

# Colmers Farm Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	103187
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	376840
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Mike Thompson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	176
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stuart Mann
<b>Headteacher</b>	Victoria Kelly
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Leybrook Road Birmingham B45 9PB
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Mike Thompson

Additional inspector

Tracey Kneale

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors sampled seven hours of teaching in 14 lessons taught by six teachers. In addition, they observed the targeted support provided for individuals or small groups of pupils by the special educational needs coordinator, teaching assistants and integration assistants. They looked at the work in pupils' books, heard a sample of pupils read in Years 1 and 2, and held discussions with pupils about many aspects of school life. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the teaching staff, and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school's improvement planning and data showing the progress made by pupils. Their scrutiny of safeguarding procedures included a detailed evaluation of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors analysed questionnaires returned by 38 parents and carers and seven members of staff, and held informal discussions with parents and carers in the playground at the start of the school day.

## Information about the school

This two-form entry school is smaller than an average-sized school. It shares a building with Colmers Farm Junior School, which occupies the first floor. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises two Reception classes. There is also an on-site Nursery and Children's Centre. This is managed by an external provider and is inspected separately.

Most pupils are White British, and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who speak English as an additional language. Overall, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. Most of these are at the early School Action stage of support. There are no pupils with physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils at School Action Plus, most of whom have moderate learning difficulties, is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about twice the national average.

As a result of repairs being made to the outside of the first floor since April 2011, children are only able to make use of a small proportion of the outdoor learning area for the Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

At the time of the inspection, a new headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher had been in post for three weeks. Both are internal appointments.

**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

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Standards are rising and pupils achieve satisfactorily.
- Systems for checking on pupils' progress are robust. Those who need extra help are quickly identified and receive effective support in order to catch up.
- Teaching is generally satisfactory and leads to satisfactory, rather than good, learning when teachers do not consistently vary the levels of challenge to reflect pupils' different levels of attainment. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It is better in English than in mathematics. Teachers plan carefully and use resources effectively.
- Reading skills are taught well, but pupils do not read regularly enough to adults in school. Teachers are good at developing pupils' confidence, but do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to work independently.
- Parents and carers agree with inspectors that the behaviour and safety of pupils are good. Instances of bullying of any type are rare.
- The good focus on personal and social development in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a sound basis for progress in other areas of learning. Opportunities to develop children's spoken language are sometimes missed. Assessment procedures are not consistently effective because the records kept lack sufficient detail. When working with children, adults sometimes focus more on supervising activities rather than on developing the intended learning.
- Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development. 'Her enthusiasm and vision have been motivational' and 'I am very excited about the future' typify the comments from staff members. Changes in the structure of management are planned, and these require improved skills in monitoring and evaluation by leaders at all levels. Some policies are not reviewed regularly enough.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further

- Build on existing good practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that, by September 2012, it is consistently good or better, by ensuring that teachers:
  - make clear reference to the skills to be developed in lessons and make use of success criteria to set specific, measurable learning targets carefully matched to the abilities of all pupils
  - provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop skills as independent learners
  - clearly schedule all pupils to read and discuss their reading at least weekly with an adult
  - identify improvements needed when marking pupils' work in mathematics.
- By September 2012, improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes by ensuring that:
  - assessments are securely underpinned by detailed, evaluative evidence of each child's development across all areas of learning
  - the intended learning resulting from focus activities is clearly understood by all adults
  - all adults make use of opportunities to develop children's skills in speaking and listening and to model correct speech when working with them.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders at all levels develop the full range of skills necessary to shape and improve the quality of pupils' learning
  - all policies, and their impact on practice, are reviewed on a regular basis.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Almost all of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires consider that their children make good progress overall and are helped develop skills in communication, reading, writing, and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that progress is satisfactory, rather than good, and that opportunities to develop children's skills in speaking and listening are not always taken in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes. In some instances, there is too little dialogue between adults and children during supervised activities and, therefore, missed opportunities to develop children's vocabulary and diction. In Key Stage 1, there is a good focus on writing and mathematics, but some children do not read books often enough.

Use of national initiatives to provide individual support in reading and counting give

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pupils effective help in developing key skills. As a result, many pupils at the 'school action' stage of support for special educational needs make good progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills. Those with moderate learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, in line with that of most pupils. Skilled teaching assistants play an important role in delivering well-structured programmes to help accelerate the progress of pupils who need a boost, and help ensure the inclusion of pupils in lessons. Daily writing sessions are improving pupils' confidence as writers as skills are regularly practised.

From starting points that are slightly below those expected nationally, children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they move into Key Stage 1, most have achieved the goals expected, although few children exceed national expectations. Progress continues to be satisfactory in Key Stage 1. By the time they transfer to the junior school, the proportions of pupils at or exceeding national expectations are broadly average.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers are keenly aware of the need to provide activities that motivate and engage boys in developing early skills in literacy and oracy. For instance, an activity in which children made 'Project X' wristbands and then described what sort of adventure they would have when the wristbands helped them to shrink, not only appealed strongly to boys, but was also chosen by girls. However, girls proved to be more articulate than boys when giving their answers.

Pupils' skills in reading are developed satisfactorily. Overall, there is the expected range of attainment. In Year 2, the most-able readers make good use of their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help decipher unfamiliar words, and read with fluency and good expression. Less-able readers, although capable of breaking down unfamiliar words into separate sounds, lack skills in blending the different sounds within words and have insecure understanding of the text. Records of pupils' reading show considerable variation in the frequency with which pupils are heard to read.

