

Monday 10th November 2025

RE: A Welcome from Your New Headteacher

Dear parents and carers,

I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Headteacher of Elmwood Infants School and Nursery. My name is Helen Hayes, and it is a genuine privilege to be joining such a vibrant, caring community.

From my first tour of Elmwood, I loved the school. I was warmly welcomed by kind, helpful staff and wonderful children who were eager to talk about their learning. I can already see many strengths, and my commitment is to build on these while continuing the great work already underway.

School values and what you can expect

Elmwood's Rights Respecting ethos shines through. I will ensure these values continue to guide our relationships, curriculum and wider school life, so that children thrive academically and personally. You can expect a calm, ambitious and inclusive culture where kindness and high expectations sit side by side, and where every child is known, safe and encouraged to do their very best.

My background

I was awarded Advanced Skills Teacher status in 2013 for Early Years education, and in that role, I supported schools across Southwark to strengthen teaching and learning in the early years phase. This experience has shaped my belief that the foundations of a child's education are built through curiosity, play, and high-quality teaching. I place a strong emphasis on phonics and early mathematics, ensuring every child develops the skills and confidence they need to succeed. Above all, I am passionate that no child is left behind. At Elmwood, I will work closely with our experienced team to make sure all pupils achieve their potential across the curriculum, with a particular focus on developing early communication, a love of stories, and a lifelong enthusiasm for learning.

I spent 13 years at Phoenix Primary School in Southwark, where I worked as part of the leadership team to achieve an Ofsted 'Outstanding' judgement in all areas in 2015, and later, as Head of School from 2023, we successfully maintained this standard with further a 'Outstanding' judgement in 2025. Through this experience, I have seen how high expectations, excellent teaching and a strong sense of community enable every child to thrive. I look forward to bringing that same ambition, care and commitment to Elmwood, ensuring every pupil is happy, confident and achieves their very best.

Getting started

In my first weeks, I am keen to get to know the children straight away. I will welcome pupils in assembly and visit every class for story times, as well as be a visible and approachable presence on the playground and at the school gate each day. I recognise that this is also an important transition for the children as they get to know me as their new headteacher, and I will take time to build positive, trusting relationships with them through assemblies, classroom visits and daily interactions.

As a parent myself to an eight-year-old daughter, I understand how important strong communication is between home and school. Good communication is the foundation of trust, so we will continue to share regular updates about learning, events and safeguarding. I also welcome your feedback. When I begin, I will send a short parent questionnaire to gather your views on Elmwood's strengths and areas for development. Most importantly, I will listen carefully to pupils, staff, governors and families to understand what's working well and what we can improve together.

Welcome Evening

I would like to invite all parents and carers to a Welcome Evening towards the end of January (exact date and time to be confirmed). This will be an opportunity for me to share what has been happening during my first month at Elmwood, including the steps we have already taken and the priorities I have identified moving forward. I will outline my initial plan for school improvement and explain how we can continue to build on the school's many strengths. Most importantly, the evening will be a chance to listen to your thoughts and feedback, as we work in partnership to ensure the very best for every Elmwood child.

Thank you for the trust you place in the school every day. I'm really looking forward to joining Elmwood, meeting many of you at the gate and at the Welcome Evening and working together so that every Elmwood child feels valued, learns well and leaves us ready for their next chapter.

With warm regards,

Ms Helen Hayes

Headteacher

Elmwood Infants School and Nursery