

Elms Farm Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103381
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	395613
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Clive Kempton 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	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Robinson
Headteacher	Elizabeth Gallagher
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector

Conny Curuana

Additional Inspector

Lynne Bradbury

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eleven of the 13 teachers were jointly observed by an inspector with a member of the senior management team, and 11 lessons were observed. Two members of staff were absent. Five and a half hours were spent in lessons. Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers, outside professionals associated with the school, a local authority adviser (now deputy headteacher designate), and nine groups of pupils. Inspectors heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. They observed the school's work, including the after-school club run by the governing body, and the behaviour of pupils at lunchtime both outdoors and indoors during wet days. They looked at the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation of its own effectiveness, and other documentation provided by the school. Inspectors also analysed the 72 parent and carer questionnaires returned, as well as those from staff and pupils, and followed up the key concerns identified.

Information about the school

Elms Farm is a larger than average-sized primary school that serves an area that reflects considerable socio-economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, although it varies between classes. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased steadily over the last five years and now represents 25% of the school population. Consequently, just over one in ten pupils now has a first language which is not English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average, as is the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual starting points is above average. The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs run by the governing body.

The school's 2011 national test results did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- Elms Farm is a satisfactory school. A warm welcome by the office staff greets all visitors when they arrive. Pupils are happy and relationships between adults and pupils are good. It is not yet a good school because the quality of teaching is too variable which limits pupils' achievement. Progress in Key Stage 2 has slowed down since the last inspection. In the 2011 national tests, standards were particularly low at the end of Year 6 in reading, English and mathematics, when they fell to slightly below national averages. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and through Key Stage 1 is good. It is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2 although it varies between subjects, classes, groups of pupils and from one year to the next. Throughout the school, pupils make more consistent progress in reading because of the support they are given at home and at school through various tailor-made interventions.
- Teaching is satisfactory because, despite some good teaching, inconsistencies in practices such as the use of assessment of pupils' work and skills to inform planning limits progress in some classes.
- Behaviour is good in lessons when pupils are engaged and interested by effective teaching. Their attitudes to learning decline when teaching is less effective. Behaviour and safety are more variable in less formal situations, and there have been too many exclusions and reported incidents of harassment.
- Senior staffing has been through a turbulent time since the last inspection and is in the process of transition to a new management structure. This has slowed the pace of improvement and led to a drop in standards in teaching and learning. Improvement planning has lacked clarity in providing clear, measurable targets to support governors in holding the school to account for its

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performance. Nevertheless, there have been some recent improvements in provision, and current data indicate that the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school is improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by ensuring that all pupils make expected progress in all year groups.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that 80% is good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan lessons with clear and measurable learning objectives that are shared with pupils and regularly reviewed during and at the end of lessons, so that teachers can check what pupils have learned
 - ensuring that all staff can accurately assess pupils' skills and achievements and plan for their next steps in learning.
- Devise a school improvement plan focused on a few key priorities to raise standards that contains regular termly milestones and measurable success criteria so that all leaders and managers can be held to account by governors.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make good progress from their low starting points when they enter the nursery. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills are broadly in line with those expected for their age, except in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils sustain this progress, largely due to the effective range of individual interventions for those who are falling behind.

At Key Stage 2, pupils' rate of progress has slowed down over the last few years. Ten percent of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire said that their children could make better progress. This slower progress is due in part to variability in the quality of teaching, and in part to the extent of new arrivals in the school. The 2011 Year 6 national test results were particularly low, especially in writing. These pupils were the first year group not to reach the government minimum expectations for attainment and progress since the last inspection, but no particular pattern of underachievement in subjects, classes or groups of pupils is evident over the years.

Throughout the school, pupils make more consistent progress in reading due to the support that individuals receive from home and from school. Attainment in reading is broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2. The weakest readers in both Year 2 and Year 6 all manage to read with some fluency, although often without expression. They sound out the letters of words that are not

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immediately recognised and try hard. Their reading ability is often better than their understanding of the text, although a recent whole-school focus on guided reading is improving this issue. Some of the older pupils who struggle with reading are not provided with enough support to choose a book that might interest or inspire them to read more. As one boy reported, he 'just picks one off the shelf with an interesting cover'. The more-able readers clearly enjoy reading and read for pleasure at home, often selecting books by a wide range of authors.

Observations of lessons showed that most pupils enjoy learning and make better progress when they are given the opportunity to work independently or in groups to research and find out things for themselves. In English, mathematics and science, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, new arrivals and those in receipt of free school meals, are well supported by the focused support of the inclusion manager, and often make better progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their peers. Observations and school data indicate that the current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach or possibly exceed the government's floor standards, and that the pace of progress is accelerating for a greater number of pupils across the school.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. A large proportion of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that their child was well-taught. Inspection findings indicate that there is some good practice, especially in Key Stage 2. Overall, just over half of the teaching observed was judged to be good. However, weaker teaching was observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' disinterest in their lessons, often due to less effective teaching, is not sufficiently picked up or challenged by some teachers. Not all staff manage the behaviour of pupils who are not usually in their form groups sufficiently well. The use of assessment to inform the next steps in pupils' learning is patchy. Where assessment is used well, all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make better progress. Despite training on this, not all teachers use this practice which limits learning in some classes.

