

Four Oaks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131920
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	360337
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Shilcof
Headteacher	Heather Sutton
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
School address	Edge Hill Road Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield B74 4PA
Telephone number	0121 6754040
Fax number	0121 6751084
Email address	enquiry@fouroaksprimary.bham.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who visited 18 lessons or parts of lessons. The inspectors observed 14 teachers and held discussions with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 141 responses to parents and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- The extent to which the school has improved marking and the setting of challenging targets for individual pupils since the last inspection.
- How accurately pupils' progress is measured throughout the school.
- The impact of the engagement of parents and carers on pupils' learning.
- How successfully leaders ensure consistency of teaching and learning between classes.

Information about the school

Four Oaks is much larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The onsite nursery, playgroup, and before- and after-school provision is managed privately and will be inspected separately. The school has gained the Activemark and is also an accredited Healthy School.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Four Oaks is an outstanding school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is the driving factor behind the school's success. Ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other leaders, she has overseen a variety of initiatives that have resulted in exceptional improvement since the last inspection. Most aspects of leadership and management are now outstanding, progress has accelerated, attainment has risen and teaching and learning have improved. The monitoring and evaluation of school performance are excellent and provide a very clear picture of strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement are highly focused and easily measurable in terms of how successful they are proving. The governing body is supportive of the school and plays an important role in shaping its direction. The track record of leaders since the last inspection shows there is exceptional capacity to take the school forward.

Pupils make outstanding progress throughout the school. This stems from a combination of factors, including consistently good or better teaching, a vibrant curriculum, excellent engagement with parents and carers, exceptional partnership activity and outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils. As a result, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is high. This represents outstanding achievement from their skill levels on entering school, which are broadly at the levels expected nationally for their age.

Improvements to marking and the setting of individual targets mean that learning is personalised and pupils are clear about what they need to do to move forward. Teaching has many strengths and there are examples of outstanding practice. Nevertheless, at times the introductions to lessons are overlong and this limits the time available for pupils to be actively involved in exploring ideas for themselves. Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to promote pupils' learning.

The school provides an extremely welcoming and friendly setting in which to learn. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and this makes a significant contribution to their successful learning. Their enjoyment of school is shown in the high rate of attendance. All pupils benefit from a highly coherent and relevant curriculum that provides exciting and memorable experiences. As one pupil commented, 'There's never a dull moment really.' Parents and carers are particularly pleased with the way their children are cared for in school. They typically commented that, 'The school has a family feel to it with all staff willing to go that extra mile to support and care for children.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:

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- introductions to lessons are concise, in order to maximise time for pupils to explore ideas for themselves
- teaching assistants are always fully involved as partners in promoting pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' concentration is excellent, and rarely drifts in lessons. They learn and practise skills exceptionally well and have developed perseverance when faced with challenging activities in a range of subjects. They read fluently and expressively. Their writing is accurately constructed and imaginative. This was evident in the descriptive writing of pupils in a Year 6 lesson about the properties and features of 'the perfect bag'.

Pupils have well-developed mathematical mental recall and calculation skills, and use these effectively to solve real-life number problems in a variety of contexts. They use information and communication technology (ICT) adeptly to support work in other subjects, such as by using the internet to research information. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same outstanding progress as other pupils because their individual needs are identified early and extra support provided to ensure they are fully met. There is no significant difference in the achievement or the quality of learning between different groups.

Pupils are extremely polite and considerate, and show respect for other people's feelings and values. They enthusiastically take on responsibilities, such as being a school councillor, house captain, lunchtime helper or play leader. In so doing, they make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. They also make a significant contribution to the wider community. This is exemplified in a project they undertook to install dog bins in the local area to help clean up pavements. This has resulted in a marked improvement in the cleanliness of paths and pavements.

Pupils' adoption of a healthy lifestyle and their knowledge of the important factors that affect their health and well-being are excellent. They have a comprehensive understanding of the beliefs and traditions of cultures different to their own. This is enhanced by opportunities to work alongside pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds, as part of the collaboration with schools in the local cluster. Pupils have a thorough understanding of what might be an unsafe situation and say they feel safe in school at all times. Pupils' high attainment and attendance, and the way they work so well as a member of a team, mean that they are prepared in an outstanding way for their future lives.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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 are aware of pupils' prior learning and ensure that activities build on it effectively. They manage classrooms well, so that little time is lost and pupils stay engaged in their tasks. Teachers clearly explain to pupils what they are to learn in lessons and how to achieve success. Paired and group discussions are used effectively to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Marking and discussion between staff and pupils ensure that pupils understand, in detail, how to improve their work. This shows improvement since the last inspection. Occasionally, not enough time is allocated in lessons for pupils to actively explore ideas for themselves. Outstanding relationships ensure that classrooms are very friendly and calm places in which to learn. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well to support pupils' learning, particularly for those with additional learning needs, but sometimes mark time during whole-class sessions.

