

Fender Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105039
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377168
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	G Curry
Headteacher	Louise Seargeant
Date of previous school inspection	07 September 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 10 teachers in 16 lessons and held meetings with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, staff and a representative of the local authority. They spoke to parents and carers informally in the playground. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, all documentation regarding the safeguarding of pupils, assessments and tracking of pupils' progress, the analysis of progress of different groups of pupils, the school development plan and reports from the School Improvement Partner. They scrutinised 77 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

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 progress of boys is helping to close the gap with that of girls.
- The extent to which the curriculum is helping to improve writing.
- The extent to which assessment information is used to challenge the more-able pupils.
- The extent to which pupils' behaviour supports learning.
- The effectiveness of managers in identifying and addressing areas of weakness to improve attainment and progress.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.

Information about the school

Most of the pupils in this smaller than average-sized primary school are from a White British background. Almost two thirds of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. More than half of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are two Education Inclusion Bases, one for each Key Stage, admitting pupils from all areas of the Wirral. The headteacher has been in post for a year. The temporary post of assistant headteacher was made permanent at the start of this term.

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

This is a satisfactory school. Amongst its strengths are the care, guidance and support it provides, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the effective partnerships with parents, carers and others. The quality of provision in the two education inclusion bases is good and there is a number of outstanding features. For example, the curriculum provided for these pupils is very well-matched to their individual needs as well as to engage and sustain interest. Good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps them to make a good start in school.

Pupils make satisfactory progress from a low starting point. Attainment has been low for several years. However, school assessment data, confirmed by inspection evidence, confirms that for pupils just entering Year 6, there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils working at the level expected for their age. Similarly, the attainment of pupils in other year groups and in particular Year 4, is improving rapidly and is now much closer to being average. The attainment of girls has been better than that for boys for some time. However, strategies to raise boys' attainment are helping to narrow the gap quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good level of support they receive. More-able pupils have achieved less well because they spend too much time in many lessons on work that is not challenging enough. Teachers mark books regularly but there is not a consistent approach to indicate to pupils precisely what they need to do to improve their work.

Over the past year, concerted actions by all staff have been successful in improving behaviour and this has made a significant impact on the learning environment which in turn is bringing about a rapid improvement in attainment. Senior staff welcome the opportunities provided by the new headteacher to be involved more closely in monitoring the work of the school. New assessment systems are helping subject leaders to track pupils' progress in English and mathematics. However, subject leaders are not involved sufficiently in helping teachers to identify and address the needs of individual pupils who are not making enough progress.

Although attendance remains low, there are clear signs of improvement. The school has introduced many strategies to improve attendance, and these have been successful in reducing the number of persistent offenders.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate in most respects and provides a good platform for taking the school forward. Actions to improve behaviour, attainment and reduce persistent absence have been successful and the more creative curriculum is providing a greater variety of opportunities for improving pupils' writing. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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?

- Increase the number of pupils in Year 6 who attain Level 4 and Level 5 in English and mathematics by July 2012 by:
 - providing greater challenge for more-able pupils across the school
 - introducing a consistent approach to marking so that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work
 - developing the role of subject leaders in helping teachers to identify and address any underachievement at an early stage.
- Explore further ways to work with families to improve attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils say they enjoy school because they like meeting friends and joining in all the school activities. Their achievement is satisfactory. Learning is most effective when lessons are sufficiently practical to help pupils to understand new ideas. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 2 when pupils used cubes and towers to gain an understanding of tens and units. Learning is less effective when pupils spend too long listening as a class before getting on with more independent tasks. The very large majority of pupils behave well and this makes a good contribution to their learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress although attainment at the end of Year 6 had been low for several years. However, there has been rapid improvement for pupils currently in Year 6 and other year groups, with a much greater proportion working at the nationally-expected levels. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities makes good progress and achieve well because of the good level of support they receive. Pupils in the inclusion bases make good progress because of consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching which is very well suited to their needs.

Pupils say they feel safe because there are always adults around to listen and to help, 'immediately!' Pupils are developing an understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and many pupils join in the many sporting activities provided by the school. They make a good contribution to the community through their responsibilities in school and by activities in the local community. Although attendance is low, the tireless effort of the school to work with pupils and their families is significantly reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities

develops good attitudes to learning. Pupils are able to work co-operatively with each other which contributes to their satisfactory preparation for the future. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are gaining a good understanding of different faiths and cultures.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall, although several examples of good teaching were observed during the inspection. Teachers apply the school's clear behaviour strategies consistently so pupils behave well. Teaching is most effective when pupils are actively engaged and they respond well to clear time limits to keep them on task. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 4 when pupils were eager to beat the clock to solve problems. In some lessons however, the pace is too slow to sustain pupils' interest. There is insufficient challenge for more-able pupils who have to complete relatively simple tasks before being given work more suited to their needs. The skills of learning assistants are well-deployed and they make a good contribution to the learning of those pupils who need extra help. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always give sufficient guidance to help pupils to improve.

