



Court Farm Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103267
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286613
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Anthony O'Malley HMI

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Tedbury Crescent |
| School category | Community | | Erdington |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 | | Birmingham B23 5NS |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0121 4641038 |
| Number on roll (school) | 115 | Fax number | 0121 4641039 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Steve Buck |
| | | Headteacher | Marie Nolan |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 March 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

Court Farm is smaller than most primary schools. It is situated in a socially and economically deprived part of Birmingham. Most pupils are of White British origin, but the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language has recently increased to over 10%. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is exceptionally high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is much higher than average. Children enter the Reception class with attainment well below the level expected for children of this age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is highly valued by the community it serves. Almost 40% of the parents returned the inspection questionnaires and nearly all of the responses were overwhelmingly positive. They rightly value the school's caring ethos.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter school with standards well below average. By the end of Year 6 standards in English and mathematics are below average. Standards in science have consistently been at the national average. In the last two years, a focus on English has raised standards in that subject, whilst standards in mathematics have dropped. The standards attained by the most able pupils need to be improved in English and mathematics. In 2006 only one pupil reached the highest level in the end-of-Year 6 tests.

Teaching is satisfactory. In lessons where teaching is good the pupils are well motivated and enjoy the challenge of tasks that force them to think hard. When learning is not so well planned, the pupils find the work too easy, or too hard, and a minority begin to misbehave. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties is good. Additional resources are focused on them and the school monitors closely the impact of these interventions. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make steady progress in their understanding and use of the language.

The quality of education for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is satisfactory. The relocation of the classroom into the main school has dealt with issues raised in the previous inspection. Teaching observed during the inspection was good. The provision for learning outside of the classroom now needs to be improved.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, particularly through the school council. They learn about healthy lifestyles but do not always apply their learning. The curriculum is satisfactory. Learning is enriched by visits to a range of local places of interest and by visitors to the school, but the pupils have only a limited knowledge of cultures beyond their neighbourhood.

Care, guidance and support are good. Child protection, staff vetting and health and safety procedures are thoroughly implemented. However, the surface of the playground is in need of repair.

The headteacher provides sound leadership. She has established a school ethos where everyone is committed to helping the pupils achieve well, and rates of progress are improving. As part of this commitment, outstanding partnerships have been established with many external agencies. These partnerships have a very positive impact on the attendance, behaviour and the emotional health of many pupils. The leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but the school development plan needs to be sharper. The plan is not sufficiently explicit about how outcomes will be measured. The school's leaders also need to monitor pupils' learning in class, and their work in books, with greater rigour to secure better progress. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory, and this is demonstrated by the improving standards currently seen in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the overall quality of teaching through improved planning that makes better use of assessment.
- Increase the rate of progress made by the more able pupils in English and mathematics, by ensuring expectations are high enough.
- Improve the outdoor environment to provide a more stimulating, and safer, area to learn and play.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When pupils enter the school their attainment is well below average. Although they make satisfactory progress throughout the school, the standards reached at the end of Reception Class, Year 2 and Year 6 remain below average. Pupils achieve best in science because they do plenty of practical work that helps them to understand the subject. The school has introduced systems for setting targets and tracking progress in English and mathematics. These are accelerating progress in both subjects. Subject leaders are now able to monitor the performance of the more able pupils, a group who underachieved in 2006. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from intensive support and make good progress. Pupils at the early stages of learning English make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. A strong emphasis is given to developing moral and social skills, with good results. Pupils behave well in the playground. As one pupil said, 'We all just get along'. In class, however, some lose concentration when the lessons are not well planned and are disruptive. Pupils are keen to come to school. Attendance has risen dramatically and is now in line with the national average. Pupils know how to stay safe, but they do not always apply what they know about healthy lifestyles. They still bring unhealthy drinks, chocolate and crisps for their lunches. The children's knowledge of other cultures, and their spiritual awareness, are satisfactory. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They are rightly proud of their fundraising. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of being class representatives on the school council, or acting as friends for lonely or upset children. They actively join in community events such as the school's 75th anniversary, carol concerts and the Lord Mayor's charities. The pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good features. Progress in mathematics is improving as pupils now have more opportunities for mental arithmetic work and practical activities. For example, in a mixed Year 1 and 2 class, pupils were able to complete bingo games by rolling three dice to find totals over thirty. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used successfully to interest pupils and to help them understand new work.. Planning is satisfactory, but teachers are not using assessment information sufficiently to ensure that activities meet pupils' needs. More able pupils are not achieving as well as they should because they are often not challenged by the tasks set. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils with learning difficulties, and those who are at an early stage of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics, but sufficient time is also given to other subjects. The high quality of work in design and technology, and the 'Activemark' for physical education, are evidence of the commitment to a broad curriculum. The outstanding link with the Malachai Trust is particularly valued by the mixed Year 4 and Year 5 class, who are keen to talk about their 'Friend Like You' project. Other activities contributing well to learning include the visit by the Life Education Caravan and trips to the theatre, outdoor education centres and the symphony hall. Some resources for history and geography are dated and neither motivating nor helpful. There is not sufficient provision for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe because staff have their well-being at heart and pupils are confident to approach them with any problems. The school, in partnership with the Education Welfare team, has had outstanding success improving attendance. Strong measures are taken where concerns persist, including fines for the worst offenders. Pupils with learning difficulties are given sensitive support. As one pupil said, 'Teachers are really good, and help you when you can't do things'. New tracking and target-setting systems are providing staff with more information about what pupils need to learn next. Most of the older pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Risk assessments are attended to and child protection arrangements are secure. However, the longstanding concerns over the surface of the playground have still to be resolved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a team that is committed to raising standards. An outstanding characteristic of the school is the partnerships that have been made with external agencies. A link with the local authority to raise standards in English and mathematics is further evidence of the leadership team's drive to work with others to raise standards. School self-evaluation gives an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. However, when actions are planned to bring about improvement, the school needs to be clearer about what their impact will be on pupils' performance. The leadership team also needs to ensure that monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and leads to more effective teaching.

Governors are supportive and they know what is working well and what needs to be changed. The recent improvements in achievement indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking with you about your work. You were very friendly and cheerful.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education where you are looked after well.

These are the things I liked most:

- You know your targets in English and mathematics.
- Everybody gets along really well together in the playground.
- I was pleased to see how much attendance has improved.
- You are very good at helping others through fundraising and spending time with them.
- The school council is listening to you and helping to make the school better.

We have asked the teachers and governors to improve some things:

- Make sure that the work you are given is not too easy or too hard.
- Improve the playground to make it a more exciting, and safer, area to learn and play.