



Firs Farm Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101989
LEA Enfield LEA
Inspection number 276629
Inspection dates 12 July 2006 to 13 July 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Marfleet AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rayleigh Road
School category	Community		Palmers Green
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		London N13 5QP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02088074292
Number on roll	390	Fax number	02088039878
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Sue Fogden
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Ms Francis Warhurst

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	12 July 2006 - 13 July 2006	276629

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children from a variety of backgrounds attend the school: over half are White, but less than 20% are White British. Over half the pupils have a first language other than English. An average number are entitled to free school meals. Mobility rates are high; there are several children from refugee or asylum seeker families. The proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school's judgement of itself as a good school. It provides good value for money. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are also good.

The fact that many pupils speak a language other than English at home contributes to the below average attainment on entry. Pupils make good progress and reach average standards by the age of seven. They continue to progress well throughout the school, and those leaving Year 6 achieve above average standards.

This achievement is the result of a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, together with much good and some outstanding teaching. Excellent assessment and tracking of pupils' progress enable teachers to set challenging targets and plan lessons that help everyone to achieve well, including pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The one area where more development is still needed is in information and communication technology (ICT), which is not used widely enough in all parts of the school.

Effective care, guidance and support contribute to the good personal development of the pupils. They are happy here, and know how to stay safe, fit and healthy. They are prepared well to become future learners, earners and citizens. Attendance levels, however, are a little below average in spite of intense efforts by the school. Too many parents take their children away during term time, and this interrupts their education.

Good leadership and management and, in particular, excellent monitoring of standards are helping the school to move forwards. The improvements since the last inspection indicate a capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Extend the provision for ICT so that all learners benefit from the richer curriculum and better teaching that it has started to produce.
- * Work with the minority of parents whose children are missing too much school in order to reduce absence levels.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils are set challenging targets; they achieve well and reach above average standards.

When they join the school, many pupils have standards that are below average; a large proportion speak a language other than English at home. Good teaching and support ensures that they progress well in the Foundation Stage and can start Year 1 with the skills they need to learn effectively. They continue to progress well, and by the end of Year 2 have reached the national average in the areas that are assessed. Standards in writing are not as high as in the other areas, however.

The good progress continues in Years 3 to 6, and pupils have achieved at least average standards in the last few years. Assessments of Year 6 pupils in 2006 show that standards are now above average overall. Writing is still slightly weaker than other skills, but progress has been made in all areas. This is true of the many pupils here for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make as much progress as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They behave well and work happily together. Most value friendships and are keen to make new friends. They enjoy discussions, practical activities and extra clubs that the school offers because, as one pupil put it, 'They make you be up and about'. Alongside this, pupils understand the value of exercise and a balanced diet.

They are proud of being playground 'buddies', house captains or members of the school council. They feel their views are valued. As a result, there is now more playground equipment and a healthy tuck shop. They accept their roles responsibly, submit job applications and undergo interviews. This, together with their good progress in basic skills, prepares them well for future involvement in the world of work. Pupils appreciate the extra help they receive and talk enthusiastically about the 'Tiger Teams' they join for this support. They know how to keep safe and who to talk to if they have a difficulty.

Attendance is below average. The school has a broad range of strategies in place for dealing with this, but it is mainly due to religious observance and extended visits abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning lead to the good progress that pupils make. Lessons are never less than satisfactory; some are outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and organise lessons well. In outstanding lessons, learners are motivated, as seen in a Year 4 English lesson on syllabic patterns taught through the clapping of verse rhythms, or a Year 5 head-to-head multiplication tables quiz for a 'Lonsdale Belt'. In lessons that are merely satisfactory, there is insufficient attention to the varying needs of pupils.

