

Colmers Farm Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103187
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323773
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Arnalena (Nina) Bee

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	170
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	Sarah Bellew
Headteacher	Bev Archer
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Leybrook Road Birmingham B45 9PB
Telephone number	01214 642153
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Colmers Farm is a two-form entry infant school. The building is shared with the junior school who use the first floor. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in two Reception classes. There is an on-site Nursery and Children's Centre that is managed by an external provider and is inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Colmers Farm Infant School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Its key strength is the way the satisfactory curriculum is enriched to promote pupils' personal and social skills and enhance learning. This is successfully achieved through the school's good links with nearby schools and people from the local community and the wider world. As a result, pupils benefit from the many interesting visitors invited into school, well-planned visits and a wide range of out-of-school clubs.

The Forest school is a particular strength of the curriculum and is appreciated and enjoyed by all pupils. Good opportunities to develop self-esteem, confidence and the skills needed to work together are offered to pupils. Consequently, learning here is good as pupils work and play in this exciting area that has been established on the edge of the school grounds. Pupils' personal and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, their awareness of different religions and cultures in our society today is less secure. Behaviour is good during lessons and generally good at other times of the day. However, a few pupils are sometimes unkind toward each other or behave inappropriately. Most pupils attend regularly and know that it is important to come to school each day. The school has good systems for monitoring attendance, but a few persistent absentees make attendance below average overall. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of why they should keep healthy and what a healthy diet comprises. They enjoy physical education lessons and know that it is important to do exercise. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have a satisfactory understanding of the potential dangers they may come across in life. By the time they leave in Year 2, their satisfactory personal and social skills and their average academic skills prepare them adequately for their next school.

Achievement is satisfactory. Information collected by the school shows that achievement for children in Reception is satisfactory in relation to their starting points. As pupils move through Years 1 and 2, achievement continues to be satisfactory. A few pupils in all classes, often those who are higher attainers, make good progress. In Year 2, standards are broadly average. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but occasionally it is good. When activities capture pupils' interests and imagination as well as suiting their individual needs, learning is at its best. At present, there is too much teaching that is satisfactory and not enough that is good. Teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged. Through their marking of pupils' work, teachers do not always make sure that pupils know how to improve and reach the targets they are given. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and the care and pastoral support that pupils receive are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers, including governors, have an adequate idea of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, planning for improvement is not always precise enough to measure outcomes, especially those linked to raising achievement and standards. Parents are generally very supportive of the work the school does, but a few are not. Most of this very small minority are concerned that their views are not sought and taken into consideration. The headteacher agrees that more could be done in his area.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children generally start school with attainment that is well below that expected for four-year-olds. By the end of Reception, only a few children reach average levels, particularly

in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and the development of personal and social skills. Nevertheless, in relation to their starting points, achievement is satisfactory overall. Personal and social skills are promoted well in all the children do. As a result, they achieve well in this area. A few higher attaining children achieve well as they develop literacy, language and mathematical skills. Teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally good. Children have good opportunities to develop information and communication technology skills and thoroughly enjoy learning using the interactive whiteboards on the classroom wall. Relationships are good. Consequently, children feel secure and demonstrate positive attitudes to life in school and the importance of learning.

