

Featherstone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103318
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323795
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Kerry Rochester

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	195
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	Silvia MacFarlane
Headteacher	Tim Starkey
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Glenville Drive Birmingham B23 6PR
Telephone number	01213 732529
Fax number	01213 776347

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Featherstone is slightly smaller than the average primary school, and draws the majority of its pupils from the adjacent housing estates. A large proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and an above average number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. The school offers a breakfast club and a private provider offers after school childcare facilities for pupils aged 3 to 11. The school has gained the Activemark and the National Healthy Schools Award. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for pupils. Good links with local schools and outside agencies support the positive contribution to the pupils' personal development. Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are below average. Because of improved teaching, they are now attaining standards that are broadly average on entry to Year 1. However there are limited opportunities for physical or creative activities in the outdoor environment. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress overall and standards are rising in response to improvements in teaching. However, standards are still below average in Year 6 because of pupils' past underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in reading and writing and good progress in mathematics as work is tailored well to their needs.

Within an overall picture of satisfactory teaching, there are inconsistencies. Teachers generally plan appropriate work for the different abilities in each class. Their assessments however are not always as precise as they need to be in order to ensure that work is always matched accurately to the needs of individual pupils, particularly in writing.

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They enjoy school and involve themselves in the school council, extra-curricular activities and the breakfast club. School councillors play an active role within the community and are very enthusiastic about their involvement in recent staff appointments. Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe because they are well cared for in a nurturing environment. They know where to seek help if they need it. A few parents expressed concern regarding the lack of support from the school with bullying issues; however, discussions with the pupils showed that bullying was dealt with effectively by the school. Throughout the school, pupils especially like the wide range of clubs and other activities that enrich the satisfactory curriculum. Although attendance is slightly below average, it is improving as a result of the school's effective procedures to deal with absences.

The school has appropriate systems in place to monitor pupils' attainment and progress and uses this information satisfactorily to set pupils targets for improvement. Too often the targets are too broad and do not help pupils to fully understand the next steps in their learning. The school has introduced procedures to involve pupils more constructively in assessing their own progress. However, these are not yet used consistently and it is too early to be sure that they will have a sustainable impact on improving pupils' progress.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher is well supported by the school's deputy headteacher. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and support its work energetically. However, they have not yet fully developed their role as a 'critical friend'. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. There is a clear action plan and the pupils have regular opportunities to participate in the community. As yet, the school is not making the best use of its evaluation of community cohesion. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, for example in implementing monitoring systems for the leadership team, but there is more to be done if standards are to rise. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in Reception, making good progress in their learning. Support for the high proportion of children whose first language is not English is good and they make good progress, as do children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The children thrive in a warm and supportive atmosphere. They show great independence and confidence when working alone and respond well to the adults who teach them. The children understand safety measures and conduct themselves responsibly and safely, even when excitedly involved in their 'mini-beast' hunt.

