

Inspection of Firs Primary School

Dreghorn Road, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, West Midlands B36 8LL

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher has raised expectations for all pupils and staff since arriving in September 2022. Staff now have high ambitions for every pupil, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have not acted effectively enough to support pupils' achievements in the past. New leaders and the trust have introduced many strategies to stem the decline of standards at the school. These are effective and are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

Pupils at this school are a delight. They are welcoming, friendly and want to learn. They enjoy coming to school and do their best in lessons. New leaders have quickly established warm and respectful relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils behave well, and the school is calm and orderly. They are confident that their teachers will deal with any issues quickly and effectively.

Leaders have established a strong provision to enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of activities that develop their personalities and further their interests. The activities include trips, visits, external visitors, competitions and assemblies. Pupils value the many opportunities that they otherwise might not have.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The new headteacher has brought about the required urgency and determination to halt the decline in standards since the previous inspection. Leaders have, in a short space of time, made some marked changes that are beginning to improve the school. The newly introduced curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. It now provides pupils with learning opportunities in a wide range of subjects.

The new curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. It clearly identifies what pupils should learn and in what order. However, pupils have many gaps in their learning as a result of previous weak teaching and poor curriculum design. This is especially the case for older pupils. Leaders have identified this, and work is underway to address these gaps.

The curriculum in some subjects does not yet identify well enough what teachers should teach and pupils should learn. As a result, learning is not yet well sequenced. Subject leaders do not always have the skills and expertise to do this effectively.

Pupils usually receive work that is matched to their needs and abilities. This includes pupils with SEND. Teachers' use of assessment is generally working well to check on what pupils can do. However, this is not yet consistent. At times, teachers do not know what gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills persist. Consequently, they are

unable to adapt their teaching to address these gaps. As a result, for some pupils, these gaps in learning are not filled quickly enough.

Teachers, on the whole, support the delivery of the new curriculum. They have good subject knowledge. However, some support staff do not have the same expertise and are not fully able to support the delivery of the new curriculum.

Reading is now a priority. Teaching of the new phonics scheme helps pupils to increase their reading fluency. This is generally effective, and most pupils are beginning to read at an age appropriate for them. Readers with the lowest ability are very well supported. Leaders swiftly identify pupils and put effective interventions in place to help them catch up. Pupils enjoy their daily reading sessions and story time.

In the past, support for pupils with SEND was inconsistent. New leaders have introduced effective systems to ensure that any pupil who may need extra help is identified and supported. Leaders share clear information with staff, especially around how pupils should best be supported in lessons. This work has very recently started and will need some time to be completed fully.

Children in the early years settle in quickly. Staff work hard to get to know children and ensure that they become used to the daily routines. The curriculum in the early years is new and well structured to ensure that children get off to a strong start. Children begin learning about letters and numbers straight away. They enjoy learning and playtime in the outside spaces. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

Senior leaders have introduced many new strategies to improve the school. However, leaders do not yet routinely check if all strategies work well and identify any that do not. Equally, they do not analyse the information they collect about, for example, behaviour effectively enough. As a result, leaders are not able to spot any patterns or trends easily.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are very well trained and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. They know their pupils well and use this information to ensure they are safe. Staff report any concerns to the safeguarding team.

The safeguarding team works well to ensure that pupils and families receive the help and support they need. Leaders work swiftly and effectively to ensure that pupils are kept safe, working with outside agencies when needed. Leaders make appropriate checks on anyone they employ and keep accurate records. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders do not have the knowledge or expertise to design and/or to monitor the effectiveness of their subject effectively. As a result, the curriculum in some subjects is not sufficiently well designed to ensure that teachers receive the information they need to teach well. Leaders should make sure that all subject leaders can fulfil their roles effectively.
- Assessment is used inconsistently. Some teachers are unaware of the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, they are not able to adapt their teaching, and pupils' learning slows. Leaders should ensure that all staff use assessment consistently well to identify what pupils can do and have learned.
- Not all additional staff support pupils consistently well, including pupils with SEND. At times, pupils do not do as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all staff are able to support pupils in lessons effectively.
- Leaders do not always evaluate the effectiveness of strategies they have deployed. Consequently, they are not always able to spot trends or patterns, or readily ascertain which are successful. Leaders should ensure that they evaluate actions and strategies so they know which are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143089
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10268337
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	358
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Parker
Headteacher	Derek Fance
Website	www.firs.academy
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average sized primary school. It is part of the Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust.
- The Headteacher was appointed in September 2022. The majority of the academy trust board and trust executive team have been appointed over the last two years.
- The school has had a large staff turnover, resulting in many supply staff currently working at the school. Numerous staff have been appointed to start in September 2023.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club, which is partly sponsored by an outside company.
- The school does not use any alternative providers for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with trustees, including the vice chair of the board of trustees, the trust's CEO and director of primary education. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders, early career teachers and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, art and design and French. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors visited the early years for each of the deep dives.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at break and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including support staff, about safeguarding arrangements and scrutinised school documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindsay Nash

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