## **Quality of teaching**

The positive views of most parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires are not fully borne out by inspection evidence, which shows that although there are good aspects to teaching, it is more often satisfactory than good.

There is some good teaching, and inspectors observed good features of teaching in all lessons. Teachers relate well to their pupils and explain tasks clearly, but their expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. In some instances, when all pupils have the same task, teachers miss opportunities to ensure good levels of individual challenge. This occurs because they do not vary the criteria for completing tasks according to pupils' different levels of attainment. The impact of teachers' marking on improving pupils' work is greater in English than in mathematics because the next steps in learning are clearly highlighted in pupils' writing. The planned curriculum does not include frequent enough opportunities for

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pupils to develop skills as independent learners through, for instance, open-ended investigative activities.

The best teaching is characterised by teachers' skills in providing activities that capture the imagination of pupils. For example, a Year 2 science lesson successfully built on previous learning about the classification of groups of animals by exploring similarities and differences in humans. The task of writing 'riddles' about people in the class, based on careful observation and good use of descriptive vocabulary, generated high levels of challenge and enjoyment as pupils first listened to each other's pen-portraits and then tried to guess the identity of the subjects. This activity also promoted important aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by celebrating diversity, reflecting on how people change over time and developing pupils' fascination in learning about themselves.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Most parents and carers who completed the inspection questionnaires think that the standard of behaviour is good and that the school deals effectively with any cases of bullying. Inspection evidence fully supports these views. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because adults look after them well. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and safe practices, such as the careful use of scissors, were observed in all lessons. There is a clear moral code within the school, and pupils clearly know right from wrong. Teachers' consistent application of clear procedures for rewarding positive attitudes and qualities, such as effort and thoughtfulness, contribute strongly to the good behaviour of pupils at work and play. Teachers' expectations that behaviour will be good in lessons are implicit, and pupils rarely need reminding about what is expected of them. Pupils' social development is good. They work and play together amicably, respect the feelings and ideas of others and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are rare. There have been no exclusions. The system for monitoring pupils' behaviour, which has recently been reviewed, pulls together different sources of information and ensures close monitoring.

The school's strong focus on raising parents' awareness of the importance of ensuring the regular attendance of their children is gaining momentum. Rates of attendance have improved, and are in line with the national average for primary schools. Punctuality is satisfactory.

### **Leadership and management**

This is a school in which all pupils are warmly welcomed and equally valued, and in which discrimination has no place. The curriculum helps promote these values. It meets requirements, provides regular opportunities for pupils to develop skills across the expected range of subjects, and satisfactorily promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' work in art, for example, helps develop their appreciation of the world around them, while work about the Chinese New Year or the Hindu festival of Diwali improve their cultural and social awareness.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage staff, senior managers and governors rightly express frustration at the delays in repairs to the junior school, which are due to be carried out by the local authority. These have adversely affected the day-to-day opportunities for the youngest children for outdoor learning. To some extent, the school helps compensate for this through the weekly outdoor learning in its 'Forest School' provided for all pupils, and which is a good feature of provision.

The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The steady year-on-year improvements in standards and achievement over the past three years provide clear evidence of the impact of leadership, in which the new headteacher and her deputy, as well as the governing body, played a part. The good teaching of phonics, now evident, followed a successful programme of staff development. The impact of sensible new initiatives, such as the adjustment to the timetable at the start of the day to help further improve the quality of individual and small-group tuition, cannot yet be accurately evaluated.

The new headteacher held a 'Big Picture Day' at the start of term to share her vision for the school. This helped all staff to become fully aware of the achievement of pupils within the national context, and promoted common understanding of the rationale underpinning the need for further improvements. Appreciative comments such as: 'I became aware of things I didn't know', and 'My pack of information allows me to research further and understand better' are testimony to the success of the exercise in strengthening the staff team.

The governing body is well organised and its effectiveness is satisfactory. Its members take a keen interest in the work of the school and are well informed. Procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils are robust. However, there is a shortage of governors and, therefore, the task of rigorously holding the school to account for its actions is difficult to achieve. A meeting with parents is planned, with the intention of generating greater interest and improving recruitment. The governors are vigilant in ensuring that policies to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are carefully enforced, but some other policies, such as the assessment and art policies, have been neglected and are in need of review. Too many policies are undated and, therefore, their review cycle is uncertain.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



25 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Colmers Farm Infant School, Birmingham, B45 9PB**

I would like to thank all of you for being so welcoming and helpful to your inspectors when we visited your school. These are the best things about your school.

- You go to a satisfactory school that is improving.
- You make steady progress as you move through the school.
- It is a happy place, and you enjoy coming to school.
- You get on well with your teachers and one another, and you behave well.
- You told us that the adults in school take good care of you, and you feel safe.
- Your attendance is improving. Well done.

Your headteacher agrees that some important things need improving to help you to make better progress, so in future this is what will happen.

- Your teachers will be giving you work that always makes you think hard – I am sure that you are ready for the challenges you will be given.
- You will be expected to think more for yourselves and not rely so much on adults to help you.
- You will be reading to adults more often to help improve your reading skills.
- Your teachers will mark your number work more clearly so that you know exactly what you have to do to improve.
- All of the adults who work in the Reception classes will be making even closer checks on your learning and progress and will be making sure that you become better at speaking and listening.
- You have a new headteacher and she has plans to change the way in which the school is run. To help this happen, the teachers will need to do some more training.

I would like you all to play your part in helping the school to become even better. The best way for you to do this is to try to think more for yourselves instead of expecting teachers to do the thinking for you.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson  
Lead inspector

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