The curriculum is good. Over the last term the school has introduced a more creative curriculum, which is having a positive impact on the quality of writing. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education, and this makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. An extensive range of effective strategies support the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The curriculum in the inclusion bases is outstanding and is tailor-made to suit the needs of individuals. There is a good range of activities after school to enhance learning.

The school provides a warm and welcoming environment where pupils feel safe. Parents, carers and pupils agree that the school provides exceptional support and

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

guidance for the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to help them to achieve well. There are good links with other professionals to access specialist support, where needed. Procedures for welcoming children to school and for smoothing the transition to the high school are good. Extensive efforts by the school to reach out to parents and carers are helping to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has extended the role of senior leaders in the management of the school and there is a shared ambition of leaders and staff to move the school forward. Subject leaders monitor provision in their subjects and identify areas for improvement. The headteacher is using information from new tracking systems to address underachievement with some success. However, the involvement of subject leaders in this process is at an early stage. Strategies to raise achievement of boys are helping to close the gap with that of girls by the end of Key Stage 2. The sharp focus on improving behaviour over the past year has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of exclusions and behaviour is now good.

The governing body is fully supportive of the headteacher’s drive to improve behaviour and raise attainment. Governors are well aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils and staff. The school has good policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of pupils, and staff are suitably trained.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and all it provides. They say that the headteacher and staff are very approachable should they have a problem and attendance at parents’ events is good. They have been very supportive of the school’s priority in improving behaviour.

The school has good links with a wide range of partners to support its work, including the adjacent Children’s Centre and the high school. The school accesses a wide range of advice and expertise through the local authority to improve teaching and learning. The progress of different groups of pupils is monitored closely to help to ensure good equality of opportunity opportunities for all. Inclusion is good and pupils from the resource bases join the mainstream classes when this suits their needs. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and the achievement gap between boys and girls is closing rapidly.

The school is a cohesive community where staff and pupils treat each other with courtesy and respect. There are good links with the local community, though the school has identified the need to extend links further afield.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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	2
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 enter the school with a range of skills that overall are low in comparison to what is typical for their age, particularly language and social skills. They make good progress but nevertheless attainment is below what is usual for their age by the time they enter Year 1. There is good interaction between adults and children throughout all activities to help children to develop their speaking skills. Children respond well to the consistent rules and routines which help them to learn. In only their first week they moved quickly to sit on the carpet when asked and enjoyed saying their name as they passed the puppet round the circle. Through the year they learn the importance of hygiene as the Life Caravan visits school. There are good partnerships with parents and carers to support children's learning, for example parents and children share book time in school together and parents enjoy noting things that children have achieved at home to put on the 'Wow Wall'. There are good procedures for assessing children's progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage and receive good support to help them to achieve well. However, few exceed the levels which are typical for their age.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Unavoidable changes in staffing over the past year have been managed effectively. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and staff are suitably trained.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents returned the Ofsted questionnaire, which is about average. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Inspection evidence supports their view that the school keeps their children safe and deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fender 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	60	30	39	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	65	25	32	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	53	31	40	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	53	30	39	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	60	30	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	56	33	43	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	51	36	47	2	3	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)	39	51	33	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	53	30	39	4	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	47	36	47	1	1	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	43	37	48	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	55	30	39	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	56	34	44	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



14 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fender Primary School, Wirral, CH49 8HB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You are polite, friendly and well-behaved. Well done!

We think your school is satisfactory, which means there are many good things about the school and some things which could be improved. We agree with you and your parents and carers that the school takes good care of you all and there is always an adult around to give you extra help when you need it. You told us how much you enjoy school, particularly meeting friends and joining in all the sporting activities. I spent a lovely time in the Reception class. The new children really liked playing in the outdoor area and seemed to be settling in very quickly. The children in the bases get through a lot of activities during the day and 'LOT' time seemed very exciting.

We have suggested two ways for improving your school.

- Increase the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who reach the higher levels in English and mathematics at the end of the year.
- Explore further ways to work with families to improve attendance.

You can help by coming to school every day and by continuing to behave so well.

I hope the older pupils enjoyed their residential trip and that you all have a successful year in school.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring
Lead Inspector

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