



Colmers Farm Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103187
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276866
Inspection dates 23 March 2006 to 24 March 2006
Reporting inspector Bogusia Matusiak-Varley AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Leybrook Road
School category	Community		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		West Midlands B45 9PB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4642153
Number on roll	159	Fax number	0121 4642278
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Claire Cartmell
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Bev Archer

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 7	23 March 2006 - 24 March 2006	276866

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Colmers Farm Infant School is an average-sized school situated in an area of challenging economic circumstances. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average. There is a very small proportion of more able pupils in each year group. Nearly all of the pupils are of White British origin and the remaining proportion are from several minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry to Reception is well below that expected nationally, especially in personal and social development, and communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. There has been a change of staff, including the headteacher, since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This is also the school's view. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Achievement is satisfactory and improving. Lower- and middle-attaining pupils make good progress, but the more able pupils could be doing better, particularly in writing. This is because of some general weaknesses in the teaching of writing that result in them making too many errors in spelling and in sentence construction in particular. A further main reason for the more able pupils not doing as well as they should is that assessment information is not used well enough to match work to their needs or to set them challenging enough targets. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress although, given their low starting points, attainment remains well below average. Provision for these pupils is satisfactory.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Attendance has risen, and is now satisfactory. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The curriculum is good and is well enriched with visits, visitors and clubs. Support, care and guidance of pupils are good. The pastoral care given to pupils is a strength and is a main reason for the pupils' good personal development.

Leadership and management of the school, including governance, are satisfactory. Senior staff have a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve and new initiatives are already having an impact. However, subject leaders are new to their posts and are not yet monitoring standards in their subjects. Their action planning for improvement does not show clearly enough what they are aiming to achieve. The school has recognised the shortcomings in the subject leaders' roles as an area for development. Given the improvements already made and those now being put in place, the school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to set more challenging targets for the more able pupils and ensure that activities in lessons always meet their needs so that they achieve well and reach the highest possible standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching of writing for the more able pupils so that, in particular, they reduce their spelling errors and develop correct sentence construction.
- Develop the roles of the newly appointed subject leaders by involving them in monitoring and evaluating the standards pupils attain and ensuring that they are clear about what they want to achieve in their action planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and there are continuing signs of slow, but steady, improvements in standards and the rate of progress. These improvements are most marked in the increasing attainment of lower- and middle-attaining pupils. These pupils meet the challenging targets set for them. They achieve well and now reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. However, the overall attainment of the current Year 2 is well below average because this group has a much higher than usual proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. In addition, the pupils in each year group who are capable of higher attainment make relatively slower progress than other ability groups. This is because assessment information is not always used well enough to set them well matched activities in lessons or challenging enough targets.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with well below average attainment. These pupils benefit from experiencing a broad range of activities and, consequently, make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also achieve satisfactorily overall. In mathematics, the recent push on developing recording and problem solving skills is already paying dividends and pupils are making faster progress than before. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and attain average standards. New initiatives have not yet proved to be as successful in writing as they have in mathematics, particularly for the more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because teaching is adapted to take account of their individual learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good, with areas of significant strength in how well pupils work with others and take responsibility for their learning. For example, pupils willingly undertake joint activities with a partner and readily correct their work. Behaviour is good. The school's rules of listen, learn, care, share and smile underpin classroom practice. From the reception year onwards, pupils observe these rules and, as a result, they play well with one another and develop good working habits. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to learning. However, sometimes, those pupils who are capable of higher attainment lose interest when tasks set are not sufficiently demanding. The school has worked very hard to raise attendance. These efforts have paid dividends as attendance is now satisfactory.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils relate well to each other and distinguish right from wrong. Pupils marvel at the wonders of nature during their studies outside in the 'forest school'. They develop a love of lifelong learning through their use of good quality resources and access to interesting choices of literary texts in lessons and during assemblies. These experiences also prepare them well for their achievement of economic well-being as adults. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community by raising funds for a range of national charities and as a result of school council

activities. For example, the school council has selected and organised a new range of playground toys. Pupils also participate in local events, such as a recent street party commemorating the end of the Second World War.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school from the reception year to the end of Year 2. There are good features in the good relationships between pupils and adults. These positive relationships create a very comfortable environment for learning. Good elements of teaching in the 'forest school' are enabling pupils to gain first-hand experiences of looking after the environment and developing their speaking and listening skills. The recent teaching of mathematics has improved well as a result of a whole-school focus on developing pupils' thinking and problem solving skills.

