

James Elliman School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131236
Local Authority	Slough
Inspection number	315760
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Johnstone

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	716
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Smith
Headteacher	Mr Paul Dieppe
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Elliman Avenue Slough SL2 5BA
Telephone number	01753 810686
Fax number	01753 790816

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than other primary schools. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of these pupils have English as an additional language and an above average number are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The largest group are of Asian origin with small groups from a variety of other backgrounds. Pupils speak over thirty different languages. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and those who have a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. More pupils than usual move into and out of the school at times other than the start of the school year. The school has Investors in People status and has recently achieved a Gold Award in the Healthy Schools Award scheme. It has also gained the Financial Management Standards in Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. It has a number of important strengths. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and provides a strong base for their good personal development. Racial harmony and mutual respect for the beliefs of others is excellent and provides a firm foundation for learning. As one parent commented, 'So many different children from different backgrounds are all made welcome'. Behaviour, pupils' attitudes to learning, and pupils' care, guidance and support are good. The supportive environment meets the needs of the more vulnerable pupils extremely well. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and know who to approach should they have any concerns.

Standards are below average and achievement in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. Pupils who enter school with very limited English make sound progress in developing their basic skills. However, many changes of staff have restricted opportunities for these pupils, and particularly boys, to develop a deep understanding and better interpretation of what they read. Nonetheless, the senior leaders recognise that there is scope to raise standards and improve achievement, and are committed to doing so.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is now a more settled staff who work together well. This has resulted in an increasing proportion of good teaching across the school. However, there is still too much that is satisfactory and at these times work is not matched effectively enough to the different needs of the pupils and their progress slows. The curriculum is satisfactory with a good range of enrichment activities. The school is developing a more creative and cross-curricular approach to learning with more opportunities for investigative work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher leads and manages the school well. He has secured the strong support of parents and managed staffing instabilities and recruitment difficulties well. Self evaluation is good and based on a wide range of data and monitoring. This is helping to more clearly identify key strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. The relatively new leadership of English, mathematics and science is satisfactory and improving. The good school improvement plan is clearly focused on initiatives to raise standards and achievement and improve teaching. Senior leaders now need to monitor and evaluate rigorously and with greater consistency the impact of these initiatives. Governors are now playing a more effective role in monitoring the work of the school. They are also increasingly holding it to account for its performance. The good teamwork, a more settled staff, a strong Foundation Stage, higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and improving standards this year indicate good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress due to the consistently effective teaching. Even so, because many children start school with less well developed skills than expected for their age a significant minority do not attain the expectations for children entering Year 1. Good induction procedures help children settle quickly. The stimulating classroom and outdoor environments add much to children's enjoyment of learning. They behave well and form excellent relationships with each other and adults. The range of languages spoken by adults gives confidence and enhances the learning of the many children at the early stages of learning English. The good curriculum provides an effective balance of adult led and

structured play activities both indoors and outdoors. The good teaching of early letter sounds and insistence on correct speaking provides a secure base for pupils' good progress in reading. Assessment is good and helps teachers to match activities successfully to the varied needs of the children. The good Foundation Stage leader recognises the need to maintain a strong focus on improving early literacy skills, particularly for boys and developing independent learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science with a particular focus on boys' achievement in reading and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or better and enables pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Ensure that monitoring is rigorously and consistently focused on the impact of those initiatives in the school improvement plan aimed at raising standards and improving achievement.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, fell to well below average in 2007. This year's assessments for Year 2 pupils, whilst below average, show a greater proportion of pupils reaching the expected level. In the 2007 National Curriculum assessments for pupils in Year 6, standards were well below average in English, mathematics and science and the school fell short of its challenging targets. Analysis of pupils' current work indicates that while standards are below average in the core subjects, they are improving and pupils in Year 6 are on track to meet their targets. There are clear indications in the pupils' work, in other year groups, of increasing improvement as they move through the school. Given their starting points, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Girls reach higher standards than boys and make better progress, particularly in English. Many pupils find difficulty in understanding what they read and in setting out their ideas in pieces of extended writing. They are not adept at applying what they know to problem solving activities in mathematics and science. Most pupils are computer literate and develop good basic information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress but there are clear indications that improvements in provision are beginning to increase the progress they make. In lessons where they receive individual or small group support they often make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils participate enthusiastically in school activities. Attendance is broadly average and has improved because of the school's actions. Pupils have good awareness of major world faiths and other cultures. Racial harmony and respect for the beliefs of others is excellent. Pupils have positive relationships with adults in the school and amongst themselves. The School Council is very active. They have helped to improve outdoor equipment, ordered new reading books and are introducing a Healthy Eating Tuck Shop. Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy school. They support the community well, for example, by making a collection at Harvest Festival and supporting local charities. Together with their good personal development and the

