

Firs Estate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112778
Local Authority	Derby
Inspection number	357186
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Jeremy Spencer HMI

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	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Davy Thomas
Headteacher	Carol Moore
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 17 lessons, taught by 10 teachers and also observed two assemblies. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents including policies, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's improvement plan. The inspection team also analysed 21 staff questionnaires, 72 pupil questionnaires and 41 parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Do all groups of pupils make enough progress from their starting points?
- How accurate and reliable are the school's assessment and tracking systems?
- Do the school leaders identify issues of underperformance and successfully implement strategies to drive improvement?
- Is teaching good enough to meet the needs of all pupils and enable them to make improved progress?

Information about the school

This is a slightly larger school than others of its type. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Significantly more pupils than average join or leave the school at times other than the usual starting or leaving points. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language is above average and has risen sharply in recent years. The Nest provides nurture group support for pupils at the school and is situated in a designated classroom on the site. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status and also holds the national Boxall Quality Mark in recognition of its work with nurture groups.

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: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school's effective headteacher and her leadership team have accurately identified areas of weakness in the school and have implemented appropriate plans that have led to improvements. Although the latest published performance data indicate that pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is below the expected standard, pupils are now making satisfactory and strongly improving progress. There is a clear sense of direction and purpose among staff and the governing body plays an important role in monitoring and evaluating the school's work and driving improvement. Clear plans, relevant to the school's emerging needs, are in place to address its current weaknesses. This combined with the satisfactory improvement made since the previous inspection, indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

Well-developed tracking systems are in place, which analyse the progress of individuals and different groups of pupils. Any who underachieve are swiftly identified and provided with appropriate intervention and support. The introduction of a structured programme to teach linking letters with sounds (phonics) and a whole school focus upon the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills have made a significant impact upon pupils' improved rates of progress. Senior leaders carefully measure the impact of interventions, in order to ensure their effectiveness, however, this information is not filtered through to all leaders. The latest school data indicate that different groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible to receive free school meals, are making strongly improving progress in reading and writing. Published data indicate that all pupils are making improved progress in mathematics. Observations of pupils working in lessons and scrutiny of work in their exercise books confirm the accuracy of the school's assessment data.

The school provides good care, guidance and support to pupils, meaning that they feel very safe in their environment. The Nest is a key strength of the school and staff provide high-quality support to pupils with additional social and emotional needs, in the form of nurture groups. The school's systems to keep pupils safe are well developed and all statutory requirements are met. Although pupils' attendance is low, there is evidence that the school's actions to target those pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable, is having a strong impact upon their improving attendance.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, however, there are frequent examples of good and occasionally outstanding teaching, which are leading to improved progress for pupils. In the best lessons, pupils fully understand what they are learning because their teacher has clearly explained it to them. Pupils are also aware of the next steps they need to take in order to improve, often with targets set for further improvement. Tasks and activities set for pupils are very well matched to their ability. As is the level of challenge and the

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opportunity to develop pupils' independent working skills, consequently, their interest in lessons is sustained. Although these features were seen in a number of lessons across the school, they are not yet consistently embedded in all classrooms.

A broad range of visits, including residential activities, supports the school's curriculum. However, the curriculum in most subjects is still heavily weighted towards the development of pupils' knowledge and does not focus well enough upon the development of their skills as they move through the school.

The school is a cohesive community and relationships between pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds are good. However, the pupils do not learn in sufficient depth about cultural diversity in the broader national and global communities.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all lessons are consistently at least good by:
 - ensuring learning activities in lessons challenge all pupils and encourage independence
 - enabling pupils to engage more closely in the learning process and ensuring that all lessons have sharply focused learning objectives.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress by:
 - developing a curriculum which is stimulating, progressive and focuses sharply on the development of pupils' skills
 - ensuring that pupils are given accessible and realistic targets to work towards
 - improving pupils' attendance rates.
- Provide pupils with better opportunities to develop their understanding of cultural diversity, particularly in national and global communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrating skills well below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress during their time in the school's Nursery and Reception classes. During Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress, as they develop improved speaking and listening skills and improved social skills. In Key Stage 2, pupils close the gap slightly in reading and writing and make stronger progress as their basic skills continue to develop. The rate of progress that pupils are making is accelerating, particularly in mathematics, due to the school's well-developed strategies to address underperformance. An increasing number of pupils enter the school at different times of the year, many of whom are at the early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school caters for these pupils well, providing additional effective support. The school's focus on developing speaking and listening skills has been successful in creating lessons rich in dialogue. This further supports the language development of these pupils.

