have implemented a more effective curriculum that is a better match for pupils' abilities, needs and career aspirations. In key stage 4 and the sixth form, the curriculum reflects discussions with pupils and students about their own aspirations and interests.
- The curriculum is strongly supported by a range of occupational, art based and speech and language therapies, which are designed to meet pupils' different needs highly effectively. Therapists work very closely with leaders and teachers to ensure that all aspects of provision are flexible and tailored to individual needs. This means that the school responds very quickly to changing circumstances.
- Senior and middle leaders review teaching and pastoral support regularly. They use the information gained to plan a very effective programme of staff training. This ensures that staff are highly skilled in dealing with pupils' complex needs and helping pupils to make excellent progress.
- All pupils have an education and health care plan (EHC plan) which explains their specific needs and targets. Tutors monitor and review these plans regularly so that they continue to meet pupils' needs.

- Leaders have identified the contribution that different subjects make to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is highly evident in planning and delivery. As a result, pupils have a strong understanding of how to be prepared for life in modern Britain.
- A high proportion of pupils are entitled to support from the additional funding such as pupil premium. School leaders and governors have ensured that pupils who benefit from this funding make similar progress to their peers.
- The school works hard to establish positive relationships with parents and to take account of their views. Social events also help to build strong and supportive relationships. These events complement very effectively the more formal review meetings that are held with parents and school staff. However, with some parents, their child's attendance remains an issue.

Governance of the school

- The governing body provides highly effective support and challenge. Governors are fully involved in the evaluation of the quality of education and in identifying strengths and areas for further improvement. The strong partnership between governors and the senior leadership team has helped the school to offer an outstanding quality of education.
- Governors have had appropriate training in safeguarding. They make sure that pupils' welfare and safety have a high priority. They choose to visit the school regularly and talk to staff and pupils as well as observing activities. They are particularly appreciative of the quality of the work in the arts and the contribution it makes to pupils' all-round personal development.
- Collectively governors know the school very well. They bring a range of expertise to their roles and use this well to help leaders to set priorities. These priorities are challenging and designed to ensure that the school sustains its improvement, particularly in the sixth form.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure a strong safeguarding culture. Excellent knowledge of pupils and families, thorough checks of staff appointments and detailed records all combine to ensure that the needs of all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, are well met. The school works closely with other agencies on safeguarding issues.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face, including from possible gang affiliation and exposure to radicalisation and extremism. All adults receive regular safeguarding training. They know how to spot warning signs and what to do if they have any concerns. Their attitudes contribute to a culture and ethos where pupils feel safe. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), including the range of workshops on safety related issues, help pupils to learn how to stay safe in different circumstances, for example when using social media.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers know their pupils and their needs extremely well and use a range of approaches to help them to make excellent progress. Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists all work together highly effectively to make sure that the work they do supports pupils fully. Their work helps to develop pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs as well as supporting their academic progress. Pupils learn new knowledge and skills as well as consolidating what they already know and can do.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. The school's expectations are made very clear and staff are consistent in their expectations and approach. Pupils respond well to this consistency because they feel secure. The calm atmosphere in lessons contributes strongly to pupils learning.
- Teachers check on and record pupils' progress systematically. They use the information to identify what pupils need to do to improve or to identify their next steps in learning. High-quality feedback enables pupils to make very strong progress and to achieve even more.
- It was very evident in English lessons and in all other subjects that teachers make sure that pupils use and improve their literacy skills as much as possible. For example, in Spanish, pupils develop their reading and speaking skills as they learn about the importance of a fiesta and a carnival. In creative media, pupils can analyse carefully how different music affects the mood of a film.
- Staff use questioning well to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers also choose to use practical activities that help pupils to understand and apply what they know to solving problems. Mathematics teaching is very carefully planned to ensure that pupils understand concepts and practise applying them. In science, practical work encourages pupils to ask questions and test out scientific principles.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's ethos is founded on mutual respect. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Staff are excellent role models. They treat their pupils with consideration, and pupils respond very positively.
- The PSHE curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' personal development. Teachers use a range of workshops, visits and visitors as well as the choice of topics to prepare pupils for adult life. The election process for the school council and holding mock elections at appropriate times also contribute to pupils' understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
- The school's work in careers education has been recognised through the 'Quality in Careers Award'. The careers programme helps to raise pupils' aspirations for what they can achieve as well as enabling them to learn about the range of opportunities open to

them. This means that pupils are being better prepared for their next steps, whether this is to stay on into the sixth form or moving on to college or an apprenticeship.