Parents say they are pleased with how quickly their children settle into school. This is because induction procedures are good. Children behave well because adults expect them to. During inspection they were seen to be really enjoying singing a song about Goldilocks and the Three Bears, although not all were able to fully take part because of their limited language and communication skills. Lessons do not always run at a swift pace because activities are not consistently enjoyable and exciting. At times, not all children with different levels of ability are sufficiently challenged. Children have good opportunities to make marks on paper and begin to write letters and words. However, teachers do not always give them suitable guidance to enable them to move to the next step and reach their targets. Health and safety arrangements are secure and the pastoral support that children receive is good, enabling them to grow into sensible and well-behaved children. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The system to track children's progress is satisfactory and enables teachers to keep check on how children are doing. All adults work well together and have a sound idea of how these young children learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good across the school by checking that all pupils, including those in Reception, are constantly challenged so that they all make good progress.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity and different religions in modern Britain.
- Improve teachers' marking so that pupils are given precise guidance on what is needed to improve and reach the targets they are given.
- Ensure that all management tasks have a much sharper focus on measurable outcomes that are linked to raising achievement and standards.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The current Year 2 pupils are on course to reach standards that are broadly average in writing, mathematics and science and below average in reading. The number of pupils reaching average standards, particularly in reading and writing, has improved considerably since 2008. This is because of a whole-school focus on the teaching of writing. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' starting points at the start of Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates because they are soundly supported in all they do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy being at school, although some show a lack of enthusiasm for their work in lessons, particularly when teaching lacks interest and excitement. They usually conduct themselves sensibly in and around the school and ensure that they and others are safe. In general, pupils relate well to each other and the adults who help them. They enthusiastically volunteer to be monitors in and around the school and take these roles seriously. This contributes to the smooth running of the school day. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to others in the community through fundraising events, especially at harvest time and at Christmas. Older pupils talk sensibly about raising funds for those less fortunate than themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In most lessons observed, parts of lessons were good. Pupils learn well when activities are exciting, for example when they use computers to extend skills and knowledge or work and play in the Forest school and the pace of lessons does not slow down. Adults generally develop good relationships with their pupils. They have high expectations regarding behaviour. As a result, behaviour is good in lessons, and attitudes to learning are positive. Where lessons are less successful, teachers do not ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged and do not continually check that all pupils understand what they are supposed to be doing. Teaching assistants generally contribute to pupils' learning, but at times could be used more effectively to give additional support to individuals.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Links between the Reception classes and Year 1 have been effectively developed and the Key Stage 1 curriculum builds soundly on what has gone on before. In many ways, the curriculum caters satisfactorily for the pupils' different abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but at times, not all pupils are sufficiently challenged. In addition, pupils' understanding of the cultures, beliefs and religions found today in modern Britain is limited. The school rightly focuses on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and the emphasis on phonics is beginning to show an improvement in their reading and writing skills. Throughout the school, there is a strong commitment towards encouraging pupils to eat healthily. The provision for art is strong and is reflected in the way the school celebrates pupils' achievements by displaying their efforts for all to see. Many enrichment activities are offered which develops learning in most subject areas, but especially pupils' development of personal and social skills. In addition, the Forest school contributes well to pupils' environmental awareness as well as achievement in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are securely in place and pupils are soundly looked after. Pupils who find learning difficult and those who present other challenges are well supported

by external agencies. As a result, pupils say they feel very safe and secure and are confident that they can confide in an adult if they have concerns. Pupils' progress is regularly tracked as pupils move through the school. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally supportive. However, it is not successful in ensuring that all pupils are given precise guidance on what is needed for further improvement. Not all pupils know their targets and there is little reference to these either in teachers' marking or in lessons. Targets are not yet fully contributing to improving pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has successfully developed and motivated her leadership team. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have made a sound start in developing their subject areas, but are not yet adequately focused on raising achievement and standards. There is a satisfactory structured plan of activities for further improvement, but the focus is too broad and this hinders the pace of improvement, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough and, as a result, leaders and managers do not have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching. Measures to promote community cohesion are satisfactory, but are in the early stages of development. The governors are soundly informed and, as a result, the way they support and challenge the school is satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The satisfactory progress the school has made, through recent improvements such as improving standards at the end of Year 2 and challenging higher attaining pupils, shows the school has satisfactory capacity for further development.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colmers Farm Infant School, Birmingham B45 9PB

We would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school recently. We especially liked seeing you enjoying yourselves as you drew pictures of frogs in the Forest school. Most of you behave well, but a few of you sometimes 'let the side down'. You go to a satisfactory school that enables you to make satisfactory progress.

These are the main things we found out about your school.

- Children in Reception get off to a satisfactory start.
- You learn lots about the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- The care and support that you receive are satisfactory.
- You are keen and eager to do jobs around the school and are thoughtful and kind as you raise money for people who are not as fortunate as you are.
- The leadership and management are satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory, and occasionally good.
- Most of you attend each day, but a small minority of you need to attend more regularly.
- By the time you leave in Year 2, you reach standards that are similar to those of pupils in most schools.

We have asked the school to do four things to improve the education you receive.

- Make sure that your headteacher and teachers check carefully how well you are taught to make sure you all make good progress.
- Help you learn more about different religions, beliefs and ways of life that are found in Britain today.
- Make sure that when teachers mark your work, they clearly show you what you need to do to improve and reach your targets.
- Make clearer plans that focus exactly on the most important things that are needed to keep the school improving.

You too can help by continuing to work hard every day.

Best wishes

Nina Bee

Lead inspector