

# Elms Farm Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103381
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308299
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Krishan Sharma

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.

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<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 (total)	323
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Debbie Cole
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Gallagher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Dorncliffe Avenue Sheldon Birmingham B33 0PJ

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 February 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	308299

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**Age group** 3-11

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**Inspection dates** 2-3 February 2009

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Due to adverse weather conditions, the local authority closed its schools on the second day of the inspection. This decision was announced just before the team was about to leave the school at the end of the first day. Just before this announcement, the team had given a detailed interim oral feedback which touched on and included emerging judgements on all aspects of the inspection framework. The lightly touched aspects were to be further investigated on the second day. As the inspectors assessed the school's own evaluation, recorded in the self-evaluation, to be accurate, they found no reason to suggest that the judgements on the remaining lightly touched aspects were not justified. The team and the senior leaders agreed that sufficient evidence had been collected to satisfy the requirements of the inspection framework.

## Description of the school

Elms Farm is a larger-than-average-sized primary school and it serves an area that reflects considerable socio-economic deprivation. This is reflected in the fact that the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, although it varies between classes. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups has nearly doubled in the last two years and they now represent about one in five of the school's population. Consequently, just over one in ten pupils now has a first language which is not English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual starting and leaving points is considerably above average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Elms Farm Community Primary is a good school. Its improving results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 clearly indicate that the school adds good value to pupils' learning from their starting points in Nursery. A large majority of parents are very satisfied with what the school does for their children. As one parent typically pointed out, 'As parents, we can't fault anything about the school ...' Effective use is made of local partnerships to improve pupils' learning and their personal development.

Children make good progress in Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the limited outdoor provision restricts opportunities for them to extend their learning. Overall, their attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly average. Pupils are reaching broadly average standards by the time they leave. These standards are depressed as many pupils are relative newcomers to the school. Pupils make good progress and achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language. The school is maintaining its focus on improving achievement and standards in mathematics as it rightly considers the subject to be a relative weakness.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved recently. Teachers clearly focus on pupils' learning and they provide a range of suitable activities to challenge all of them. As a result, pupils make good progress. Pupils' skills in checking their own work, and thinking of ways to improve their own learning further, vary across the school because not enough attention has been paid to the development of these skills. The curriculum is effective in helping pupils to acquire basic skills and it rightly places due emphasis on promoting healthy eating and regular physical activity. Pupils behave well and enjoy participating in a wide range of activities, in and out of the classroom. Their good personal development is reflected in the regard they display for their own and others' safety. Good pastoral care is helping pupils to gain confidence and trust in others. Their care for others is evident in the contribution they make to local and national good causes by raising funds. Academic guidance given through marking is mostly good, but varies across the school.

The headteacher provides effective leadership and management and is ably supported by a team of keen senior leaders. Parents acknowledge the headteacher's commitment to the school. A parent writes, 'I have seen many improvements over the years and feel the headteacher has injected new life into Elms Farm.' The school's checking systems are good and clearly identify its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the priorities for improvement are the right ones. The middle leaders are steadily sharpening their monitoring skills. Given the accuracy of its self-evaluation and the distributed leadership that contributes to it, the school's capacity to improve further is good. Consequently, the school has secured the necessary improvements since the last inspection. The commitment to contribute to the cohesion of the local community is strong. However, more remains to be done, in and out of the school, to promote awareness of the full diversity of cultures present in modern Britain. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are in a strong position to support it as a result.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Most children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below the levels expected for their age. Recently, the number of those entering with skills well below the expected levels,

particularly in early literacy, has grown. Children make good progress from their starting points. Their achievement in linking letters and sounds and counting is particularly good, because of the priority given to the acquisition of these skills. It is not as strong in some other aspects of early literacy, such as reading, writing and communication skills. Children develop good personal skills because of good provision for their welfare. They are eager to participate in all the activities offered to them. They behave well and are confident enough to work independently. Their awareness of their own and others' safety is good. They relate well to each other and enjoy taking responsibility for small tasks, such as tidying up. Children receive a good balance of activities, between those chosen by themselves and those that are led by adults. All adults support children well in their learning; only occasionally are opportunities to extend children's speaking and thinking missed. The limited provision for learning outdoors restricts opportunities for children to explore and apply their skills. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Each child is assigned to a key worker, who knows the children well. Children's progress is assessed and tracked and the data are used to plan the next steps in their learning.

