

Four Oaks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131920
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	315890
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Hales
Headteacher	Heather Sutton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Edge Hill Road Four Oaks Sutton Coldfield B74 4PA
Telephone number	01216 754040
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This newly established school was formed from the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools that shared the same site. The two schools amalgamated in September 2006. Most of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. When they start school, children usually show attainment that is at about the expected level for their ages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a rapidly improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is extremely popular with most parents and is good at making pupils become confident and enthusiastic learners. This new school has moved forward well. The headteacher, who is ably supported by other senior staff, has got the staff working enthusiastically and effectively together. Along with the governors, they have a clear view of what works well in the school and where improvements are needed. For example, pupils were not making sufficient progress in Years 3 to 6, in relation to their starting points, when the school first opened. This has been attacked rigorously with the setting up of new structures and systems to boost and improve pupils' learning. Nevertheless, there remains work to do to help them catch up on previous underperformance.

Standards are above average and all pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress. This is continued in Years 1 and 2 but then becomes inconsistent in the remaining year groups. Teaching is satisfactory overall but improving and is often good. There are signs that pupils' progress is accelerating, particularly in those parts of the school where there was underperformance previously. Effective systems have been put in place to track pupils' progress regularly. Now, any pupil or group of pupils falling behind in their reading, writing and mathematics is quickly identified and given support to get back on track. Significant work has been undertaken to improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A number of parents commented about the good support provided for their children in this area. Teachers' marking is good in English as a result of the school's well-directed focus on pupils' writing. However, practice in other subjects is inconsistent, particularly mathematics and science.

Effective pastoral care and elements of the school's satisfactory curriculum ensure that pupils show good personal development. As one pupil commented, 'Four Oaks is like being in a large family.' Pupils behave well, are friendly to each other and are welcoming to visitors. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in the high levels of attendance that are above average. Although a few parents and pupils showed concerns about bullying, the school's procedures for dealing with this are appropriate and the vast majority of pupils state that they feel safe at school. The use of individual learning targets for pupils is developing at the school. However, they are not yet having a significant impact on improving pupils' achievement. The school is working hard to improve this.

The successful amalgamation and recent improvements have occurred because there is good leadership and management. Clear action plans and the school's successes so far in improving the quality of education and provision show that there is good capacity to sustain the improvement. As one parent typically said, 'Improvements to the school are continually being made' whilst another noted, 'My child loves school and looks forward to each day.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching. It is particularly effective at providing a good balance of children's independent learning alongside teacher-directed tasks. Teachers and support staff work closely together so that children are offered a good level of care, guidance and support. This ensures they quickly develop positive

attitudes to learning. Children leave the Reception classes with attainment that is slightly higher than that expected. They do particularly well in their social and personal education. Children are provided with a wide range of stimulating and practical activities as a result of a well-organised curriculum. It successfully covers all the areas of learning and provides them with regular opportunities to develop their skills. Children talk of how much they enjoy their activities and work well collaboratively, aware of the need to 'take turns' and share. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The phase leader works hard to provide effective induction from the on-site private nursery and also promotes good transition into Year 1. She demonstrates a robust understanding of the needs of the children and, as a result, they settle in quickly and happily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make good progress in all year groups.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking in mathematics and science to that found in English.
- Provide all pupils with individual learning targets in English and mathematics that they understand and that contribute effectively to their learning and good progress.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As the school is new, there are no year-on-year trends with regards to pupils' attainment. However, data and evidence provided by the school indicate that pupils are generally making good progress through the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Progress in the remaining years has been more mixed, with not all pupils making the progress that they are capable of. To address this issue, a more rigorous system of tracking pupils' progress has been introduced, with all staff being made more accountable for the progress of the pupils in their care. This is beginning to have an impact, with pupils in Year 3 to 6 now making at least satisfactory progress, although many are still catching up from previous underachievement. Until recently, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were a particular group of pupils who were not making sufficient progress as a result of shortcomings in provision. These have been addressed through better provision management. These pupils are now making the same progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy their learning and are extremely mature and articulate when talking about the strengths of the school or things they think could be improved. Responsibilities such as school council representatives or class captains are undertaken with pride. School council members speak of the fundraising activities they have initiated to raise funds for playground equipment. Pupils speak positively about each other and about the staff, who are described as 'enthusiastic,' 'strict but fair' and 'prepared to share a joke.' They work well together on collaborative activities, sharing resources sensibly and ideas. For example, Year 6 pupils discussed possible objections and solutions when discussing their ideas for a letter to the headteacher requesting a disco. Pupils comment on how they feel safe in school and how they feel able to discuss issues or concerns with their peers and the