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Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and pupils are confident that any occasional lapses in behaviour are dealt with well by teachers. During the inspection, pupils were observed to be polite and public spaces around the school were safe and calm. Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the need to exercise. Healthy cooking activities are offered on a weekly basis at the school's breakfast club and a separate healthy cooking club runs after school. A Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) led family learning cooking club also runs in the school. Pupils enjoy a broad range of after-school sports clubs, which are well attended. Pupils spoke fondly about the break-dancing club. Particularly impressive in this school are the daily physical activity sessions, held each morning. Pupils support the running of these activities, which involve short bursts of exercise, to facilitate readiness for learning.

Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community. Within school, they value the role of the school council and members wear their badges with pride. However, the school's contribution to the wider community is less well developed. Attendance is low but improving and along with pupils' increasingly secure development of basic skills indicates that they are building up satisfactory workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Pupils demonstrate satisfactory social skills and moral values and those pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are discreetly supported in classes to enable them to be included in activities. On some occasions, these pupils withdraw to 'The Nest' in order to receive effective additional input to support their development. School tracking data indicate that pupils who previously made slow progress make significantly improved progress in most cases, following intervention work in 'The Nest.' Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified efficiently and work is usually adapted appropriately to meet their needs in lessons. This ensures that they make satisfactory progress. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Although pupils learn about other cultures in the curriculum, their first-hand experiences with representatives from other cultures is limited. In some lessons and assemblies, pupils reflect meaningfully upon their learning, indicating good spiritual development. However, this is not a consistent feature among all lessons. Pupils clearly care about each other, and this is strongly encouraged by staff. For example, in a lesson in Year 1, pupils thought about how they could help a child to stop worrying about her wobbly teeth. Thoughtful ideas from other children included 'give her a teddy' and 'sing her a lullaby.'

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. During the inspection, no inadequate lessons were seen. While there is evidence of good teaching in lessons, the most effective features of teaching are not sufficiently widespread and embedded throughout the school. The strongest teaching is accelerating progress rapidly and the pace of learning is brisk in these lessons. However, teachers do not always make good enough use of open-ended questions to challenge pupils' thinking and trigger well-reasoned responses. Good support is usually provided by teaching assistants and relationships between adults and pupils are positive.

Information about pupils' prior attainment is used well to plan lessons that are better matched to pupils' abilities. However, on some occasions higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. There are some examples of very good marking in the school, which provides clear guidance on what pupils need to do to make their work better. Encouraging comments also help to build their self-esteem. However, these features are not consistent across the school. Pupils' engagement in learning is stronger in the classrooms where they clearly understand what they are learning to do. In the best lessons, teachers present what it is pupils are going to learn and explain to pupils how they will know when they have been successful through small tasks matched to pupils' abilities.

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The school's curriculum has good features, for example, effective partnership work with a local engineering company provides enrichment activities for pupils. A partnership with a local university enables the Aim High programme to run, which helps to raise pupils' aspirations. However, the curriculum is no better than satisfactory because structured plans to develop pupils' skills as they move through the school are not well enough developed.

Parents and carers appreciate the good level of care and support that their children receive. Staff know pupils well and provide very effective pastoral support. The strong work of 'The Nest' is referred to frequently throughout this report and makes a significant impact upon improved outcomes for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, increasingly well-supported by senior staff, has worked skilfully to secure improvements at the school, under challenging circumstances. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and systematically each term. Information from meetings about pupils is used to set challenging targets in order to accelerate progress and improve standards. However, information about the impact of interventions is not used to its full advantage by all members of the leadership team to ensure that provision for these pupils is any better than satisfactory. Although reducing gaps in attainment between groups of pupils have not yet shown sustained improvement. This indicates satisfactory equality of opportunity for pupils.

Staff have great faith in the school's senior leadership team and demonstrate a sense of ambition and determination to improve. Good use of assessment data has resulted in a sharply focused school improvement plan. However, action plans developed by some middle leaders sometimes lack clear success criteria, or milestones to measure progress, which leads to a slower rate of improvement. The school has developed good partnerships with others in order to improve opportunities for pupils' learning. For example, students from a local secondary school attend the school's breakfast club on a weekly basis, to support pupils' reading development. However, the school's partnership with the educational welfare service requires further development, in order to raise pupils' levels of attendance.

