

Fairfield First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116675
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	290588
Inspection dates	22-23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Watters HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	98
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Shorthouse
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Hedar
Date of previous school inspection	30 September-2 October 2002
School address	Stourbridge Road Fairfield Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 9LZ
Telephone number	01527 873081
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Age group	4-9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), who investigated the following issues: standards and achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, the impact of the school's monitoring and evaluation, the children's behaviour and attitudes, and the quality of care, support and guidance provided for them. Evidence was gathered from parents' questionnaires, conversations with children, checking their written work, observing lessons, checking the school's documentation and discussions with the headteacher. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but HMI found no evidence to suggest that the school's own grades, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and they have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Fairfield First School is situated in the village of Fairfield, on the north-western edge of Bromsgrove. Some children live locally, with 70% coming from outside the school's traditional catchment area. Many children live in privately owned homes, with some living in rented accommodation. The school's social and economic context is generally favourable, although many children enter the school with attainment levels just below those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, at 2%, is well below the national average. 13% of the pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average of 18%. Most pupils experience pre-school education before they enter the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The headteacher says that 'the school has ... high expectations for all, a strong emphasis on enthusiasm and fun and gives each individual the opportunity to succeed'. This is an accurate description and a central feature of this good school's success. Staff and children alike are confident and good humoured, eager to talk about their work and what makes their school special to them. The school community is a secure and safe place in which adults and children work harmoniously and enthusiastically, with a real sense of commitment and determination to do well. This is certainly reflected in the children's good achievement and the fact that many reach standards that are above the level expected for their age. The majority make good progress and some do exceptionally well, for example, in reading and mathematics in Year 2 and in writing and reading in Year 4. The school is aware that a small minority of children in each year group do not achieve as well as they might.

The children's personal development and well-being is good. They are well-rounded young people, who greatly enjoy coming to school. Because they are treated with respect and listened to, they respond kindly to each other and are at ease with themselves. They express themselves in an open and engaging manner and welcome the opportunity to say how much they appreciate their school. Attendance is good. The children are happy and appreciative of what their school provides, particularly the lovely school grounds. One child said, 'The teachers are kind and help us a lot ... I'll be really sad when I leave.' Another child said, 'There's no bullying here ... we all look after each other'. Walking around the playground at morning break and lunchtime certainly endorsed these views. The children know a lot about healthy lifestyles and understand the importance of exercise and eating healthy food; for example, they happily talked about what makes a balanced diet.

The children are tolerant and show a mature understanding about the importance of helping each other in the school and the wider community. They regularly take part in fundraising activities for local and worldwide charities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through a broad, balanced and good curriculum, which provides a wide range of very positive enrichment activities, the children develop their knowledge and understanding of cultures and faiths different from their own and more about living in Great Britain today. The links with schools in Birmingham, Lincolnshire and Sri Lanka give the children a positive insight into living in a different community and country. Visitors to school, such as grandparents and parents who help in lessons and other members of the local community who talk about life at the school in the past, all contribute positively to the children's increasing awareness of their own place in society. The school council and eco action team provide further opportunities for the children to have a voice in their school, and influence decisions that affect them. Both groups talked well about their achievements, for example, the introduction of quiet and sheltered areas in the playground and the improvements to recycling and protecting the school environment.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive and 70% responded to an inspection questionnaire. 96% of these gave a very strong endorsement of the school's work, expressing parents' satisfaction and support for the quality of education provided for their children. 'I think Fairfield is a fantastic school and I am so pleased that I have chosen it for my son,' said one parent. Another parent said: 'I could not be happier with the schooling that my children have received at Fairfield First School. They are all happy, progressing well academically, and experiencing a wide range of activities.'

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan a range of interesting and exciting activities, which are usually matched very well to the children's different starting points and capabilities. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to helping the children achieve well, particularly when they teach small groups alongside the class teacher. Assessment is generally used very well to inform what the children should do next to improve their work, although on occasions some of the children's targets are not amended to reflect their current levels of achievement. Similarly, some of the written work in the children's literacy books is not always checked carefully enough and the quality of presentation and standards reached in these books does not sufficiently reflect their capabilities or their good achievement in other pieces of writing.

The children are looked after very well. They receive a good level of care, support and guidance and feel extremely safe. Arrangements for safeguarding the children are secure and robust and risk assessments are very carefully attended to. The school regularly consults parents and listens to what they have to say. For example, changes were made to the school's approach to promoting the children's good behaviour and more information about what the children are being taught has been sent to parents.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides calm, thoughtful and authoritative leadership. She listens well and gives a very positive steer to the school's work, accurately evaluating where success has been achieved and what needs to be done next to make the school's performance even better. She receives good support from the teachers, who also show an impressive determination to improve their work. There is a very good team spirit and morale is high. Monitoring and evaluation are good, although on a few occasions the outcomes of monitoring activities are not followed up with enough rigour. For example, a relative weakness in the quality of teaching identified in February 2007 was still evident during the inspection. Some of the monitoring is of very good quality, particularly where improvements in teaching are linked to the children's achievements and their rate of progress. The children's progress is tracked carefully and challenging targets contribute to their good achievement.

The governing body provides good support and is carrying out its statutory duties well. Governors visit the school frequently and check the school's performance, particularly through the work of the curriculum committee. This ensures that they keep a watchful eye on how well the children are achieving. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school has a good capacity to improve further. It is a buoyant and vibrant community, which recognises its successes but avoids

complacency. Its exciting challenge is to raise the bar even further, lifting expectations even more and shifting its performance to become consistently outstanding. It is very well placed to do so!

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation to make sure that the best practice is implemented consistently and that areas for improvement are followed up more rigorously.
- Increase the rate of progress for the small minority of children in each year group who do not yet make consistently satisfactory and better progress.
- Make sure that children's targets are amended to take account of their current achievement and that the quality of presentation and standards achieved in the children's literacy books matches their good achievement in other pieces of writing.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
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	2

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?	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

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 Children

Inspection of Fairfield First School, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 9LZ

As you know, I recently visited your school to see how well you are doing in your work and how much you enjoy being at school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. You are all very friendly and polite and were really keen to tell me how much you like your school and appreciate all the interesting things you do. Thank you also to those of you who took me around the school grounds and told me about the improvements that have been made and the opportunities you have for play and looking after the environment. I was really impressed with what you are doing to take care of your playing area, encourage wildlife and help plants and wildflowers to grow.

I could see that you get on very well with each other and the adults who work with you. Many of you told me that you feel very safe and that people listen to you when you are a little concerned or worried about anything. You also help each other. When I was in the playground I could see groups of you sitting and talking on the friendship benches, making sure that no-one felt left out and that everyone had a friend to play with. Many of you do well in reading, writing and number work and you all behave very well. Your teachers plan interesting lessons and Mrs Hedar and the governors keep a careful eye on how well you are doing.

I am very pleased to tell you that you go to a good school. All the adults take great care of you and want you to do your best. To help you do even better I have asked Mrs Hedar and the teachers to:

- check how well you are doing in lessons even more carefully so that all of you learn even more quickly than you are already doing
- make sure that your teachers change your targets when you have reached them
- help you to write as well in your literacy books as you do when writing stories.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. I have really enjoyed visiting your school and wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector