

Fairchildes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101784
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	307805
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	452
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Cress
Headteacher	Miss R Sandell
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Fairchildes Avenue New Addington Croydon CR0 0AH
Telephone number	01689 842268
Fax number	01689 849338

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress in English and mathematics, the effectiveness of middle managers, the use of assessment and pupils' attendance. Evidence was gathered from records of pupils' attainment, samples of pupils' past work, observations in lessons and round the school, meetings with staff, governors and pupils and an analysis of 56 responses to the parents' questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

The school is larger than other schools of its type. As at the last inspection, there are more boys than girls. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average, with no group predominating, and few are at the early stages of learning English. A much higher proportion of pupils is entitled to receive free school meals than is usually found. A smaller than average proportion of pupils have statements of education need, though the proportion of all pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The largest group has moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is popular with parents. It has outstanding features in the curriculum, pupils' personal development, the care, guidance and support offered to them and in the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage. One parent wrote to say, 'A lovely school which improves every year'.

Pupils achieve well from their low starting points. By Year 2, standards are below average and rise to broadly average levels by the time pupils reach Year 6. Good progress is a result of good teaching; pupils make the best progress in science. In writing, progress is good overall but is not consistent between classes. The school is working to raise standards and has been successful in improving the amount of work pupils produce and the quality of their ideas. This comes about from an outstanding curriculum, which builds well on pupils' interests, as can be seen from the high quality of their work displayed in classrooms and corridors. Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic. Pupils are keen to write and do so in a wide range of styles and for different purposes, but the school has identified that written work often lacks accuracy in grammar, spelling and punctuation. It is this which prevents pupils from reaching higher levels. A pilot project in Year 5 to counter this trend is beginning to prove effective and the school plans to introduce this to all year groups from September.

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. It stems from the excellent relationships between adults and children that are evident from the very youngest classes. Pupils have an outstanding appreciation of the need to keep healthy; as one pupil put it, 'It stimulates your brain so you can work better'. Pupils recounted lessons where they had developed their brain power, such as in mental mathematics or meditation in a lesson about Buddhism. They understand and practise the ideas of a balanced diet. Pupils say they are very safe in school and that bullying is rare and well handled if it happens. Behaviour is good; most pupils behave very well but they agree there are those who occasionally spoil it. Pupils are developing effective basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Their understanding of what is of real value in life was strongly illustrated by the girl who said, 'Taking a stand and having your say'.

Most pupils love school and this is clear in their enthusiasm for learning and their outstanding contribution to the running of the school. It is less evident in the attendance figures, which are satisfactory. The school now works well with all parents to promote better attendance. This had been a key issue at the last inspection and, initially, progress was slow. The school joined several other local schools in appointing an independent firm of welfare officers (EWO). The school's new EWO and the attendance coordinator have introduced much greater rigour into the procedures. The impact of this is seen in an increase of 3% over last year's figures, showing the school's good capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is outstanding because of its breadth and richness. A parent expressed it well: 'It offers a breadth of curriculum which our children have made the most of: this has included the steel band, camping trips, sports such as football, athletics, lacrosse, cross-country running and various art activities, not to mention growing their own vegetables for school meals'. The inspector visited a rehearsal of the steel band and saw for himself not only the excellent quality of performance but also the outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding. Pastoral care is at the heart of the excellent partnership with parents. One parent commented, 'My child has special needs

and Fairchildes have been so supportive not only of my child but of me as well'. There is a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Assessment procedures are very effective in spotting and supporting any underachievement and in identifying where pupils need to improve. The headteacher and deputy give an outstanding lead and are very well supported by senior managers. Middle managers are new to post and their well-directed initiatives, such as the 'accurate writing' lessons, have not yet had enough time to have a real impact. Governors support the school well but, since the recent changes to the make-up of the governing body, they have not established formal systems to evaluate at first-hand the school's work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Nursery with low levels of skills, especially in communication and personal development. Excellent resources and thorough planning enable the children to feel secure and begin to explore. Lessons are organised so that the bulk of time is given to activities chosen and pursued by the children themselves. Skilful questioning and observations by adults make sure that the best opportunities are made of their choices. A group of Reception children were digging in the garden for buried treasure. The discovery of coins delighted them and then led on to their discussing what else one might find in the soil, such as worms and roots. Thorough assessment procedures ensure that each child's needs are catered for. The Foundation Stage coordinator gives an outstanding lead. This is shown by the recent success of initiatives aimed at improving children's ability to link sounds and letters. Excellent teaching and provision enable the children to make rapid progress throughout Nursery and Reception, so that their standards rise to a little below the borough average by the time they are ready for Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable pupils to improve the accuracy of their written work in order to reach higher levels.
- Build on the recent success in working with parents to raise the levels of attendance.

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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 the 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?	1

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.

Annex A

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 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	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**

11 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairchildes Primary School, Croydon, CR0 0AH

Thank you for the great welcome you gave me when I visited your school on a lovely July day. Thanks also for the invitation to your Year 6 production - I hope it went well. I enjoyed many things about my day. One of the most memorable was the playing of the steel band, which was really professional in the way they knew the music by heart and worked together perfectly. I also enjoyed meeting the groups of pupils. It is interesting to see how much you grow up in your time at Fairchildes. When I asked some of you which are the most important lessons to learn in life, one of the youngest (rightly) said 'Not calling out', whereas older pupils mentioned friendship and respect. This shows that your development as young people is outstanding. You feel safe in school, know why it's important to keep healthy and feel that the school council works very well on your behalf.

You go to a good school and make good progress in your work. The youngest children have an excellent start to their schooling. By the time you reach Year 6, your results are similar to most schools. Science is your strongest subject and many of you said how much you enjoy it. You produce large amounts of written work, though some of you need to make sure that you do not make careless errors. Year 5 have been having special lessons in accuracy and I have asked the teachers to go on with that type of work for all of you.

Teaching is good and your lessons clearly interest you. Most of you behave very well. Your education is enriched by many extra activities such as visits and gardening. Your headteacher is an excellent leader and she and her team run the school well. The level of care and support they give you is excellent. One of the things they are working to improve is your attendance. They have been very successful recently but there is room for further improvement. You can help by reminding your parents how important to your progress full attendance is.

I hope you continue to enjoy Fairchildes.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead Inspector