acquisition of sound basic skills, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Greater staffing stability has helped to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. The move to adopt teaching styles that provide greater opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills is helping to raise standards. Pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour, and classroom management is good. Teachers receive effective support from classroom assistants. Pupils who have learning difficulties receive good teaching and progress well during small group work. This is also true of the pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition. In the most effective lessons, teachers ask searching questions that encourage pupils to think more deeply. Learning is linked to real life situations and this makes learning more meaningful and motivates the pupils. Across the school, ICT supports learning effectively. In a small minority of lessons teaching is not as effective because there is a lack of pace and work is not matched effectively enough to the different needs in the class. As a result pupils make satisfactory rather than the good progress of which they are capable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets national requirements with an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. The school engages the children successfully in theme weeks. For example, there is a current theme to promote multi-cultural understanding and celebrate the many different cultures represented in the school. A good range of extra curricular opportunities, including sport and the arts, enhances the curriculum. There is good provision for ICT. In part to meet the needs of boys more effectively, the school is developing a more creative approach to learning by linking work in different subjects. It is also beginning to provide more opportunities for investigative work in mathematics and science. These initiatives are not yet embedded in the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides an environment in which pupils feel safe, valued and supported. All safeguarding requirements are met and vulnerable pupils are cared for well. The few pupils who have behavioural needs receive outstanding support from the learning mentor. Adults know their pupils well and provide them with very good personal and pastoral support. The school works closely with a range of outside agencies to provide additional help for those pupils who need extra support. Pupils have personal targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy. Most of these help pupils to measure how well they are doing. There is good marking that has developmental comments on pupils' work, although this level of marking is not a consistent feature across all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The good leadership of the headteacher has provided the school with clear direction. This included a period with considerable staffing and recruitment difficulties, which led to some inadequate teaching. The recent improvement in teaching and learning over the past year stems from effective self-evaluation and the school's own staff training programme. This has included the development of the high quality teaching assistants to class teacher status, which has stabilised the staffing. The headteacher has restructured and strengthened the senior leadership team, who now have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve school performance. It is too early for these changes to have had a significant impact on improving achievement and standards. Governance is satisfactory and improving. Learning resources and finances are managed very well by the business manager and administrative staff.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of James Elliman School, Slough, SL2 5BA

Thank you all very much for the warm, cheerful welcome, and for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school. We came to see how well you are doing and would like to tell you what we found out.

James Elliman School is a very friendly and happy school. It provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. This means that there are many good things about your school but there are also some important aspects that can be improved.

It was particularly pleasing to see how well you all get on together and how you make pupils who are new to the school feel so welcome. You behave well and know about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. Mr Dieppe and all the staff care very much about you and work hard to make sure that you are happy and enjoy your time at school. You clearly enjoy your lessons and try hard to do the work your teachers give you. We were pleased to see how well some of you take on your roles as school councillors, monitors and mentors. It was good to see all the exciting things that were happening during your multi-cultural week and we know how much you enjoyed this.

We have asked Mr Dieppe, your teachers and governors to:

- help you improve more in English, particularly boys' reading and writing, and help all of you to improve your mathematics and science
- make sure that all your lessons are as good as they can be, so that work is not too easy or too hard
- ensure that all the good new things that are helping to improve your school are checked regularly to make sure they are really helping you to improve.

We know that you will want to help too. You can do this by continuing to behave well and doing your best in lessons. With your help we know you can make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Johnstone

Lead Inspector