

Fircroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	101007
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	376499
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2012
Lead inspector	John Laver

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 of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Madhu Chauhan
Headteacher	Anne Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Laver	Additional Inspector
Justina Llochi	Additional Inspector
Adam Hewett	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also attended a school assembly and observed break and lunch times. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, assessment and tracking information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. The inspection team analysed 126 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by 100 pupils and nine staff.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just below average. Almost three quarters of the pupils attending the school come from a range of minority ethnic heritages and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is more than double the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as being disabled or having special educational needs is broadly average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery class and in three Reception classes, reflecting a recent increase in the school roll. The school's expectation is that it will revert to two Reception classes in September 2012. The school exceeds the government's current floor standard for pupils' attainment and progress. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Healthy Schools status. There is a breakfast club and an after-school club on the school site, neither managed by the governing body.

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

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Judged to be good at the time of the previous inspection, it has continued to build upon its strengths. Parents and carers are very positive about the school, a typical comment being, 'My children are incredibly happy here, and are thriving academically and socially.'
- Good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes towards learning ensure that all groups of pupils, whatever their backgrounds or level of ability, achieve well. By the age of 11, attainment is generally above the national average.
- The fastest progress is in mathematics, which has benefited from an extensive range of strategies to support pupils' learning and the use of high quality resources. Reading and writing do not yet benefit from the same level of support or resourcing, and pupils' progress in these skills is less rapid, although it is improving.
- High-quality support ensures that pupils identified as being disabled or having special educational needs, and those at an early stage of learning English, not only do well academically but are also happy and settled in school.
- Strengths in teaching include the very effective use of assessment, marking and use of pupil targets which give pupils clear indications of how they can improve their work. Sometimes the teaching is outstanding, but best practice is not yet spread consistently across all teachers in the school, so that in a minority of lessons pupils do not achieve as well as they might, particularly in English.
- Behaviour is usually good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel very safe and they get on very well with each other.
- Leadership and management at all levels are good. Governors and staff share the same determination to build on the school's existing strengths.

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- The headteacher has high expectations, which are reinforced by accurate self-evaluation, rigorous monitoring and good strategic planning for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In the course of the next 12 months, further raise pupils' achievement in reading and writing, to match that in mathematics, by improving the consistency of good and better teaching in reading and writing, particularly by providing more resources and support for those pupils who could attain at a higher level.
- Share the best teaching practice more systematically throughout the school in order to provide more consistently challenging opportunities for all pupils, so that even more of them reach the highest levels of attainment.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge below age-related expectations. Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes enables all children to make good progress, until at the point of joining Year 1 they are attaining at or slightly above age-related expectations in most areas, except reading and writing. Despite a good start in developing an understanding of sounds and letters in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, the approach of teachers and particularly of support staff in developing this understanding is not as consistent as it could be, and some reading material is not best matched to pupils' needs.

Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 is broadly average and above average by the end of Year 6. Progress in mathematics is consistently good, with some pupils making outstanding progress. Progress in English, although slower, is improving. The overall good achievement is evident in recent national test results and the school's own assessment and tracking data. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above average.

Good, and occasionally outstanding, learning and progress were also clearly evident in lessons observed during the inspection, and this was due to high expectations of teachers and pupils' very positive attitudes. Pupils are confident and articulate learners, because the school strongly emphasises the importance of active, independent and collaborative learning, so pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education. Parents and carers rightly recognise the good rate of achievement in the school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs share in the good progress, benefiting from good support and the encouragement they receive to play a full part in lessons. Those pupils who are particularly able, gifted or talented achieve well, benefiting not just from appropriately challenging work in most lessons but also from additional learning opportunities, for example

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through visiting other local schools and in-school extension classes. Occasionally higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they might, when the pace and challenge which is integral to most of the teaching, is less evident. One of the school's main successes has been to ensure that in this very diverse school population, all groups of pupils progress at a similar rate. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve at a better rate than their counterparts nationally, as do pupils from various minority ethnic groups. Some previous differences in performance, for example between boys and girls, have been successfully narrowed by the provision of a range of topics and resources designed to more readily appeal to the different interests of all pupils.

Quality of teaching

The inspection findings bear out the views of almost all pupils, parents and carers that teaching is good, has been for a considerable time, and is the main reason for pupils' good achievement. The well-planned curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and progress. Regular and rigorous assessments enable staff to carefully monitor all pupils' progress, and the school provides additional support where necessary for those identified as making slower than expected progress. Strengths in teaching are evident throughout all year groups, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and examples of outstanding teaching were observed during the inspection. However, strategies for disseminating outstanding practice across the school are not yet fully embedded to help accelerate pupils' learning at an even greater rate.

