

Fircroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101007
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	307561
Inspection date	3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	420
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Madhu Chauhan
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Fircroft Road Tooting London SW17 7PP
Telephone number	020 8672 6258
Fax number	020 8767 6693

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

- the particular strengths of teaching and learning and any areas in which their quality could be improved
- the impact of leadership and management in raising achievement for the more able pupils in Key Stage 2
- how subject leaders were promoting improvement especially in literacy
- the strengths of pupils' personal development, curriculum and care.

The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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

The school is larger than most of its type and draws pupils from a range of backgrounds. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than the national average, and almost half of all pupils in the school have English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils with a statement of special educational need are higher than average. Pupils' needs include autistic spectrum disorders, physical difficulties and speech, language and communication needs. A number of pupils join and leave the school at different times of the year. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the Fircroft Breakfast and After School Clubs, which are not managed by the governing body. The school holds the Green Guardian Award, Investors in People award and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Fircroft is a good school where pupils achieve well because they are well taught and greatly enjoy their learning. The school has a happy community ethos and relationships at every level are strong. A large majority of parents are pleased with the school and especially value the richness of their children's learning experiences and the high-quality care they receive from all staff. One parent wrote, 'Fircroft School is a happy friendly school' and 'It has a great feel about it as soon as you enter. Great mix of cultures.'

Children enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those of children of similar age. They make a good start to their learning and when they enter Year 1 standards are average in most areas, but still slightly below average in all aspects of literacy. In 2008, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was broadly average. However, pupils have made clear gains in literacy as a result of the careful initiatives to improve sounds and letters work (phonics) and to encourage writing, especially for boys, with inspiring texts and imaginative themes in lessons. The initiatives developed in Key Stage 1 are now being integrated into the curriculum in Key Stage 2 with early signs of success. During the inspection, the work in lessons and in pupils' books indicated good progress in literacy and sustained good progress in mathematics and science. The school is ambitious to raise attainment further, especially in literacy.

Teaching is good because lessons are well paced and teachers use good subject knowledge to make lessons interesting. Pupils listen attentively, are keen to answer questions, and settle quickly to independent work. Staff are developing their skills well to plan activities in lessons that meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. However, the work planned for pupils who find learning easy is not always sufficiently challenging. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers to provide good support for those who find learning difficult. The excellent curriculum ensures that good links between subjects, especially literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT), make learning more exciting for pupils. For example, the super heroes theme developed for Key Stage 1 is fun, links all areas of the curriculum, and is helping to improve imaginative writing. Extra-curricular activities are extremely rich. Parents greatly value these opportunities for their children to extend their learning experiences beyond the classroom. Children also spoke enthusiastically about the breadth of their learning. One said, 'There are lots of exciting things in class like writing a really big story and we do loads outside of school as well.'

Pupils' personal development is good. Their good attendance shows that they love school. The school council is very active in helping to improve the school and even plays a part in staff appointments. The school is actively exploring ways to extend the range of responsibilities for pupils even further, recognising the efficiency and trustworthiness of the pupils. Behaviour seen during the inspection was good. Poor behaviour does occur but any incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly. All pupils have a good understanding of staying healthy and behaving in a safe way with consideration for others. Pupils show a good awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and are enthusiastic in their support of charities. Their good achievement and good personal development ensure that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils recognise and respect the high level of care they receive so they feel confident to share concerns with staff and know they will always receive help. One pupil said, 'Teachers are very understanding. They always help you.' Aspects of safeguarding and safety are secure and the

high quality of care provided in school is supplemented efficiently by support from a wide range of external agencies. Academic guidance is good and assessment information is used carefully to set short targets for all pupils in literacy and numeracy. Pupils understand their targets, and say that they find them helpful. They are now beginning to work with their teachers to identify for themselves where they need to improve. The use of marking to identify for all pupils how and where a piece of work can be improved and so promote greater progress is less consistent and rigorous, especially in literacy. Flexible, carefully targeted support is used to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those new to the school with English as an additional language, also make good progress. An equally sensitive range of support mechanisms for the more able pupils, to extend their learning and help improve the progress they make, is now being integrated into the school planning.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides high-quality leadership, which is respected by both staff and parents. She works in a close and very efficient partnership with the deputy headteacher to inspire and unite staff in their drive to improve the school. Subject leaders are ambitious for their subjects and monitor developments and pupils' progress with growing skill and determination. There has been a careful assessment of the school's areas for development and a number of new and effective initiatives are beginning to show clear signs of success. Most areas identified for improvement in the last inspection have been fully addressed and overall the school provides good value for money. The governors are very supportive of the school and have a clear perspective on areas for development. Some governors bring very valuable skills to their role and make an important contribution to the school's development. There is potential for other governors to develop their expertise further so they can monitor aspects of the school's work more closely and provide a more critical edge to their work. The school is placed securely at the heart of its local community, is establishing links with pupils and communities in Kenya, and recognises the need to extend pupil's awareness of other parts of the United Kingdom. The school's self-evaluation is secure and it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in EYFS is good because children are well taught and the curriculum meets their needs well. Children enter EYFS with skills and abilities that are below average, especially in their personal, social, emotional, physical and creative development and communication and language skills. By the time children enter Year 1 they have reached standards that are broadly similar to other children of the same age. A sustained emphasis on phonics and careful encouragement of speaking and listening skills is helping to improve literacy skills, although they remain just below average at the end of EYFS. Children's personal development is excellent so they feel secure and confident and quickly learn to share and cooperate with each other. Activities are well planned and stimulating and so provide a good range of learning experiences both inside and outside to cover all areas of their learning. In the Nursery, for example, children were learning about winter and extending their language skills in a garden activity where they raked up and swept away leaves and then planted bulbs. Resources are good although some of the outdoor play equipment is dated and in need of refurbishment. Leadership and management are good. All staff work as a united team despite the considerable difficulties imposed by the separation of Nursery and Reception units on different sides of the school site. There are good systems for assessment and observation of children in lessons and parents are kept closely involved in their children's development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in writing in Key Stage 1 and English in Key Stage 2 for all pupils by improving the rigour and consistency of marking to guide pupils in how and where to improve their work.
- Ensure that work planned for higher-attaining pupils is sufficiently challenging.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
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
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fircroft Primary School, London, SW17 7PP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You were very friendly and we thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and your teachers, looking at your work and finding out about the things you enjoy most in school. You told us that you thought your school was good and we agree with you.

We saw that you all behaved well and showed a great deal of enthusiasm in your lessons and wanted to do as well as you could. Everyone works hard to make sure that you are well cared for and safe in school. You understand about keeping safe and what you need to do to be healthy. Your teachers work hard to make sure your lessons are enjoyable and interesting. You like the targets that are set for you and recognise that they help you to move forward in your learning. We think your school is well led and managed and this is why you enjoy learning and make good progress.

We have suggested two ways in which your teachers could make your school even better.

- They must plan tasks for you in lessons that will really stretch you so that you make even better progress, especially for those who find learning easy.
- They must help you to improve the progress you make and standards you reach in literacy by always marking your work carefully to show you where and how to improve.

We know you will continue to work hard and help your teachers to make your school even better. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Norma Ball

Lead Inspector