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

- Improve outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to increase opportunities for them to learn and practise skills across all areas of learning.
- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, by improving their skills in checking their own work and learning how to improve it.
- Strengthen pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in modern Britain and explore ways of promoting this understanding within the community.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

By the end of Year 6, pupils reach broadly average standards, though these are better in English and science than in mathematics. Unvalidated results in the national tests in 2008 show that the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grade Level 5 rose in all three subjects. By the end of Year 2, the 2008 results showed some decline, but remained broadly average. Standards at the end of Year 6 are on target to remain at least broadly average in 2009. Standards are improving in Year 2 and more pupils are now working at, or above, the levels expected for their age. Pupils make good progress overall in both key stages, although progress made between Years 3 to 6 varies due to inconsistency in teaching. More able pupils make good progress, as do those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because their needs are clearly defined and support for them is targeted well.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in and around the school and feel safe in the secure environment. Bullying is rare and, when it occurs, pupils say that the school deals with it promptly. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to work and, as a result, make good progress. Their social skills are well developed and pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. They have a general awareness of the cultural diversity present around them, though their knowledge of the range of cultures in Britain today is more limited. Pupils respond to creative experiences, such as music and art, with visible excitement and enjoy most of the work given

to them because teachers make lessons interesting. They have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular physical exercise. They willingly raise funds to support good causes both locally and further afield. Improving basic skills and their personal and social skills help pupils prepare satisfactorily for the world of work. Attendance has recently improved, but still remains below average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is good but it is more variable in Years 3 to 6. In all lessons, pupils' behaviour is good and they are keen to learn. When working independently, they conduct themselves responsibly and stay on task. The careful deployment of teaching assistants ensures that pupils with specific needs, such as those with English as an additional language, are appropriately supported. In most lessons, teachers plan suitable tasks to cater for the needs of all groups of pupils and a good range of activities is offered. As a result, most pupils make good progress. However, in some lessons, planning is less flexible and does not always meet the changing needs of pupils. Occasionally, this slows the pace of learning. Pupils' skills in checking their own work, and their understanding of how they could improve it, vary between classes, because these are not consistently taught well.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's sharp focus on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy contributes to good achievement by all groups of pupils. The programmes for personal, social and health education and social and emotional aspects of learning promote pupils' personal development well. As a result, pupils learn to relate to those around them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well served by the curriculum because it meets their needs well. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is less well developed. Ample opportunities to link subjects together into themes are provided and the resulting themes add to pupils' interest in their learning. However, occasionally, these themes do not sufficiently challenge the more able. The specialist provision for music in Year 4 is an excellent example of the school's aim to make learning enjoyable. A range of enrichment activities, visits and visitors support the curriculum well.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are securely in place. Those new to the school settle well because they are given good guidance and support. Clear guidelines promote good behaviour and are consistently applied across the school. The school works closely with parents and a wide range of agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare needs are met. Although the impact of the school's actions to reduce the rate of absenteeism is limited, it is working strenuously with the local authority to reduce it further. Most pupils say that the targets set for them help them to improve their work. Marking is helpful, but occasionally, it does not give clear enough guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their work.

Provision in the pre-school club is good. Pupils enjoy eating a healthy breakfast. The after-school club was cancelled during the inspection due to severe weather. Staff are aware of their

responsibilities and engage pupils in worthwhile activities in a safe and caring environment. Welfare requirements are met. The organisers keep parents fully informed.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is ably supported by a determined and confident senior leadership team and a keen group of middle leaders. Current whole-school priorities are the right ones and signal the senior leaders' commitment to improving the achievement and personal development of all pupils. The school's monitoring systems are well established and are sufficiently strong to highlight its key strengths and weaknesses. As a result, challenging academic and attendance targets are set. The systematic collection and use of data informs the deployment of teaching assistants and the precise nature of interventions needed. As a result, the groups of pupils who receive additional support make good progress. Occasionally, monitoring reports do not sufficiently focus on the impact of actions on pupils' learning. Due to the school's actions, pupils' awareness of different faiths, ethnic and cultural groups and the nature of its community is growing satisfactorily. However, advancing the awareness of cultural diversity with pupils and their community is a relative weakness. The governors are supportive and have a good awareness of the school's strengths and a willingness to challenge it to do better.



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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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<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 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?	3
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**

3 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Elms Farm Community Primary School, Birmingham B33 0PJ

We enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school. Thank you for the way you made us feel welcome and for talking to us about your school and the work you were doing. As a team, we decided that Elms Farm Community School is a good school. Here are some of good things that we found:

- most of you make good progress in lessons because you are being taught well.
- you behave well and relate well to each other
- you care about others in the community and show this concern by raising funds for good causes
- you enjoy your lessons because they are planned to interest you. You also enjoy taking part in before- and after-school activities
- your teachers and other adults in the school care about you and are always ready to help you
- your headteacher and all the staff are determined to make your school even better.

This is what we have asked the governors and the headteacher to do:

- make sure that the younger children in the Nursery and Reception classes have enough opportunities to learn in a secure and interesting outdoor environment
- teach you skills that help you to check your own work and improve it so that you make faster progress, particularly in maths
- make sure that you and your community learn to understand and appreciate all faiths and cultures present in the school and in the country.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Krishan Sharma

Lead inspector