The curriculum is tailored to meet the changing needs of individuals and groups. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well attended and include sports, art, music and dance clubs. Visits to places of educational interest, including the Black Country Museum, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. Planning builds methodically on previous work and there are strong links between subjects. Involvement in a wide range of partnerships effectively enhances pupils' learning and development, particularly in ICT, sport and the arts. The curriculum places strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to make informed choices to

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adopt healthy lifestyles. This has been recognised by the school gaining the Activemark and achieving Healthy School status.

Staff give outstanding attention to all aspects of care, guidance and support. All know the procedures to follow if they have concerns regarding the well-being of a pupil. Excellent links with a variety of outside agencies ensure extra assistance is available for individual pupils, if required, including those who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances. This extra support fosters their learning and development successfully. Pupils who have medical needs are looked after effectively to ensure their well-being. Transition arrangements are smooth throughout the school, with each class having excellent induction processes to welcome new pupils.

Leaders have worked determinably to improve attendance and this has proved successful.

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?

Leaders are very successful in inspiring those involved in school life to share a common sense of purpose in meeting ambitious targets for all pupils. Consequently, morale is high amongst all staff. Most members of the governing body are fully involved in evaluating the school and influential in determining its direction. Some governors are relatively new and are developing their skills in areas such as the formal monitoring of aspects of safeguarding. Nevertheless, there is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues amongst all governors and staff, and training for safeguarding is regular and of high quality. Leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching rigorously to ensure it is consistent throughout the school. They are taking highly effective steps to drive up its quality still further, such as through targeting the effective deployment of teaching assistants.

The promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling of discrimination lie at the heart of the school's work. Leaders track the progress of individuals and different groups accurately, so that any required intervention programmes can be put into place quickly. As a result, pupils' outcomes are very positive and any unevenness between different groups is minimal.

The school is highly committed to working in partnership with others, and often takes a leading role in activities such as those that take place through the Four Oaks Cluster of schools. This has enhanced pupils' learning and development in ways the school could not provide on its own, in such areas as sports development and work in the creative arts. Leaders successfully promote community cohesion by encouraging pupils not only to view

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their role as members of the school, but also to consider their role in the local, national and international community. Excellent engagement with parents and carers ensures they are strongly involved in their children's learning and the work of the school. This has a powerful impact on the progress that pupils make.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make exceptional progress because their individual needs are very effectively met. Adults provide activities that are practical, interesting and often based on children's own experiences. As a result, they are engaged in learning and motivated to do their best. Nevertheless, there are times when children spend too much time listening to adults during introductions to sessions rather than being actively involved in their learning. Strong emphasis is placed on encouraging children to make choices for themselves and this successfully promotes their development as independent learners. Children show high levels of curiosity and imagination. This was apparent when they found a worm in the digging area and said, 'We are going to make a home for it so it is safe and happy.'

Children have well-developed communication skills, being able to speak clearly and confidently. These skills are promoted effectively through a variety of role play activities, such as in the area set out as a 'Jungle.' Their reading skills are above the levels expected and they write with enthusiasm and imagination. This was evident when they were writing adventure stories using adjectives to make them interesting to the reader. Children's mathematical understanding is enhanced by adults challenging them to explain their methods for working out problems.

The rich curriculum is extended by opportunities to take part in educational visits, such as to the Severn Valley Steam Railway, and to work with visitors that include members of the emergency services. The outdoor area is used successfully to promote children's

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development across the areas of learning. Outstanding leadership ensures that staff use assessment information exceptionally well to plan activities that meet the needs of individual children. Comprehensive policies and procedures ensure the welfare and safety of children. Effective engagement with parents and carers makes a significant contribution to the progress that children make.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers returning completed questionnaires were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical: 'Four Oaks is a very friendly, family oriented school where staff and pupils are very happy and enthusiastic,' and, 'My child adores this school and relishes all the exciting opportunities on offer.' A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school took account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspection evidence shows that the school makes every effort to respond to suggestions and concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Four Oaks 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 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 418 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	106	75	32	23	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	108	77	30	21	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	77	55	54	38	7	5	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	55	54	38	6	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	91	65	45	32	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	62	48	34	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	91	65	43	30	3	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)	109	77	28	20	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	81	57	50	35	6	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	49	59	42	10	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	84	60	40	28	12	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	106	75	32	23	2	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	74	31	22	4	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



13 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Four Oaks Primary School, Sutton Coldfield, B74 4PA

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that your school is outstanding and that:

- you make outstanding progress and, by the end of Year 6, attain high standards in English and mathematics
- your behaviour is exemplary and you make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and the local community
- you have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and are adopting a healthy lifestyle in an outstanding manner
- the exciting curriculum is very effectively extended by visits to places such as to the Black Country Museum and the Severn Valley Steam Railway
- staff make sure you are very safe in school and on visits
- staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- provide more time for you to explore ideas for yourselves, and make sure teaching assistants are always fully involved in promoting your learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector

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