

Firfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112516
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	289307
Inspection dates	23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Simpson HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Rhodes
Acting Headteacher	Mrs L Norris
Date of previous school inspection	14–17 January 2002
School address	Sawley Road Breaston Derbyshire DE72 3EF
Telephone number	01332 872216
Fax number	01332 872403

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; teaching and learning; care, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, observation of the school at work, interviews with senior members of staff and pupils, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Firfield is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. All pupils have English as a first language. The percentage of the school's pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average. The previous headteacher retired at Easter and the deputy head is acting headteacher throughout this term. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up post on 1 September 2007.

The school has achieved Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Firfield is a happy and industrious school where a family ethos is successfully promoted. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. There are many strengths, for example the strong spirit of teamwork amongst the adults who work in the school. They effectively build the school into a cohesive community, including regularly exploiting opportunities for pupils of all ages to work productively together. Pupils are mature and inquisitive and enjoy opportunities to show responsibility and autonomy from an early age. One parent captured the views of many in response to the inspection questionnaire: 'The staff are very dedicated, supportive and want all the children to do well and be happy. There is a sense of pride within the school.'

Children join the school with attainment above national expectations. Standards remain above national averages as they progress through the school and pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. The children make a good start in the Foundation Stage as a result of the strong liaison with parents, thorough and regular assessment and the stimulating and well planned learning activities. The pupils' rate of progress increases towards the latter end of their time at Firfield as they become more secure and confident in their essential literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are progressing faster in English as a result of the school's concerted action in this area than they are in mathematics and science. Increasingly they are being set and meeting more challenging targets. However, systems to monitor their progress lack the consistency and rigour necessary for the school to quickly identify and address underachievement.

Firfield is a well cared for school: classrooms and the playground provide a stimulating environment for learning and productive play. Teaching is good overall. It is increasingly matched to pupils' needs and provides appropriate challenge, although this has yet to fully translate into pupils making securely or consistently good progress. Teaching is characterised by providing pupils with plenty of opportunities to demonstrate their understanding, work effectively in groups and take the initiative for their learning. A good Year 6 lesson was well planned to provide pupils with a variety of learning activities, which they completed at pace and with a clear focus on addressing their mathematical misconceptions. Adults were well deployed and made a strong contribution to keeping pupils focused and engaged. The school acknowledges that there is scope for sharper learning objectives in lessons so that the progress of pupils can be more readily measured. Teaching is monitored regularly but the evaluations lack rigour in setting staff appropriate targets for personal improvement.

The curriculum is good. Provision is wide ranging and designed to stimulate pupils' interest and creativity. Coverage includes French, brain awareness, inter-school arts and the promotion of community involvement. Similarly adults give generously of their time to enrich pupils' education through a diverse range of extra-curricular activities, including a choir open to all, sports clubs and additional opportunities to learn a language or acquire skills such as cross-stitching. The school actively and impressively promotes the pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their personal beliefs and, through activities such as art work based on observations of nature, to experience awe and wonder.

The pupils' personal development is good. There are many examples of how well they look after one another, such as the 'friendship stop' on the playground and helping one another with their reading. Given the high standards attained, the strong development of interpersonal skills and activities such as the very successful business enterprise fairs, the development of workplace and other skills that will contribute to future well-being is outstanding. The welfare of pupils is paramount to the school. Care, guidance and support are good with several strengths. The enthusiasm with which staff talk about individual pupils is a notable quality of Firfield. They place a strong emphasis on working closely with the school community and effectively establish relationships based on mutual regard. A parent wrote that, 'Our children love school; they have made super friends and are becoming well rounded and thoughtful young people.' Teaching assistants play a significant role in addressing the needs of pupils. However, academic guidance is not robust enough. A significant number of pupils asked during the inspection were unsure what they needed to do next to improve their work. Individual class teachers regularly record the progress of pupils but this is not sufficiently feeding into targeting the school's support where it is most needed.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher knows the school's strengths and acknowledges where there is scope for improvement. A number of senior leaders are relatively new in post. They have maintained the school's distinctive ethos and retained the confidence of the school community. However, they do not have sufficient ownership of the data which is available in the school to be accountable, and to hold others accountable, for the progress of pupils and to be proactive in addressing or pre-empting underachievement. The school has demonstrated a satisfactory capacity to improve. Its readiness to respond to initiatives and promote very good practice such as the business enterprise fairs demonstrate that the school is far from complacent and is ambitious to be ever better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of pupils so that it is consistently good.
- Establish rigorous and consistent monitoring systems which enable the school to measure progress throughout the school.
- Ensure that lesson observations identify how teaching could be improved.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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	1

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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.



24 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firfield Primary School, Breaston, Derby, DE72 3EF

Thank you for welcoming me into your school. I appreciated how you talked to me in and out of your lessons and shared your opinions about Firfield. I enjoyed the opportunities I had to see you learn and watch how you set your short term targets for the day and the discussions I had with the school council, which showed how ready you were to express your ideas. Your views and the views of your parents and carers have helped me to understand what your school is like.

The adults at your school want you to enjoy your education, value you as individuals, and are ambitious for all of you. As a result of their work and the enthusiastic way you respond to your education, I could see that you were making progress over time and the school is expecting ever higher standards from you. In so many ways you impressed me. Here are some examples: it was very pleasing to see how much some of you were learning as a result of your science investigation in John's Garden; you have made a good contribution to improving your playground; and I appreciated the thoughtful way many of you wanted to talk to me during break time.

We know that you will want your school to become even more successful. You will be pleased to know that my recommendations for what Firfield should do to improve further include that you do even more of the work in your lessons! I know that you like to be challenged by the activities in lessons and readily take responsibility. I also think that the school can more thoroughly check on the progress you're making.

Thank you again for making my inspection enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

David Simpson
HMI