The governing body shows a keen desire and ability to support and challenge the school appropriately. They have good working relationships with staff and are rigorous in ensuring that the school's effective safeguarding procedures are well monitored. The

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governing body devises a separate action plan to monitor the work of the school, ensuring that all priorities are well planned for and evaluated.

The school engages with parents and carers well and firm plans are in place to further develop links through access to a new school website/learning platform. The appointment of a member of staff, who speaks the Polish language, has made a significant difference in enabling the school to communicate more effectively with the large number of parents and carers from its Polish community. A number of projects promote community cohesion well at a local level. Tentative links have been made with a school in another area and with a school in Ghana. However, the school's evaluation of its work in promoting community cohesion is currently underdeveloped. As is pupils' understanding of national and global issues.

Good systems are in place to manage the school budget and no major shortcomings are evident in the use or management of resources. Pupils at the school secure satisfactory outcomes, and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve satisfactory outcomes. They begin in the Nursery from low starting points, particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills and in their personal, social and emotional development. The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. For example, an additional teacher has been appointed to work with children in the Nursery class, which has led to some improved progress. Good leadership has also ensured that both indoor and outdoor learning environments are well organised and resourced. Children are content and settled in their learning and in their engagement with others. The atmosphere in classrooms and

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outdoor play areas is calm and purposeful as a result of strong relationships and well-organised activities. Activities are well planned and are based upon thorough and accurate observations and assessments of children's progress. Effective and skilled support staff are deployed well to promote the learning of children and support their welfare requirements. Early Years Foundation Stage leaders have demonstrated astute judgement in implementing initiatives to accurately meet the children's needs. For example, through working in partnership with a local children's centre, the school has introduced the 'Every Child a Talker' initiative to develop children's speaking and listening skills. The school's decision to offer flexible provision to Nursery pupils in the form of either morning or afternoon sessions, has been welcomed by parents and carers. Activities to support the improved development of children's writing skills are available in both indoor and outdoor learning environments. However, boys do not always choose to engage in these activities as frequently girls, which leads to slower progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The views of parents and carers were very positive. One parent commented, 'My child couldn't read and had very low attendance before he came to this school. A few months ago he achieved a 100% attendance award and he can now read too.' The school and The Nest gave him the confidence - it is a great school.' Other parents made similar positive comments and all parents responding to the survey said that their children enjoy coming to school. Inspectors also spoke through a translator to parents and carers who are learning to speak English as an additional language. They expressed how welcome they were made to feel at the school and how well they were supported.

Some parents and carers brought up individual concerns. All of these were considered by the inspection team and discussed, preserving their anonymity, with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Firs Estate Primary 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 260 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	61	16	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	51	19	46	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	41	22	54	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	17	32	78	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	46	22	54	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	39	24	59	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	29	28	68	1	2	0	0
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)	6	15	31	76	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	22	30	73	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	24	25	61	3	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	17	31	76	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	37	25	61	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	59	14	34	2	5	0	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



17 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firs Estate Primary School, Derby, DE22 3WA

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you when we came to inspect your school. Thank you for coming to talk to us and completing the questionnaire. We have listened to your views and read every response. We would like to share with you what we have learned about your school.

Firs Estate Primary is a satisfactory school, which means that the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. Here are some of the best things about your school.

Everybody in school makes each person feel welcome and a part of the school.

The Nest is a very good part of the school and has helped some of you to learn, when you have previously found it very difficult.

Your headteacher and other leaders and teachers work very hard and make sure that your school works well with other schools and other partners, so that you can take part in lots of exciting activities.

You know how to keep yourselves safe and feel secure when you are in school.

We have asked your teachers to clearly explain what you are learning about in every lesson, and to give you clear targets, so that you can become more involved in the learning. We have also asked them to make lessons a bit more challenging for some of you, so that you have to think harder. A lot of your learning at the moment involves learning about things, rather than how to do things. We would like to see your teachers think a little more carefully about teaching you how to do things - this is also known as developing your skills. This will help you to learn even faster. It would also be good for you to learn more about children and other people in other parts of the country and across the world, to help you understand better how people are different but also share similarities. Finally, we have asked that everybody works together to improve attendance levels in your school. You all have a part to play by working hard, thinking carefully about your learning and making sure that you come to school as often as possible, to benefit from all that it has to offer you. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty's Inspector

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