

The Eltham Foundation School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100188
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	354814
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	952
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Draper
Headteacher	Mrs J Pickering
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 March 2008
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Telephone number	020 8859 0133
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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

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 37 lessons, or part-lessons, taught by 36 teachers. They met with groups of students, staff and governors and representatives from the local authority. They also had a telephone conversation with the executive headteacher. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including school and trust improvement plans, monitoring records, school policies and questionnaires from 66 parents and carers. They also took account of the views of 140 students and 66 members of staff who responded to their respective questionnaires.

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

- the learning and progress of students
- the extent to which teaching and learning methods are sufficiently varied, interesting and challenging so that they meet the needs of different groups of students
- how well leaders and managers at all levels are driving improvements in teaching and learning to bring about more rapid, and sustained, rises in attainment and progress.

Information about the school

The majority of students in the school are White British. The school has specialist sports status and full extended school status; it is housed on a very large site that is used by a variety of other community users. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is broadly average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including statements of special educational needs, is well above the national average.

The school has undergone significant changes in leadership with a high turnover of staff since 2008. The local authority has recently helped the school to become a National Challenge Trust School, linked to Greenwich University and with support from a nearby school. The new trust arrangements include the appointments of an executive headteacher and a new head of school from January 2011. In September 2010, the local authority engaged the support of a consultant headteacher to work alongside the substantive headteacher to help drive forward change at a faster rate. The substantive headteacher left the school at the end of the week immediately prior to the inspection and the consultant headteacher became acting headteacher two days before the inspection on a temporary basis until the arrival of the executive headteacher.

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Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Turbulence in the senior leadership of the school in recent years has had a negative impact on the school's effectiveness, which has declined since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching, students' behaviour in too many lessons and achievement are all inadequate. The consultant headteacher has helped to establish a clearer vision for the school but the impact of his new plans has not yet been demonstrated in improved outcomes and provision. Actions taken since the previous inspection to increase the effectiveness of middle leadership have not brought about sufficient improvement to redress the legacy of underachievement. Middle leaders are gaining a growing awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, resulting from their greater involvement in monitoring and improvement activities. However, information gained from monitoring has not been evaluated rigorously enough to identify what action is necessary to bring about rapid improvement, especially in the quality of teaching. The quality of self-evaluation throughout the school has been improving but predictions about student outcomes for 2010 were not accurate. The governing body has not secured better leadership and management in the school over recent years, although it has helped to broker the move to trust status. These weaknesses result in the school having an inadequate capacity to improve.

A significant number of students, especially boys, do not make the progress of which they are capable and their achievement is inadequate. This is reflected in the low attainment of students leaving the school in Year 11. GCSE results for 2010 were lower than those for 2009; in 2010 the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was significantly below average. There is too much variation in achievement across subjects. Teaching is not strong enough in too many lessons to ensure that students learn effectively. Some teaching is good, but too much is inadequate. This inconsistency was evident at the last inspection and has not been eliminated. Only recently have arrangements been improved for checking students' progress rigorously, despite this being an area of weakness at the previous inspection. The curriculum is satisfactory and the range of options available for students in Years 10 and 11 is sound.

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The school's specialist status is having a strong impact on outcomes for sports and related subjects, and the leadership of this area is outstanding. However, there have been limited opportunities for this strong practice to be shared across the school to help improve general school achievement.

The care, guidance and support provided for students are satisfactory and there are positive features to the pastoral care. Specifically targeted and effective support is provided for students identified as having additional needs or who experience problems. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in their learning. There are clear strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. These are having some impact within the school, but in too many lessons there is low-level disruption occasioned by excessive off-task chatter and a lack of engagement with learning and this makes behaviour inadequate overall. Attendance is low, although improving, and students' punctuality is too lax. The school is working satisfactorily with an increasing range of external agencies to help meet students' needs.

Supported by other senior leaders, most of whom have also been adversely affected by the changing senior leadership arrangements, the consultant headteacher is beginning to provide direction, create a constructive climate and raise staff morale. A number of new leadership and management arrangements have been put in place to bring about improvement and these will require further adaptation when the executive headteacher and new head of school take up their appointments in January 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure better achievement across subjects, and especially in the core subjects by:
- eliminating the number of lessons that are inadequate or just satisfactory so that teaching consistently engages students in their learning, enables students to make better progress, and minimises the time wasted through persistent low-level disruption by:
 - providing appropriate training to ensure that all staff are accurate in their assessments of students' work against national standards
 - using secure assessment information to plan learning activities that support individual learning needs well
 - developing teachers' skills in the use of strategies to check that learning is taking place throughout the lesson
 - providing greater challenge and pace to accelerate students' progress
 - ensuring that agreed behaviour management systems are applied consistently well throughout the school.

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- ensuring leaders at all levels, including governors, rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the school so they understand and take actions necessary to increase the rate of improvement by:
 - monitoring and evaluating practice at all levels based on regular, accurate and robust assessments that lead to focused, precise and effective interventions to raise achievement
 - ensuring the governing body has the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to regularly challenge the performance of the school
- improving attendance and ensuring students arrive punctually to lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

The attainment of students on entry to the school is below average, their attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is low and their achievement is inadequate. In 2010, unvalidated GCSE results were particularly low in a number of subjects, including the core subjects, although they were above average in the subjects associated with the school's sports specialism. Clearly targeted support boosts the progress of students who experience specific difficulties with their learning and their achievement is satisfactory overall.

