

Firs Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133325
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	360486
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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	493
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Liakat Ali Khan
Headteacher	Mrs Dina Martin
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 19 parts of lessons taught by 17 staff, and observations of other activities took place. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders and staff, pupils and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents including policies, action plans, information about pupils' learning and progress, attendance data and records of monitoring. Responses to questionnaires returned by pupils and staff and the 133 returned by parents and carers were analysed.

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

- Whether the learning and progress of all groups of pupils are good and whether standards are rising quickly enough.
- Whether attendance is good enough and improving sufficiently.
- Whether any aspects of the school's work are outstanding.

Information about the school

Firs Hill is much larger than the average sized primary school. The very large majority of pupils are from a range of different minority ethnic heritages and speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little below that typically found in primary schools. Although the proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the usual times is broadly typical, some of those joining are new to the country and to formal schooling. Firs Hill is a National Support School and the headteacher is a National Leader in Education. Some leaders have recently returned after being on secondment in other schools and since September 2010 four senior leaders have left the school due to promotion, resulting in some teachers being newly appointed. The school has gained 12 external awards for its work in a variety of areas and is working towards achieving more.

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?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Key strengths are the extent to which it knows its community, the steps it takes to involve parents and carers in the life of the school and their children's education, and its success in removing the barriers to learning that many pupils face. Pupils receive high quality care and support. As a result, their personal outcomes are strong. Pupils from all ethnic heritages get on very well together. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is the contribution they make to the community within and beyond school. They also have a very positive understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and embrace the school's promotion of this extremely well.

Pupils' academic achievement is good. Most enter school with attainment that is well below expectations for their age. An uncompromising approach to ensuring they acquire basic skills has resulted in standards steadily rising to the point where they are now broadly in line with the national average by the time they leave. An outstanding curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 captures pupils' interest and ensures their active and practical involvement in learning. Detailed analysis of how different groups are getting on, specific action taken to narrow gaps and good quality teaching means that all groups are progressing well. However, while good overall, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and of guidance given to pupils on how to improve their work and reach their targets. This is the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage too where, for example, planning for learning in the outdoor provision has some limitations.

The school is well led and managed overall. The headteacher's firm direction is based on her commitment to ensuring that the school acts on its role of improving pupils' life chances. She has high expectations of staff which they strive to meet. A good range of monitoring activities results in key strengths and areas requiring development being understood and the latter are concertedly tackled. The success of this action is demonstrated in the key issues from the previous inspection, raising standards in mathematics and improving pupils' independence, showing good improvement. Because of the recent turnover of staff, some leaders are new to their responsibilities and so, although much positive practice exists, not all leaders are yet fully experienced in their role. Nevertheless, the maintenance of strengths since the last inspection and the progress made in a wide variety of areas demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standards reached by pupils further by:

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- ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that all learning is as good as the best
 - ensuring that pupils receive consistently detailed feedback on how to improve their work and reach their targets
 - making more rigorous checks of children's small steps in learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and using this information to plan the provision both indoors and outdoors so it meets their individual needs more fully.
- Ensure that all leaders, especially those new to their role, acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be fully effective in their role.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning very much and are keen to do well. The impact of the new curriculum is seen in their enthusiasm for their work and their excitement when they hear about the practical tasks they will be undertaking. These include making a boat that will carry treasure without overturning and making a wind turbine that will generate electricity. They also enjoy their literacy and numeracy learning, especially when it too is made fun, for example when information and communication technology (ICT) is used to test spellings. Pupils follow instructions, apply themselves well and often show good levels of independence and initiative. Most work well together when doing group tasks.

The trend of rising standards and better achievement at both Key Stages 1 and 2 show the positive impact of work taken to bring about improvement. The detailed analysis of the attainment and progress of the many different groups of pupils in the main school is used to target support closely to their needs. As a result, although rates of progress are not entirely consistent, gaps are closing and pupils of different ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are all progressing well.

Pupils are happy in school, feel safe and have a good understanding of different aspects of safety. They behave well. They have a strong voice and their views are valued and acted upon, from what they think of their mathematics teaching, topics they want to learn about, to what rewards will be given for good attendance. They have very many opportunities for making a contribution within and beyond the school which they take up with relish. They are ambassadors for healthy eating, for example by checking each others' lunchboxes and promoting healthy choices. They act as peer mediators and school councillors, and are very active in raising funds for those less fortunate than themselves. From starting points where many speak little English, they develop into confident, mature young people who get on well together across the range of ethnic heritages. Pupils' attendance has risen to be broadly in line with national figures overall and persistent absenteeism is now low.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Teachers create a supportive environment for pupils and usually make learning fun. Good relationships and strong encouragement mean that pupils are confident in the classroom, as seen for example when a Key Stage 1 pupil felt able to say to a teacher 'I don't know what that word means' and in how keen many are to volunteer answers. Activities are often designed to ensure that pupils participate actively and learn by doing. The promotion of basic skills and subject specific learning are central to whatever is happening. Teachers take good account of the different learning needs of pupils, especially in mathematics and English lessons. There is a higher level teaching assistant in every year group and many bilingual support staff, resulting in some high quality support being given to promote learning and language acquisition. Most lessons are well planned and dynamic and because of their attention to detail promote learning well. In a minority of cases, however, the pace is sometimes too fast or too slow, the purpose of activities is not made clear enough or learning is not checked and consolidated sufficiently. Some high quality feedback is given to pupils on how well they are doing and how to reach their targets through marking, but not all is of this quality.

The curriculum is innovative, creative and is playing a key part in driving up standards. Pupils' views were sought when devising it and they therefore engage fully with it. Through the greater use of ICT, imaginative tasks, the very extensive range of visitors into school and visits to other places, learning is made relevant, meaningful and stimulating.