In writing, teaching does not do enough to ensure that the more able pupils develop their competence in spelling accurately and in constructing sentences correctly. Pupils capable of higher attainment are not always given enough examples of texts, for example, so that they see and understand what is expected of them.

The school has developed a range of good assessment procedures. These track pupils' progress effectively but, as yet, information from assessment is not used consistently well to challenge potentially higher-attaining pupils and to set tasks that are at the right level for them. Although teaching in the reception year is satisfactory, there are some occasions when children spend too long consolidating what they already know, understand and can do, rather than on new learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and pupils are provided with a range of exciting and stimulating opportunities. For example, many authors, illustrators and artists visit the school and engender a love of reading and creativity in the pupils. The good range of learning experiences provided in a very well resourced library further fuels pupils' love of books and increases their vocabulary. A highly successful arts week provides good opportunities for pupils to extend their creative skills. Well planned learning opportunities in the 'forest school' enable pupils to develop their team building and cooperation skills. A good range of visits, visitors and extracurricular activities, such as gardening, dance and sports clubs, further enrich the day-by-day lessons.

The Reception children enjoy a good range of activities that broaden their experiences and enable them to make sound progress in all areas. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is planned according to national guidelines and fully meets external requirements. However, planned activities do not always take into consideration the needs of the small number of more able pupils in each year group. Good opportunities

are provided for children to use their ICT skills across the curriculum and this contributes significantly to their good rate of progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good, supported by orderly routines and a very strong focus on pupils' emotional well-being. These strengths are illustrated in the creation of very good links with parents and the provision of nurture group for those pupils experiencing difficulties. Parents are delighted with the workshops offered by the school to help them with supporting their children's learning.

Good child protection procedures are in place and all staff have been appropriately trained. Staff are watchful and supervise children vigilantly. The recent introduction of individual targets, which systematically build pupils' learning in small steps, is starting to have an impact on pupils' academic progress, but this approach is at an early stage. The vast majority of pupils know their targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are aware of their targets for improvement and these are regularly shared with parents. However, pupils who are potentially higher attaining are not given targets that stretch them well enough. The school has recognised this as an area for development. The school works well with many outside agencies and the recent attendance initiatives, implemented with the help of a social worker, have been effective in raising attendance levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There is a caring and friendly ethos and clear educational direction. Since the last inspection, the school has had a change of both staff and headteacher. Many new initiatives have been introduced and all members of staff are working hard to improve achievement and raise standards. Significant signs of their success are evident in the increasing rates of progress of most pupils, particularly in mathematics, and rising levels of attendance. These positive factors demonstrate not only the school's satisfactory rate of improvement, but its capacity for making further improvement in the future.

Accurate evaluation of the school's performance by senior staff has identified the most important priorities for improvement. Much work has been done to improve the systems for tracking pupils' progress and, as a result, subject leaders are more aware of how well pupils are doing. However, not all of them are confident in monitoring teaching and learning, or in identifying strengths and areas for development within their subject. Their action planning does not always state clearly enough what they are aiming to achieve.

The school actively seeks the opinions of stakeholders. Governance of the school is satisfactory. The newly appointed governing body fulfils its statutory requirements but, at present, relies too heavily on senior staff members to set the school's educational direction.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	3	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Thank you so very much for the very warm welcome we received when we came to visit you. We think that your classrooms are delightful and you have worked very hard at producing such interesting displays. We especially liked the animals you made in 'Arts Week' which are on display in the entrance hall. We were particularly pleased with:

- Your relationships with your teachers and with one another.
- Your good attitudes, behaviour and improved attendance.
- Your good progress in ICT.
- The way you solve problems and think clearly in mathematics lessons.
- How well you use the 'forest school' to help you learn.
- The learning opportunities.
- How well staff look after you.
- The good resources, which make learning interesting for you.

We have asked your school to:

- Help you get even higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Use information from assessments to further challenge those of you who find learning easy.
- Improve the way in which you are taught how to write.
- Help teachers who have responsibilities for leading subjects to get a better idea of checking how well you are learning.