Most students say they enjoy school, especially when they are able to be involved practically in their lessons. However, their progress in too many lessons is limited by constant chatter and off-task behaviour. Just over half the students who responded to the inspection questionnaire disagreed that behaviour was good at the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students understand well how to keep safe and healthy and many participate in extra-curricular sports activities. Some make a contribution to the school community through, for example, being members of the school council. Students made a good contribution to the design of the new school uniform, which they wear with pride. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the broader community, through sporting links and collecting for charities. Most students say they feel safe in lessons. Exclusions are falling, but attendance remains low despite an improving trend. Low achievement in English and mathematics means that students do not develop important basic skills well enough to contribute to their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	4
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning and frequently observe teaching but this process has not yet resulted in overall better teaching and learning. There remains a considerable amount of low-level disruption in classes because behaviour is not always well managed, which slows the pace of learning. Despite the introduction of good lesson planning forms, in too many lessons not enough account is taken of the needs of individual students so that many activities do not fully engage and adequately challenge all students. While lesson objectives are displayed consistently, students are not always sure of exactly what is expected of them during the lesson, and often their progress towards meeting the lesson's success criteria is not properly measured. In more effective lessons, students are engaged and motivated by a range of different teaching methods and they willingly participate in interesting and enjoyable activities.

Students across the school have access to a broad curriculum, enhanced since the last inspection by a good range of additional vocational subjects on site. The range of courses offered is now better at meeting the needs and interests of students. The personal, social and health education programme, supplemented well by citizenship and religious education, helps students to understand their rights and responsibilities and contributes satisfactorily to the development of their spiritual, moral and social development. The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities that students enjoy; there are good participation rates for most of these activities. The specialist sports subjects are very popular in the school. The curriculum promotes sound cultural and religious awareness, and this helps to promote satisfactory community cohesion.

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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Appropriate steps are taken to ensure that students are kept safe and well in school. There are good links with community welfare services and the school has developed more robust strategies to monitor and improve attendance in recent years. Students who find learning difficult are well supported pastorally by the learning support assistants and pastoral managers. However, while the school now keeps efficient records of all students' progress, not all teachers use this information effectively enough to plan their lessons to meet all students' learning requirements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The capacity of leaders and managers to secure and sustain improvements is fragile. Some middle managers are new to their role and some are still developing the necessary skills to drive improvements forward rapidly. The new acting headteacher is augmenting the leadership team with a leader from his own school, but this arrangement is very recent and is temporary. The acting headteacher has also introduced more effective measures to hold leaders to account for their own and students' performance. The system of line management at senior and middle management level is now more focused on achievement and attainment and on monitoring the effect of strategies to address underachievement. This system has yet to produce marked and demonstrable improvements in student outcomes.

Recent refinements to systems for tracking students' progress and a greater focus by managers on the progress made by Year 11 students are beginning to have an effect. However, the implementation of these new systems throughout the whole school is not yet fully embedded and the rigour with which different subject departments analyse and use assessment information is too variable. The excellent practice found in the specialist areas has not been shared effectively enough with other departmental leaders. Senior and middle leaders have taken appropriate steps to develop a whole-school response for the development of community cohesion. Governors have ensured that statutory requirements in relation to equalities and safeguarding have been met, but have not been effective enough in challenging leaders to address weaknesses. The school's promotion of equal opportunities and tackling of discrimination are satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

A smaller number of parents than usual for a school of this size responded to the questionnaire. They were generally positive about the work of the school. However, some disagreed that the school helps them to support their child’s learning and a similar number disagreed that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour; the evidence from the inspection supports this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Eltham Foundation 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 952 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	17	41	62	13	20	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	13	20	45	68	4	6	4	6
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	26	38	58	8	12	3	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	15	41	62	10	15	4	6
The teaching is good at this school	7	11	45	68	7	11	3	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	14	37	56	17	26	3	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	14	36	55	16	24	3	5
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)	7	11	43	65	10	15	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	17	36	55	14	21	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	17	31	47	15	23	6	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	9	41	62	11	17	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	5	8	41	62	12	18	5	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	17	36	55	11	17	5	8

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. 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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Eltham Foundation School, Eltham SE9 5EQ

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome and also for speaking so well to us about your views on a range of school matters. We were impressed by how you wanted the school to be good and took a careful note of those things you thought would make the school better. We also took into account the views of your teachers, particularly those who help to lead the school.

The Eltham Foundation has some positive features but also some very important shortcomings. The school provides you with satisfactory care, guidance and support and we are pleased to say that your sports activities help you to achieve good results in these areas and stay healthy. We agree about the need for more engaging and interactive lessons which would reduce chatting and involve you all more in the lesson activities. We also noted that too many of you do not make as much progress as you should and that examination results are too low. This is partly because too many of you do not attend school regularly enough, or turn up late to lessons.

There have been too many changes of headteacher which have slowed the pace of improvement since the last inspection. We think the governors could have pressed more forcefully for better leadership to make improvement happen quickly.

We have judged that the school requires 'special measures'; this means the school will get help to improve more quickly. Inspectors will visit every few months to see how the school is getting on. They will want to check with you about how things are going, especially after your new headteacher arrives in January. In particular they will want to know how well you attend, how well you enjoy your lessons and how well your teachers know you are making better progress. You can all help by ensuring you attend more regularly and make every effort to help teachers help you to succeed.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector

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