

Firs Estate Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112778 |
| Local Authority | City of Derby |
| Inspection number | 311001 |
| Inspection dates | 28–29 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | David Speakman |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 177 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Martin Tunncliffe |
| Headteacher | Mrs Carol Moore |
| Date of previous school inspection | 23 May 2005 |
| School address | Raven Street Derby Derbyshire DE22 3WA |
| Telephone number | 01332346230 |
| Fax number | 01332 200782 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. The circumstances in which the school operates are changing; the number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual time of first admission is high and growing; the proportion of pupils who speak little or no English is above average and rising. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has a similar percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to other schools. The number with a statement of special educational need is average. The attainment of pupils starting in Reception is well below that expected for children of this age. The headteacher took the permanent post in 2006, after being acting headteacher for a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. In response to below average attainment over some years, the headteacher has carefully guided the implementation of a number of initiatives to raise standards. Assessment records show that progress overall has accelerated and the gap between the school's performance and the national average is now closing. Overall attainment throughout the school remains below average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in mathematics have improved in the last two years. Year 6 test results were broadly average in 2007 and current standards are again in line with those expected nationally for pupils of this age. Attainment in English has not shown the same improvement and standards in pupils' literacy skills, particularly in writing, are still below average.

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but is inconsistent from class to class. Some teaching is satisfactory, some good and some has excellent features. This results in pupils experiencing different rates of progress as they move through the school. There are opportunities identified in curriculum planning to use other subjects to improve pupils' literacy skills, but these are mainly for speaking and listening. There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to use and consolidate their writing skills.

A significant number of parents expressed concern about behaviour in school. The school has also recognised behaviour as a problem and made improvements. For example, qualified staff have been employed and a 'nurture group' set up to promote and support positive behaviour. This has resulted in a noticeable improvement in the behaviour of pupils involved. Behaviour in and around school is satisfactory but it still has to be carefully managed by staff. Personal development is satisfactory overall. The school shows good levels of care for pupils. It has a caring and inclusive ethos so that all pupils have equality of opportunity to learn and make progress. It works well with other schools and external agencies to support pupils' learning and well-being.

The headteacher and the chair of the governing body provide focused leadership, with a clear direction on improving the quality of education in order to raise standards. They take on board much of the work related to school improvement at a whole school strategic planning level. Although the day-to-day management of the school ensures that the school runs smoothly, not all those with leadership responsibility, including governors, focus enough on the strategic development of the school or on whole-school development, and leadership is satisfactory overall. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Working with the headteacher, teachers are now more effective in using assessment data to set pupils' targets to raise standards. Attainment in mathematics is better and standards are now broadly average but standards in English remain an issue for improvement. Due to effective measures to improve attendance, it is now average. The level of improvement and the accurate identification of weak areas through monitoring and accurate self-evaluation, mean the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children join the nursery, they have particular weaknesses in their language and communication skills and in their personal development. Staff work effectively as a team, focusing on these areas and enable children to develop their independence, make choices and