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave and respond in lessons. Teachers use challenging questioning to extend pupils' understanding. In most lessons pupils are encouraged to discuss what they are learning and to listen constructively to each other. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the objectives of lessons and the success criteria for their work. Pupils know their targets, which are regularly reviewed. The marking of work is usually detailed and constructive, praising pupils' efforts but also giving clear indications of how work can be improved. These features were observed during the inspection, for example in an outstanding English lesson for older pupils, designed to improve their writing skills. The teacher skilfully used work pupils had done previously to identify particular features of the writing and pupils were encouraged to learn from each other, celebrate good work, and discuss the results. The pace was relentless, the pupils' enthusiasm was infectious, and the teacher's skilful questioning and use of individual targets enabled every pupil to make outstanding gains in understanding and literacy skills. Only occasionally, particularly in reading and writing, do teachers not provide appropriate challenge, support and resources for pupils to enable them to reach higher levels.

Teachers successfully provide for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding by introducing a range of topics such as 'superheroes' to engage pupils' interests. Teachers make good links across different subjects. For example, pupils were observed practising their basic Spanish in mathematics lessons and

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history topics are used to develop a range of writing skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour as observed during the inspection was good and their eagerness to learn is an important factor in their good achievement. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their improved attendance, which is now above average. Pupils are polite and courteous, and work well together. The school's records and discussions with pupils indicate that behaviour over time has been mostly good. Pupils recognise that bullying can take different forms, but they are confident that all forms of misbehaviour or any untoward incidents will be dealt with effectively. Records of a few incidents of misbehaviour or bullying in recent months show that they have been addressed quickly, and there have been no recent exclusions. School rules are highlighted both in classrooms and pupils' books, and staff have effective strategies to reward and promote good behaviour in lessons. Safety concerns such as dealing with cyber-bullying are also addressed in lessons and assemblies. Although a small number of parents and carers have expressed concerns about the level of supervision in the playground at lunchtimes, pupils told the inspectors that the school provides a safe and secure environment, a view confirmed by inspectors' own observations.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, working closely with knowledgeable and committed governors and staff, has successfully addressed the issues identified at the previous inspection. For example, improvements in marking have helped to give pupils a greater understanding of exactly how they can improve their work. Also, the school plans well for its different groups of pupils and monitors their performance closely to ensure that they all achieve well. Parents and carers confirm that the school's leadership has been a strength for several years. The senior leadership team has both high expectations and a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. There has been a successful programme for the professional development of staff in areas such as the use of assessment. The role of middle leaders and managers, particularly the phase leaders, is still developing, but they are increasingly supporting other staff, raising expectations and ensuring greater consistency, for example in marking. All staff are held increasingly accountable for progress, and a positive approach to improvement permeates the school. At the same time, the leadership emphasises the inclusivity of the school, much valued by parents and carers as well as pupils, who feel safe and know that they all have an equal opportunity to do well and any form of discrimination will be tackled rigorously. There are secure arrangements for safeguarding, and both pupils' and staff awareness of safeguarding issues is regularly updated.

The leadership works hard and effectively to keep parents and carers well informed through regular communications and involves them in their children's learning. They share in the setting of pupils' targets and are invited into school for opportunities such as joint work on projects with their children and, subsequently, producing a

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play for performance.

The school provides a well-planned curriculum, which places great emphasis on teaching key skills like literacy and numeracy in a lively and engaging way, for example by encouraging pupils to research topics. Some pupils have had the opportunity to meet with pupils from a school outside the local area, and all pupils benefit from a rich programme of activities such as clubs, residential trips and visits to sites such as the Imperial War Museum and the National Gallery. These events are part of the school's effective and engaging provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are planned opportunities for pupils to reflect on the issues raised by living in a multicultural, multi-faith community. For example, pupils tell each other about their own families' religious practices.

The leadership's track record of success since the previous inspection, its continual search for ways to improve further and its determination to maintain pupils' academic success and personal development at the centre of its work clearly demonstrate its good capacity to improve further.

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).

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.



4 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fircroft Primary School, Tooting, London SW17 7PP

Thank you for welcoming us so politely when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing you in lessons and around the school. Your school is providing you with a good education, and I am writing to tell you what we found.

These are the things we liked most.

- All of you, from the Nursery up to Year 6, make good progress in your work, especially in mathematics.
- Your teachers teach you well, they make lessons interesting by giving you lots of tasks to do, they mark your work well and they help you learn a great deal.
- You behave well and we agree with you when you tell us that you feel safe in school and are well cared for. You get on very well with each other.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well, and all staff work hard to help you enjoy school, keep improving it and prepare you well for your next school.

In order to make your good school even better, we have asked the school to:

- give you even more help and resources in learning to improve your reading and writing so that all of you can make the best possible progress
- help teachers learn from each other so that all of you get work which really makes you think hard and do your best and enables you to make the best progress possible all of the time.

If you continue to work as hard as we saw you doing during the inspection, you will help your teachers and other staff succeed in making your school even better.

Yours sincerely

John Laver
Lead inspector

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