Good teaching leads to children's enthusiasm for learning. Children's achievement in all areas of learning is good. As a result of the limited outdoor provision in physical and creative development the children do not have the opportunity to develop a wide variety of physical or creative skills. They understand that their fruit keeps them healthy. Assessments of the children lead to informed evaluations of the children's needs, and effective action is taken to intervene where there is underachievement. Leadership is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and accelerate pupils' progress in writing by: ensuring teachers plan work that effectively challenges all groups of pupils engaging pupils actively in assessing their own progress and setting their own targets improving the consistency of marking and using formative marking to support pupils' learning and development further.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that senior leaders monitor more rigorously and provide clear guidance for teachers on how to improve the quality of their teaching.
- Improve the outdoor learning environment by developing further the provision for physical and creative development.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The children enter Reception with skills below national expectations and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress through to Year 2 where standards are average. In the recent past, pupils have not made enough progress and standards are below average levels in Year 6. Nevertheless, the results of the 2008 national tests show that pupils made satisfactory progress in mathematics, science and English. Pupils currently in Years 1 to 6 are making good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Pupil's progress in writing across the school is generally satisfactory although a small number of pupils are making only limited progress. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in reading and writing and good progress in mathematics because of the good, well-targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils are caring and polite and their personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with particular strengths in pupils' moral and social development. They respond warmly to the school's reward systems and appreciate and value each other's efforts and successes. This was demonstrated in a whole-school assembly which reinforced the caring and supportive ethos of the school. Behaviour is good and pupils generally enjoy their work and concentrate well in lessons, even when there is insufficient challenge. Members of the school council are proud of the role they play in school decisions and enjoy working cooperatively and sharing ideas. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and play and work together safely. Their acquisition of basic skills to prepare them for the next stage of their education is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Where teaching and learning are best, teachers use questions very well, lessons are well planned and pupils are focused on the task, due to appropriate pitch and challenge. In most lessons, teaching assistants contribute well to small-group work and individual instruction. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. In the less effective lessons, work is not as clearly planned to match pupils' needs, the pace of learning is not brisk enough, expectations are too low and some lessons lack challenge. Marking of pupils' work and target setting are inconsistent and do not help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. There are still too many lessons that are only satisfactory. Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently rigorously in order to correctly identify and tackle any weaknesses.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and covers all of the required subjects. It is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children in the Reception class have a carefully planned curriculum that meets their needs well. The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for progress in basic skills. There is access to information and communication technology for all pupils and this is used well in some lessons to support effective learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of sports and physical education. There are a number of lunchtime clubs which pupils enjoy attending.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care and support are a strength of the school and the staff provide a safe and nurturing environment. Pupils show a high level of respect and value each other's efforts. The school complies with all requirements for child protection and safeguarding. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and are confident that staff will resolve any issues of concern. There are satisfactory systems in place for the assessment and tracking of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities,

and suitable intervention for their provision. Support for those pupils learning English as an additional language in all years is good and staff work well with a wide range of outside agencies to promote their well-being. Children arriving from other countries are carefully assessed and well supported. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory. Pupils are given targets in literacy and numeracy, but some targets are too general and as a result some pupils do not fully understand how to move on in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders work hard to ensure that all pupils are well cared for. The school has established tracking systems since the last inspection. However, there has been a lack of rigour in monitoring and evaluating pupils' achievement, leading to a varied understanding of pupils' progress across the school. Targets are not challenging enough and there is too much teaching that is only satisfactory. Subject leaders are not yet having sufficient impact on improving pupils' progress quickly enough. The school has an action plan and a number of activities are in place to promote community cohesion, which is satisfactory. In particular, the school works well with the local community. Governors based on their improving understanding of the school's performance are beginning to challenge senior leaders more effectively and hold them to account. Based on the improvements since the last inspection, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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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?	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?	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?	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	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**

20 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Featherstone Primary School, Birmingham, B23 6PR

My colleagues and I enjoyed our recent visit to your school. We really appreciated the way you greeted us and made us feel very welcome. A special thanks to those of you to whom we talked at lunchtime and during lessons; you conducted yourselves well. Your school has continued to improve since it was last inspected and it provides you with a satisfactory education.

These are some of the things that the school does well.

- You behave well and you are polite, friendly and respectful. This helps to make the school a calm and welcoming place for you to be.
- All adults look after you really well and you feel safe in school.
- The children in the Reception classes make good progress.
- Your school has a range of clubs that you enjoy attending and you really like physical education and sports which help you keep fit.

In order to help the school become even better, we have asked the staff to do the following:

- make sure you are given targets that tell you what you need to learn next and encourage you to keep a check on how well you are doing in your work
- ensure teachers mark your work in a way that will help you improve
- improve the quality of teaching so that you are challenged to do as well as you can, particularly in your writing
- provide children in the Reception class with better playground equipment so they can have lots of different experiences in their learning.

As you can see, you have a big part to play in this. Work hard in lessons and do your very best to improve!

Thank you again for all your help in the inspection and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Kerry Rochester

Lead inspector