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Pupils as young as Year 2 have a residential visit to broaden their experience. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well through discrete lessons, a programme of core studies and through links with other subjects. Giving pupils more opportunities to learn by trying things out for themselves was an area for improvement at the last inspection, and the revised curriculum is contributing to this very successfully: pupils pose questions and come up with strategies to find out the answers. A very wide range of clubs caters for and develops pupils' broader interests and talents, carefully timed so as to avoid clashes with their other commitments such as religious education lessons in the community after school.

Extremely detailed attention is paid to understanding different pupils' needs and to taking the steps necessary for them to feel secure enough to be able to learn effectively. This includes strong efforts to involve their families. There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils which provides for high quality care and support for all. For pupils with additional personal, language or learning needs a wide range of specialist staff and close liaison with external agencies provide the extra help they need to succeed in school. Steps to improve attendance are extensive and include restructuring the term so as to avoid religious holidays, as well as action targeted at individual families. These have been effective and very few pupils indeed are now persistently absent. Pupils joining the school at other than the usual times receive very sensitive and responsive support to help them settle in. The breakfast club provides a welcoming and healthy start to the day for those who attend.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a very clear understanding of how children learn and the nature of the barriers they face in doing so, and this informs the strategies adopted to promote improvement, with notable success. The impact of actions taken is closely checked, and the tracking and analysis of the progress made by all groups of pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 to ensure equality of opportunity is very thorough. Some other leaders make a valuable contribution to these processes, but others, especially some who are new to their responsibilities, have yet to be fully effective. In particular, not all have yet undertaken rigorous monitoring and evaluation and so, although key strengths and weaknesses are well understood, some of the school's judgements about itself are on the generous side. Nevertheless, there is a shared and concerted determination to improve the school which is being acted on to good effect. This is also true of the governing body, which is knowledgeable about the school and proactive in taking steps to develop it and in seeking parents' and carers' views about it. The school's responsibility to keep pupils safe is taken

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seriously, and the way in which it promotes their emotional safety and well-being is a strong feature of its work. There is recognition that some administrative aspects of arrangements need to be strengthened. The lengths to which the school goes to engage with parents and carers and the partnership with external organisations to meet pupils' needs are outstanding. An exceptionally wide range of activities, communications with and ways of seeking parents and carers views exist. Also outstanding is the promotion of community cohesion locally and beyond and the active tackling of discrimination. There are high aspirations for every pupil in terms of their academic and personal success.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, from starting points that are generally well below expectations. While by the time they leave they do not usually reach age related expectations, with the exception of in 2010 when that group of children did so, they are nevertheless closer to them. They make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because there is a friendly and supportive environment with strong attention paid to meeting their personal needs and to ensuring that they settle in quickly and feel secure. This is helped by the positive relationships and partnerships with parents and carers. In the encouraging and supportive climate children develop good social skills, behave well and they become increasingly confident and independent. A good range of activities, often linked through themes such as 'growth and change', captures their interest and helps them learn well. The bilingual staff help children new to speaking English to develop their communication and language skills well. The inconsistencies in practice evident elsewhere in the school, however, are also present in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Some teaching is focused well on meeting children's general and specific needs but some is less effective, with questioning not drawing out and extending children's learning and planning not precisely

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targeted to their individual needs. Limitations of the building mean that children do not have ready access to outdoor provision and the arrangements made to compensate for this do not do so fully. Leadership and some management processes such as arrangements for tracking pupils' progress are in a period of transition. While they are still ensuring good outcomes overall, they are not yet promoting consistency of provision.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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 very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressing their views of the school are positive about it. In particular, they say that the school keeps children safe and helps them to have a healthy lifestyle, that pupils are well taught and enjoy school. Inspection evidence supports these views and the other positive views expressed. There are some areas where a few parents and carers expressed negative views, especially in relation to the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and the progress their children are making. These were investigated. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' behaviour is good, the school's arrangements for promoting positive behaviour are effective and that pupils make good progress overall. The school holds the Leading Partnership with Parents Award in recognition of its work with parents and carers and it continues to place considerable emphasis on engaging with them further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Firs Hill Community 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 133 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 493 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	45	67	50	5	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	48	65	49	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	60	45	67	50	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	40	63	47	15	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	62	47	66	50	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	44	65	49	8	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	50	60	45	3	2	1	1
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)	53	40	56	42	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	32	72	54	10	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	34	68	51	12	9	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	30	69	52	10	8	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	46	35	76	57	7	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	39	69	52	11	8	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.



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firs Hill Community Primary School, Sheffield, S3 9AN

Thank you for being so very friendly when my colleagues and I inspected your school, and for showing us your work. We enjoyed talking with you very much.

I am pleased to be able to tell you that you go to a good school. Adults care about every one of you and want you to be happy and successful in your learning. They look after you very well and so you feel secure in school. You all get on with each other very well and think that you are 'all the same'. Your behaviour is good and you make an excellent contribution to your school through the many responsibilities you take on so well. Staff are making sure that they provide a lot of interesting activities for you as well, for example by arranging visits out to make things even more exciting. This helps you to learn better because you find these activities fun. You are also well taught and you work hard. You are making good progress and by the time you leave school you are reaching similar standards to those reached across the country. The way the school works with your parents and carers, other organisations and the community generally on your behalf is outstanding.

Your headteacher and other staff are working hard and successfully to improve the school for you. There are some things we have asked them to do to make it even better. We would like them to help you reach even higher standards by making sure that all lessons are as good as the best ones and by giving you all equally detailed information about how to make your work even better and to reach your targets. We have also asked that all of your school's leaders do all the things they can to take the very best steps to improve the school further.

You can help by continuing to work hard and being so positive. I send you and your teachers very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan McKenna

Lead inspector

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