progress satisfactorily overall. Children behave well and enjoy their time in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led activities and those children choose for themselves. Resources for learning out of doors are limited; hence, not enough use is made of the outdoor environment. Teaching is satisfactory, although expectations are not always high enough. Regular informal assessments are developing and providing an increasingly accurate view of children's progress and enable staff to plan to raise achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop curriculum planning to identify clearly opportunities to consolidate and improve pupils' core skills in literacy through other subjects, particularly writing, in order to raise standards.
- Improve planning for school improvement so the senior leadership team, subject leaders and the governing body play a greater part in the strategic leadership and management of the school.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is at least good in all classes so that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children progress satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage, particularly in developing their communication skills and personal development. However, by the time they transfer into Year 1, the majority do not meet the goals nationally expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. Overall achievement through Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory and standards at the end of both key stages are below average. There has been a significant improvement in mathematics, with standards now being broadly average. Standards in literacy are weaker, where they remain below average in reading and particularly in writing. Pupils who find learning difficult make satisfactory progress. Those with English as an additional language soon acquire enough English to enable them to learn at a satisfactory rate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school a lot. They find lessons interesting and they value rewards, such as 'Golden Time' given for their achievements. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. School assemblies promote pupils' personal development satisfactorily, informing them about relationships and moral and social issues. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles. They learn about healthy eating at the healthy eating and breakfast clubs. Even though there are no grassed areas, pupils take part in a number of physical activities, including enhanced swimming provision. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through taking on responsibility and helping others on the playground at breaks and contributing their ideas through the school council. Some pupils say they experience aggressive behaviour from others but the majority say they feel safe and would know who to talk to if in need. Preparation for the next stages of their education is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Behaviour management is consistently good and teachers deal with behaviour issues in a respectful way, to avoid confrontation without compromising expectations. Class organisation is good; pupils work in groups that are organised using pupils' target levels. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to provide valued support to these groups. The accuracy match of work to pupils' capability varies. Some teachers match work to the needs of learners' well, ensuring that pupils capable of difficult work have harder tasks, whilst those who find learning more difficult have easier tasks. Occasionally pupils who are more able are simply given more of the same work to do. Teachers make sure that pupils are actively involved in learning. They are good at matching questions to ability to draw in pupils at different levels of attainment, those shy or reluctant to answer, and those new to school. They never dismiss what pupils say as unimportant or incorrect, but value all contributions. This helps boost pupils' confidence in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils say they find the opportunities for learning interesting. Information and communication technology (ICT) has a strong place in the curriculum to support other subjects. A strong programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship helps pupils' personal development well. The school does not use subjects other than English well enough to improve and consolidate pupils writing skills. Pupils identified as being in danger of underachieving are given help to correct this through a range of support strategies. Curriculum enrichment is good. A broad range of themed weeks and days, such as the European Language Day, where pupils sample a number of languages and ways of life, add interest to learning. An adequate number of extra-curricular activities support learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's good pastoral care and the attention given to all children, including those experiencing difficulties in learning or presenting challenging behaviour is highly effective and results in an inclusive and caring community. Consequently, pupils feel at ease in school and enjoy being there. Pupils with English as an additional language are ably supported so they soon settle into school routines. Procedures for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff are in place. Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. The school has rigorous and effective systems for promoting attendance. A system has been introduced for setting targets to raise pupils' awareness of what is expected of them and how to improve their performance. Older pupils have a secure grasp of these, but younger pupils do not all fully understand them. Through parenting classes and those for developing parents' ICT skills, the school is improving relationships with parents and is working with them to ensure pupils make sound use of their schooling.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory in terms of its impact on raising achievement. Leadership, although satisfactory, requires development in terms of distributing it further across staff and the governing body. School self-evaluation is accurate and identifies main areas for improvement. Senior leaders and subject leaders have made a start in holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils through pupil progress review meetings held each half term. Targets are now challenging and have helped bring about the early signs of improvement. The school has developed a strong ethos of care and equality of opportunity for all pupils. It provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 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 |

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

30 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firs Estate Primary School, Derby, DE22 3WA

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning.

At present, your school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The school takes good care of you all to help you learn and grow. Most of you behave well, but there are still a few who need a lot of support in making sure that their behaviour is acceptable. The school does this well so that behaviour is satisfactory overall. You say that you are happy in school and that you find learning interesting and enjoyable. You are happy that you feel safe in school. You talk with confidence about staying healthy and making sensible choices about your diet. The majority of you work hard in lessons, but standards are still below average, particularly in writing. The progress that you make throughout your time in school is satisfactory.

There are a number of things that we feel could be improved. We have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to:

- help you improve your English language skills by looking at different subjects to see how these can be used to help you improve, particularly in writing,
- make sure that teaching in all classes is good and helps you make progress,
- spread the load of running the school to other staff.

The staff will be continuing to work hard to improve your school. You can help by making sure that you all behave very well all of the time so they can concentrate on helping you improve your work.

We wish you well for the future.

David Speakman

Lead inspector