In the best lessons observed, for example in one mixed Year 3/4 lesson on the Greeks, pupils were excited about their learning. They researched the topic using laptops and resource books and worked collaboratively with a real sense of purpose. This is an example of how the best teaching uses the school's broad curriculum to underpin learning and develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. In the less successful lessons, the pace of learning was too slow. Opportunities to challenge and question pupils were often missed, which meant that pupils did not learn enough. At times, teachers talk too much and pupils became disinterested in the activities which are often mundane and unexciting.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Nearly one fifth of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire

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felt that behaviour was not consistently good. Inspection findings agree with this view and judge behaviour and safety to be satisfactory. Behaviour is usually good in lessons due to the generally consistent use of the behaviour management system. Where more effective teaching engages pupils, they are naturally well-behaved and eager to take part and succeed. They pay attention and are keen to respond to the teacher's questions. When pupils find the work interesting and challenging, they are totally captivated by the task and are unaware of time passing. However, if the teaching is not interesting enough, or pupils are unclear about what they are learning, or the teacher talks too much, pupils lose interest and their learning slows.

Behaviour and safety out of class is more variable. There are too many reported incidents, generally involving boys during lunch breaks. Observations show that pupils can behave very well in break times, for example in classroom-based activities or at 'film club' on rainy days. Some older pupils take on leadership roles as play leaders, prefects, librarians and peer tutors. These opportunities significantly develop their maturity, confidence and self-esteem. Nevertheless, there have also been too many fixed-term and permanent exclusions over recent years, and too many entries in the school's behaviour and racist logs. Twenty percent of parents and pupils feel that the school does not deal effectively with bullying. Inspectors asked a range of pupils for their views on bullying. Some agree that there has been some falling out resulting in name calling within friendship groups, especially between girls, but that the school deals with this appropriately by bringing pupils' parents and carers together to discuss and resolve issues.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance and all poor attendance and punctuality are now rigorously challenged. This has considerably improved attendance, although it is still below average. The biggest issue remaining is condoned absence by some families.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has ambition to drive the school forward but the pace of improvement has been hampered by the lack of stability in the senior leadership team. Some leaders have relinquished their management roles to focus more on teaching, and temporary management roles have been allocated to other staff until permanent appointments are made. The governing body is very supportive and has ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. However, it has not sufficiently held the school to account for the underachievement of some year groups. School development planning does not set clear enough, quantifiable, targets or milestones to help governors challenge the school when targets are missed.

Nevertheless, there has been some improvement, for example, in accelerating the progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 by implementing good intervention strategies. This indicates that the school has the capacity to improve, even under difficult circumstances.

The curriculum is satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the main

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school. Pupils are sometimes grouped out of their usual classes by ability or for other reasons which does not always have a positive effect on behaviour. The inclusion manager has worked well to coach and support individual members of staff to help them improve their performance or classroom behaviour management. Information and communication technology is used effectively in some lessons but its use for teaching and learning is generally under-developed.

The school's leaders place great importance on the inclusion of all pupils and on closing the gap between their attainment and national averages. They are keen that more pupils have better life chances and are equipped with the skills they need when they transfer to secondary school. This drive to promote equality and tackle discrimination has been particularly successful for lower-attaining and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, more recently, it has been the middle and higher ability pupils who have underachieved and on whom the school is now focusing.

Parents are very supportive of the school. One said, 'the school is very approachable and makes every effort to get to know you.' Outside professionals provide good support to pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The after-school club attracts only small numbers of pupils but provides a valued resource for working parents and carers. The limited number of pupils who attend are well looked after, but some of the older pupils do not have the opportunity to play with someone of their own age.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elms Farm Community Primary School, Birmingham, B33 0PJ.

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we visited your school earlier this term. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like me to tell you the outcome of the inspection and what you could all do to help the school become even better.

At the moment, your school is satisfactory, but it could be a lot better because some aspects of your school are good but some are not. You behave well in the classroom and are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Some of you need to improve your behaviour in the playground and consider other people's feelings. You make visitors to the school feel very welcome, and are good ambassadors for Elms Farm. Your teachers work hard for you and mostly prepare interesting lessons. Those of you who need extra help get good support from a range of adults. You are all good at reading. Don't forget to try to read more at home and get adults to help you choose appropriate books. You have got a good headteacher, who is supported by her senior staff in trying to improve the school.

There are aspects of the school that need to get better. I have asked the headteacher and senior staff to sort these things out by making sure that:

- you are helped to make quicker progress in English and mathematics.
- teachers explain what you are going to learn in each lesson and check how well you have done - you should all be able to explain what you have learned in each lesson
- the plans the senior staff write include more challenging targets to improve your test results.

I wish you all the best for the future. Don't forget, you need to be at school on time every day to make the most of the opportunities it provides for you.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector

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