

# Ferndale Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103982
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	286827
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Sims

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	397
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Keith Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nigel Edge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Ferndale Avenue Great Barr Birmingham B43 5QF
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 3573326
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 3587110

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 June 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	286827

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ferndale Primary School is much larger than most primary schools. It has a maintained Nursery, which children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and start school with very different levels of skill and ability. Within the school's catchment area, however, there is some significant social deprivation and the overall standard of attainment on entry is well below average. Around a third of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over the last year, the school has admitted 14 refugees, some of whom have never been to school and most of whom understand very little English. At around a third, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school acts as an 'enhanced learning provision' for the local authority and admits a much larger proportion of pupils with severe difficulties and/or disabilities and statements of special educational need than most schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ferndale is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Teaching and learning, the curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management are all good. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and made some helpful comments such as 'we are exceptionally pleased with Ferndale School. The extra-curricular activities programme is second to none. The head and deputy are inspirational leaders. The children have such wonderful, creative opportunity through initiatives focusing on health, art, conservation and sport. The integration of children with special needs is wonderful.'

There is a buzz about this school which derives from inspirational aspects of the headteacher's leadership and the outstanding teamwork, commitment and enthusiasm of all of the staff. The very wide range of activities planned to enrich pupils' confidence and experience is outstanding. Vibrant art projects, opportunities for sport, residential visits and numerous other activities enable pupils to do, as one pupil said, 'more than I could ever have dreamed of'. All of this takes place in a friendly, caring, enthusiastic environment where it really is true that 'every child matters'. The integration of refugees and pupils with a wide range of difficulties and disabilities, some of them severe, is exceptional. Support, help and cooperation from a wide range of organisations, agencies and other partners are harnessed to contribute to the school's efforts to enrich the lives of its pupils. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is excellent. This area of the school is exceptionally well resourced, imaginatively laid out and provides children with a wonderful start to their education.

In the rest of the school, pupils achieve well, progressing from well below average standards when they join to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Their progress in mathematics is outstanding. Progress in developing writing skills, whilst satisfactory, is not as good because teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to write at length or to consolidate their skills through work in other subjects. Whilst teachers are very encouraging in the comments they make when marking pupils' work, they do not give pupils sufficient feedback to let them know how they could improve or what they should be aiming for. This limits the progress of the more able pupils in particular. Nevertheless, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and the future world of work through the wide range of other skills which they acquire and their good inter-personal skills.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, and many have made excellent progress in this area to develop into polite, confident and well-behaved youngsters, who enjoy most aspects of the school and speak with unreserved appreciation of the many staff who help them. They contribute eagerly to the life of the school, some acting as playground buddies or helpers, others as representatives on the school council and the great majority through their enthusiastic participation in the school's many activities. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to lead healthy lifestyles and adopt safe practices, and most try to implement this understanding whilst in school.

Over the last five years, the school has improved in many ways, showing that there is good capacity for further improvement. Much of the school's success has been driven by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, but there is scope for delegating more responsibility to other members of staff. Where this has been done, as in the Foundation Stage and in mathematics, there has been excellent progress. In some other areas, however, staff are lacking in leadership experience and dedicated time to carry out their responsibilities. What is not

lacking is the drive, determination and cooperative spirit to make this really good school into an outstanding one.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop pupils' writing skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and to consolidate their skills through written work across the curriculum.
- Provide pupils with more opportunity to reflect on their learning and clearer feedback when marking their work so that they are more aware of their targets and know what they need to do to improve.
- Delegate more responsibility and provide sufficient time for subject leaders to manage their areas of responsibility and lead new initiatives.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Overall, pupils achieve well. From well below average standards on entry, many children reach the expected goals in most areas of learning by the time they start Year 1. This outstanding progress is not reflected as strongly in the area of communication, language and literacy, where exceptionally low skills on entry improve to well below average by the end of Reception.

Standards are well below average in reading and writing at the end of Year 2, but are better than this in mathematics and other aspects of their work. A lower starting point when they entered Year 1 and some slower progress because of a number of staffing and curricular changes along the way mask the fact that pupils are now making good progress in Years 1 and 2.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have risen since the previous inspection and are now broadly average. Pupils make good progress from Years 3 to 6, and progress in mathematics has been exceptionally good for the last two years. As with other year groups, standards are weakest in writing, though they are improving slowly because of initiatives which the school has implemented over the past two years.

The significant effort which is expended on pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and refugees enables these pupils to make good progress. Whilst they make at least satisfactory progress, the more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, and some could aspire to higher standards.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils have good attitudes to work and are extremely enthusiastic about the many additional activities provided for them. They behave well and get on with each other and with adults, saying, 'We are like one big family'. Of particular merit is the pupils' outstanding acceptance of those who find school life difficult. The school uses a range of methods to ensure pupils attend school and, as a result, attendance is good.

