

Elm Court School

Elm Park, Lambeth, SW2 2EF

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the interim executive board have a very clear plan for improving the quality of teaching through high quality training.
- Students of all abilities, including those with behavioural needs, those with autistic spectrum disorders and those with other special educational needs, achieve well in all areas of learning. They make best progress in mathematics because of the very effective practical approaches used in lessons.
- Parents are pleased with the school and rightly say that their children achieve well.
- Students' behaviour is good. They say they feel safe and secure.
- Good teaching ensures that students achieve well in almost all activities. In the best lessons, staff have high expectations and extend students' skills through detailed questioning and demanding practical activities.
- The effective curriculum provides exciting opportunities for students, engaging them well in learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high standard due to the range of activities they take part in outside normal lessons.
- Through their efficient planning and careful controls, the interim executive board ensures the best possible use of the money available, so that all groups of students benefit.
- The school has a strong capacity to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in English is not quite as strong as it is in mathematics because the new reading scheme is not used in all year groups and not all students get the chance to read and write every day.
- The attendance of a few students is not regular enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, staff, groups of students and the chair of the interim executive board.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of evidence including students' books, teachers' planning, the school's improvement plan, records of students' progress and safeguarding documentation.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons together with the headteacher and assistant headteachers. Inspectors also listened to students read.
- Inspectors took note of the school's own survey of parents because there were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for results to be displayed. Inspectors also received questionnaires from 20 staff.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Students' disabilities and special educational needs are mainly emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and communication difficulties.
- A higher than average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- An above average proportion of students are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- An interim executive board was appointed by the local authority two years ago.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- Three students are taught in alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement in English, so that it is as good as in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - the new reading scheme is extended to include students in all year groups
 - all students have opportunities to read and write, in English or in other subjects, every day
 - marking helps students to know how they can improve.
- Improve the attendance of the few students who do not attend school regularly enough.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students across the school, including those taught in alternative provision, achieve well, often from very low starting points. Prior to attending this school, many have missed a lot of school time due to exclusion or poor attendance. They quickly settle at Elm Court and make good progress in English and very good progress in mathematics. As a result, by the time they leave the school in Year 11 all students achieve some recognised qualifications, including GCSEs and vocational qualifications.
- Students achieve best in numeracy. A strong focus on practical tasks ensures that, from Year 7, they build on what they know and can do. Students show very good independence and confidence in their mathematics lessons. In Year 10, for example, students used computers to create different graphs from data they had collected. They were able to work at a fast pace because they were interested in the task. Their learning about the importance of data was rapid and significant. Several students were able to explain clearly to inspectors the trends that their graphs showed.
- Progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening is good although not quite as strong as in mathematics. Students' books are well presented but show that they do not all have opportunities to write every day. Some do too little writing in subjects other than English. A strong focus on the teaching of phonics (matching letters and sounds) and the use of symbols has been introduced into Year 7. Progress information shows that these students now learn more quickly than other groups. Plans are rightly in place to extend this reading programme to students in other year groups.
- The progress of students supported by the additional funding is as good as other students. These students benefit from good support, including extra help and guidance from teaching assistants, to ensure that they are able to keep up with their peers. The daily breakfast club, which is free to students, ensures that they are well prepared for learning in the day ahead.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is at least good, and some is outstanding. Most students in each year group now make better progress because of the effective action the school has taken to strengthen teaching in the past two years. The pace of learning is good and where teaching is outstanding students work at a very fast pace.
- Students enjoy the exciting tasks that teachers plan which encourage the vast majority to learn. A wide range of practical activities means that students are regularly involved in problem-solving activities which interest them and build their confidence. For example, in a technology lesson, students in Years 8 and 9 were engaged in creating animation using cameras and their own drawings. They were fully engaged and excited by the task. Very skilful questioning by the teacher extended their understanding and promoted their numeracy skills as they planned for angles and margins.
- The highly demanding tasks set in many mathematics lessons encourage students to work at a fast pace. Well-prepared resources, carefully adapted for students' different ability levels, ensure that students' skills improve well.
- Marking of students' work is usually completed alongside them so that they can understand where they are going wrong and quickly put it right. This is best in mathematics and helps them to know the next steps in their learning.
- Extra funding to help students at risk of not doing well has enabled the school to increase the number of additional adults who support them in lessons. The impact of this initiative is evident in the high number of students who have individual support, which is helping these students to catch up with their classmates.
- Teachers work closely with families, providing good information about students' achievements