The needs of all are met either by groupings within the class or, in the case of older pupils, the use of ability groups drawn from different classes to ensure that all receive the maximum possible challenge. Pupils are also helped by small group work outside the main lessons, either in school time or after school. Support staff are used effectively,

particularly in helping children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Specialist staff also support pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

Marking, assessment and the thorough tracking of pupils' progress lead to teachers setting challenging targets. Improving standards are the result.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. A coherent framework from Reception to Year 6, which is reviewed annually, ensures innovation and secure progression in the way pupils learn across all subjects. A good range of Foundation Stage activities prepares children well for Year 1. Effective links between subjects enhance pupils' skills throughout the school. Visits and visitors significantly enrich the curriculum, for example the visits from History Off the Page actors and an overnight residential stay on the 'Golden Hinde'. The opportunity to learn French from Year 4 onwards is an additional benefit to pupils.

Thorough planning is followed up with the sampling of pupils' work to evaluate outcomes. Classroom activities cater for differing needs, particularly in English, mathematics and science, but provision for ICT is uneven across the school. Personal, social and health education lessons contribute effectively to the personal development and well-being of pupils. A wide range of enrichment activities extends and enhances pupils' learning experiences, including the Don Giovanni opera project in Year 4 and the specialist bassoon and recorder lessons in Year 3. Opportunities for games and outdoor activities are numerous.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support. Firs Farm creates a strong sense of community where all pupils belong and feel valued. Cultural diversity is recognised, creating a harmonious atmosphere where pupils thrive and confidence grows. As one parent said, 'This is like a village school.'

The school has high expectations of pupils' attitudes towards each other and to their work. Highly effective systems judge how well pupils do and how they can improve, especially in English, mathematics and science. This means pupils' learning is supported where it is needed, having a positive impact on achievement. The consistent approach to target setting means pupils know what they are working towards.

Support for those with specific needs and learning difficulties is very carefully and continuously evaluated so that they do as well as they can. Parents value the high level of support pupils receive. There are good arrangements for children starting school, which make it a happy experience. The school monitors attendance carefully, and has had a measure of success in discouraging absences, but does not yet have the support of all parents.

Pupils are guided to make healthy choices and develop physical fitness. Rigorous and regular checks are carried out to ensure they remain safe.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Improving standards result from good leadership and management. When the present headteacher and her deputy took up their posts nearly two years ago, this was already a good school, but they have found ways to take it further forward. A strong senior team is backed up by good middle managers whose skills are steadily developing, and all staff contribute to a rigorous process of self-evaluation. The school knows itself well, and parents, who are consulted regularly, are appreciative of the improvements being made.

Excellent monitoring has identified aspects of teaching and learning that can be further improved. The school uses data highly effectively to show where pupils could be making even better progress, and the recent rise in attainment levels can be attributed directly to this.

Governors feel they are now more fully involved. Their wealth of experience and expertise helps them to both challenge and support the school. Finances are well managed. Human resources, particularly the support staff, are deployed very effectively, although the provision for ICT across the school is uneven. One reason given for this is the nature of the accommodation: aging demountables that are harder to equip than the excellent modern buildings have retarded the introduction of new technologies in some parts of the school. Although ICT provision overall has improved since the last inspection, when its quality was called into question, the school rightly seeks more improvement in order to enhance learning and achievement.

In other respects, the school has moved forward significantly, not least in its rising standards, and has amply demonstrated its capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Children

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome at your school and a special thank you to those who talked to us. We really enjoyed looking at your work and watching you in lessons and assemblies. Firs Farm Primary School says it is a good school, and we agree.

Why we think your school is good: :) You make good progress in your work and reach high standards. :) You behave well, and enjoy being at school. :) You have a good headteacher, and she has a strong team to help her. :) You are taught plenty of useful and interesting things. :) The teachers and other staff help you to learn well. :) They support and look after you well, too. :) You know how to stay safe, fit and healthy. :) Your parents are very happy with the school.

What we have asked your school to do now: * Make sure that everyone has use of suitable computer technology, in all the classrooms. * Get across the message that missing school in term time will prevent you from learning as much as you should. We want to wish you well in the future and hope that you will always be as happy as you are at Firs Farm Primary School.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Marfleet

Lead Inspector