school staff. Children are very conscious of the need to keep healthy and speak highly of the two hours of physical education they receive a week and the positive influence of Jamie Oliver on their school lunches. Pupils leave school as sensible individuals with above-average skills in English and mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is improving and there are examples of good teaching in all parts of the school. This is beginning to have a positive affect so that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress throughout all year groups, although there are lessons where pupils of all ability are not challenged sufficiently. The pace of learning is occasionally not rapid enough and, at times, pupils are given work that is inappropriate to their needs. A small minority of pupils say that their work is too easy. Teachers' marking in English is good and appreciated by the pupils, who regard it as helpful in improving their work. Comments in other subject areas, however, do not always provide sufficient direction for pupils on how to progress their learning further. Most pupils try hard in lessons and classroom relationships are generally good. Support staff are used well and make an effective contribution to the pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is enriched well by a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are popular with the pupils. Residential visits for older pupils contribute successfully to their social development and a good range of visits out, and visitors into school broadens pupils' awareness and experience. There is good provision for educating pupils in aspects of their personal development such as how to lead healthy lifestyles and adopt safe practices. Staff work well together to plan the curriculum. The school is currently following a particular focus on pupils' writing so a significant amount of time is devoted to literacy. All subjects of the national curriculum are taught. Occasionally, a lack of continuity means that the time spent on certain subjects, for example, science, is uneven. The school acknowledges that aspects of the curriculum are still developing. Staff are currently trialing different approaches to teaching particular topics and promoting specific skills, such as those associated with information and communication technology, across other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Pupils are known well by staff and they are happy and confident in coming to school. Health and safety and child protection procedures are rigorous. The quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved and there are also close links with external agencies. One external professional, for example, described the working relationship with the school as 'exceptional.' Pupils are provided with satisfactory academic support and guidance. There is some exemplary marking in English that provides pupils with very clear guidance about how they can improve their work and move to the next stage of their learning. This is not reflected in other subjects. The school is developing individual targets for the pupils but there is still some way to go before all pupils have clearly defined learning targets in both English and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Over the last four terms much has been achieved. A new school has been established, new structures and systems have been put in place and a staff team has been brought together. This has not been an easy process and has been managed successfully as a result of the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and other senior staff. Staff and governors have identified appropriate areas for development and introduced new procedures and initiatives such as a rigorous approach to tracking the progress of pupils to combat underachievement. Good levels of monitoring and challenging targets are also contributing to improvement. Not all of the quality systems are working consistently and staff and governors know that there is still work to be done. They are clear, however, that the school is moving in the right direction. Governors provide good support and challenge for the school. They are effectively involved in the school's strategic development and have a good understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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 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?	3

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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Four Oaks Primary School, Sutton Coldfield, B74 4PA

We enjoyed visiting your school to see how well you are doing. You made us feel very welcome and we enjoyed our discussions about your work and other aspects of the school. You helped us learn a lot about the school and spoke to us very maturely, sensibly and politely. This letter is to let you know what we found out about your school.

At the moment you go to a satisfactory school that is getting better and better. Standards in English and mathematics are generally higher than is found in most other schools but not all of you are making the progress that you are capable of. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to improve this. You are all keen to work and most of you enjoy your time in school and get on well together. Your levels of attendance are much higher than in many other schools – well done. Your teachers provide at least satisfactory and often good teaching. You told us that the teachers' marking in English was really helpful, and we would agree. It is not so helpful in other subjects so we have also asked the school to look at this.

Most of your parents are pleased with the school and think it does a good job to make sure you are properly looked after. Your headteacher has done really well with the other staff and governors to set up the new school. They have good plans to make it even better and have set some challenging targets to achieve. Some of you have targets in your work which help you to learn. We would like the school to make sure everyone has targets in English and mathematics to help them get better in those subjects.

You can help your teachers by continuing your enthusiasm for learning and keeping up those high levels of attendance. We wish all of you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead inspector

24 January 2008



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Chris Kessell
Lead inspector