on a regular basis. A recent school survey of parents' views shows how much they value the support that they receive. Good support for students' particular needs, often from teaching assistants, helps to make sure that all students keep pace with others in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Leaders have successfully raised expectations and are succeeding in tackling a history of poor attendance. Students' behaviour in and around school, including in lessons, at break times and lunchtimes, is good. The current strong focus on managing behaviour has reduced exclusions.
- Most students, including those who travel independently by public transport, are now attending regularly and arriving on time. The thorough work done on raising attendance has ensured that it has improved strongly although a few students still do not attend well enough.
- Students say that they feel safe in school. They know about unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. Break times and lunchtimes are well supervised and any incidents are recorded and monitored. The high attendance at after-school clubs shows that many students are keen to try new things.
- Students are mostly polite and helpful to visitors and get on well together regardless of age, race or ability. They react well to the school's consistent approach to managing behaviour and understand the consequences of their actions. As a result the school is a calm place and all students have an equal chance to succeed.
- Staff manage students' behaviour well. Students who have difficulties with their emotional and social skills improve their behaviour because of rigorous monitoring, specific targets and use of rewards. Students, parents and staff say that behaviour has improved and is now good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff, with strong support from the local authority, have improved the quality of teaching and learning and developed a calm and productive school in which students succeed and feel valued. They have a good partnership with parents, who are pleased with all that the school does.
- Leaders have demonstrated a good capacity for further improvement by providing staff with high levels of training and introducing many changes to the curriculum to provide memorable experiences for students such as annual residential visits for students in Year 8, and a wide range of visitors and specialist teachers.
- Ensuring each subject is taught by a specialist teacher ensures that students have the best possible chance to do well and acquire the qualifications that they need for college. Specialist facilities, including the very creative art facilities, the music studio and science and technology laboratories, all contribute to students' good attitudes and ensure that they can concentrate and do well in the subjects they like the most.
- Students have many opportunities to develop their mathematics skills in subjects such as geography and science, but fewer opportunities to improve their writing skills in different subjects. Opportunities for them to take part in work-related experiences are helping to prepare them well for college. Two girls, for example, recently set up a 'nail bar', providing hand massages and nail painting at a parents' afternoon, developing their own mini-enterprise to fund future sessions.
- Opportunities for students to improve their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are provided regularly through the effective curriculum. Regular sports matches with other schools, including boys and girls football matches, visits to the local community and links with other local schools as well as a strong focus on music and residential experiences ensure that students' personal development improves during their time at the school.
- Leaders at all levels are fully involved in improving teaching and raising standards. Good use of

the national 'Teachers Standards' demonstrates their commitment to improving teaching so that staff can develop their skills and seek promotion. Leaders work closely with the interim executive board to strengthen teachers' skills and improve practice further.

- The senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and are good role models in making sure that teaching and learning continue to improve. Staff are clear about what is expected of them.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The interim executive board is very experienced. It is supportive and helpful to leaders and staff. The board encourages a welcoming atmosphere in which all students feel valued and do well. Members of the board evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement rigorously, receiving regular updates from leaders and asking searching questions about their decisions. The board members clearly know how well students are doing and regularly check the performance of teachers and students. The Chair of Board visits regularly and takes an active part in the school's day-to-day life. Board members have a good grasp of the school budget and a clear understanding of the importance of linking staff pay to the quality of their teaching. Sufficient funding is allocated to regular, high-quality training to ensure teaching continues to improve. Finances are well managed and additional money, such as the pupil premium funding, is well used to provide extra staffing and experiences for eligible students. The board knows about the impact of this work through its checks on students' progress. The interim executive board makes sure that safeguarding practices and procedures fully meet current national requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100659
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	400419

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Pat Petch
Headteacher	Joanna Tarrant
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 October 2009
Telephone number	020 86743412
Fax number	020 86717883
Email address	admin@elmcourt.lambeth.sch.uk

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