- High-quality work experience also supports pupils' personal development. In recent years, pupils have worked in places as varied as primary schools, Vauxhall City Farm and the Houses of Parliament. This deepens their understanding of the world of work.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of activities. They take part in different sports, including some more unusual ones such as BMX biking. The performing arts make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development through workshops and performances in dance, drama and music. A very high proportion of pupils are involved in these activities.
- Pupils are encouraged to play an active role in the school and generally respond to the opportunities open to them. The members of the school council were very positive about their experience of school. As one said, 'The school helps me in all areas of my life.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school is an orderly community.
- A number of pupils join the school with a history of behavioural difficulties which have interrupted their education. This rapidly starts to change from day one at the school. Due to the support that they receive in school, almost all pupils develop excellent attitudes and are willing to learn. Where pupils may occasionally be having a difficult day, their behaviour is not allowed to disrupt the work and learning of others.
- Staff have high expectations and are very consistent in the way in which they manage behaviour. Pupils learn to take responsibility for managing their own behaviour.
- Staff are quick to praise and support pupils who are trying hard to learn to control their behaviour. The use of fixed-term exclusions is declining over time and any use of exclusion is very much the last resort.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They know what to do and to whom they should go if they have any worries or concerns. They said that there is very little bullying and, if it does happen, it is dealt with quickly.
- Attendance has improved. A small number of pupils are still persistent absentees. Staff work hard with parents, but a few have yet to be convinced that attendance is important.
- A few pupils attend alternative provision to take courses that the school is not able to offer. The school checks their attendance, behaviour and progress regularly to make sure that they are benefiting from these opportunities.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils become much more confident in their ability to achieve well, both academically and personally. They make outstanding all-round progress, often from very low starting points, though these do not necessarily reflect their ability. Many more pupils continue

into the sixth form and go on to college or a supported apprenticeship than did previously.

- Pupils are achieving much better qualifications in basic skills and work-related courses than they did at the time of the previous inspection, including the awards of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA).
- The range of qualifications studied help prepare pupils to be fully prepared for the next steps in their careers. The curriculum raises their aspirations and encourages them to look for interesting courses and careers.
- The strengths in pupils' personal development and their increasing ability to manage their own behaviour provide pupils with the foundations that they need to make excellent academic progress.
- Pupils' work and school records show that from when pupils start at the school, they make sustained and significant progress in their core skills of literacy and numeracy. They also sustain this progress in the other subjects that they study, for example art and design, creative media and Spanish.
- In general, the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding close quickly as many pupils start to catch up on what they have missed through not being in school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language make similar outstanding progress to their peers.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The sixth form was established in 2016. Prior to this, pupils moved on to college placements which did not always meet their needs well enough and too many did not complete their courses.
- School leaders carefully evaluated students' needs and have put in place a wide range of courses and qualifications which are widely recognised by employers, for example work-related courses. Pupils continue to take English and mathematics and have opportunities to improve on their qualifications in these subjects.
- Success rates have improved and all students who stay at school complete their courses. The sixth form gives them opportunities to grow into mature adults and responsible members of society.
- As a result of dynamic leadership, the sixth form makes a significant contribution to the school. Students are strongly encouraged to show a sense of responsibility. They are excellent role models and provide support for younger pupils. Their leadership of the school council is valued by leaders, and students believe that their views are taken seriously.
- The curriculum and teaching in the sixth form are of a similar high quality to the rest of the school. They enable students to develop their social skills and independence as well as gaining valuable further qualifications. Teachers thoroughly assess and evaluate how well students are doing and adjust the curriculum and their teaching to cater for individual needs.
- The work on 'Young Enterprise' projects makes a very significant contribution to the sixth-form curriculum. The projects help students to acquire strong work-related skills

and to become more self-reliant. Students took part in a project at East St market, where they sold hand-made Christmas decorations. The school's evidence suggests that students successfully took on responsibility for every aspect of the project. This helped them to use and improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, as well as their communication and teamwork. For example, students learned to budget, shop for and cook their own lunches.

- Students are well-supported in making decisions about life after school. They appreciate the information they receive when making their applications, whether this is for a college course, a supported internship or an apprenticeship.

School details

Unique reference number	100659
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	10058953

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	9 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Jenner
Headteacher	Joanna Tarrant
Telephone number	020 8674 3412
Website	www.elmcourt.lambeth.sch.uk
Email address	admin@elmcourt.lambeth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school admits children from the age of nine but currently has no children aged under 11 on roll. Since the previous inspection, the school has started a sixth form. Almost all pupils now continue their education in the sixth form, where they may stay until they are aged up to 19.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. These are mostly for moderate learning difficulties, speech and language needs, autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The two largest groups are of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage. Over 75% of pupils are boys.
- The school uses alternative provision for older pupils with part-time opportunities to study work-related courses at Lambeth College and Newstart.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons in different subjects and in all year groups. All observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- The team held meetings with governors, school leaders and staff.
- The team considered the school's own evidence of parents' opinions. A very small number of parents completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors met and talked with pupils, including the school council. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and records of their progress.
- The team took into account 35 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The team scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school and those available on its website.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paula Farrow

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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