Whilst pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, there are insufficient opportunities to develop pupils' spirituality. Pupils make a positive contribution to school and the wider community. For example, the school council meets regularly and has made decisions about toilet facilities for the school, and pupils participate in events to raise funds for charities such as Water Aid. In the Foundation Stage, children work well independently, but this ability

is not developed as consistently in later years, as opportunities for pupils to show initiative or undertake activities of their own choosing are limited.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers and support staff know the pupils well. They make the lessons interesting and practical and, with good humour and praise, encourage pupils to work hard and be proud of their efforts. The teachers make the most of the school's good resources to give pupils a focal point and the opportunity to handle items that make the learning more real. Many teachers are adept at using the interactive whiteboards, and pupils are motivated by their use. Lessons are well planned. The planning is most effective for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The staff empathise particularly well with these pupils and enable them to grow in skills and determination. They also plan activities to suit the more able pupils, but these do not always give the level of challenge necessary for really good progress. Lessons are often lively, with rapid-fire question and answer sessions. However, teachers expect short answers, thereby limiting the opportunity for pupils to expand their speaking skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a dynamic curriculum that is responsive to the interests and needs of its pupils. The staff are eager to expand the pupils' horizons by bringing in visitors with fascinating expertise. They take pupils on many visits to places that give them a real insight into the topics they are studying. Pupils value the residential trips, available from the age of six, with their many adventurous activities. These, and the many after school clubs, build strong partnerships with the outside wider community. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is exciting and adventurous, enabling children to make really good progress.

Good planning for social, health and safety education enables pupils to grow consistently in maturity, and develop a strong awareness of a healthy diet and hazards in the environment. Pupils associate the school clubs with 'building fitness with fun'.

The planning to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy through other subjects does not have a full, coherent framework. This has a particular impact on writing, where the school misses opportunities to consolidate skills taught in English lessons and to increase the range and extent of pupils' writing. The use of information and communication technology, however, has developed significantly in recent years and is having a positive impact on pupils' progress.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

There is an outstanding commitment amongst the staff to ensure the well-being of the pupils, and this is done in a safe, secure and stimulating environment. A good example of this is the work that is undertaken with the nurture groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and refugee children make good progress because they are supported effectively. Partnerships with outside agencies are particularly effective and ensure that this is a truly inclusive school that meets the pastoral needs of its pupils very well. Procedures for ensuring

pupils' safety are effective and the school ensures that good attention is paid to health and safety matters.

The school tracks the progress of each individual pupil and each year group carefully. The academic guidance provided for pupils is, however, less secure. Marking, whilst completed regularly, does not give pupils enough guidance on the next steps to improve their work. Pupils have some targets for improvement, but are not always sure what they are. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to assess their own work or to review and refine completed work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

In many respects, the leadership of the headteacher, exceptionally well supported by the deputy headteacher, is outstanding. It has inspired excellent teamwork amongst the staff, cultivated an excitement for school amongst the pupils, ensured exceptional integration of vulnerable pupils and secured many improvements over the years. He is extremely successful in tapping into sources for additional funding, acquiring resources at bargain prices and managing the large body of staff efficiently and effectively. There is a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the main areas which need to be developed. The quality of teaching and learning and pupils' work is checked regularly. However, the energy and momentum do not allow sufficient time for reflecting on how effective the school's many initiatives have been in raising pupils' achievement. Also, not enough time has been invested in developing the skills of other staff as leaders or giving them sufficient opportunity to evaluate what is happening in their areas of responsibility and to lead new initiatives. The staff are, nevertheless, extremely supportive and work tirelessly to implement new initiatives. The governing body is also very supportive and fulfils its duties well.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

15 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferndale Primary School, Birmingham, B43 5QF

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for your welcome and for talking to us. Many of you told us that you think Ferndale is a good school, and we agree with you. These are our main findings.

- You are making good progress in your work, particularly in mathematics, and leave the school well prepared for the next stage of your education.
- There is a lovely atmosphere within the school, to which you contribute greatly through your good behaviour, friendliness and consideration for others.
- You receive good teaching and support from the staff, who keep you working hard and help you to learn new things each week.
- The school provides a wonderful range of activities, visitors, visits to places of interest and residential trips, which you all greatly enjoy.
- The staff take good care of you, particularly those of you who need extra help with your work or who have only just arrived at the school.
- The governors, headteacher and staff work together very well as a team and have put a lot of effort into making the school as good as it is.

In order to help the school become even better, we have asked the staff to:

- give you more opportunities to develop your writing and to practise the skills you have learnt in your literacy lessons
- give you clearer feedback when marking your work so that you know what you have to improve and what your targets are.

These things should help you to improve the quality of your work and provide more challenge for some of you who are capable of reaching even higher standards. We have also asked the headteacher to let other staff have a go at some of the things he has been doing, like introducing new initiatives, so they can develop as leaders.

You can help make Ferndale into an outstanding school by continuing to enjoy school and trying your hardest in all your work. We wish each one of you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Sims Lead Inspector