

Ferrars Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109539
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	337316
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cathy Young
Headteacher	Ms Leigh Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed learning in each of the 10 classes, visited 22 lessons and observed the work of 11 teachers. The inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including tracking of pupils' progress, school planning and records of meetings of the governing body. Inspectors also evaluated samples of pupils' recent work and documents regarding safeguarding. Questionnaires from 46 parents and carers, 132 pupils and 20 staff were scrutinised.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can, especially in mathematics
- if the personal development and well-being of the pupils is effective and if attendance is improving
- whether assessment information is used well enough to provide consistently challenging and interesting work for all groups of pupils
- if the work of the school is monitored and evaluated rigorously enough to identify the right areas for further improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average size infant school in Luton. More than three quarters of the pupils come from a range of ethnic minority groups. There are 26 languages spoken by pupils at home and about half speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is close to the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above that seen in most schools with these pupils having a range of learning and health related difficulties. The school is taking part in early discussions concerning the possible amalgamations of Luton schools. The school holds Healthy Living and Activemark awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Parents believe their children like coming to school and most pupils say so too. They especially like their teachers and making new friends. Children enter the school with a very wide range of early experiences and skills, which overall are a little below the expectations for their age. Many initially are very quiet but they settle well and make good overall progress as they move through the school. Almost all pupils, including those with additional needs and those learning English, grow in confidence and often become chatty and confident young learners. By the age of seven standards in English are slightly above average and many pupils do well in their writing. This helps them prepare well for their future. Standards in mathematics are not as high because some pupils do not have the skills and confidence to use what they know about numbers to solve mathematical problems.

Pupils' personal development is good and has a positive impact on learning. Many are keen to please the adults around them and therefore try hard and behave well. For their age they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their friends safe, and how exercise helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Attendance is average and improving as the school does much to stress the benefits of regular attendance.

The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is good but somewhat variable. Staff manage pupils well and use resources such as interactive white boards to illustrate what pupils are to learn. However, the use of assessment information to set challenging tasks for different groups of pupils is not consistent and in some lessons work is too easy. Some staff plan lots of opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas but others do this less effectively. The school works hard to enrich the curriculum through a programme of visits and visitors which the pupils enjoy. The mathematics curriculum, while satisfactory, does not ensure there are enough exciting opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves and solve problems.

The leadership and management of the school are good. There is a newly-established senior management team and some recently appointed governors. Together, with experienced personnel, this is ensuring the school continues to move forward and has a good capacity for further improvement. The school serves a very diverse area with widely differing expectations. There are generally good links with parents although relatively few feel really knowledgeable about the life of the school. While the school tries to involve everyone, it does not introduce many new activities or regularly revisit ideas it has tried in order to involve more parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Extend the effective practice in teaching and learning by:
 - making consistent use of the range of assessment information to set challenging work for all groups of pupils
 - developing the range of opportunities for pupils to use their skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Extend the links with parents and their involvement in the life and work of the school in order to better support their children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with skills that, while mixed, are close to the expectations for their age. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress overall and many start to blossom and become much more confident learners. This helps pupils prepare well for their future. Most, including those at the early stages of English, develop a wider and more descriptive vocabulary and chat happily to their friends and the adults around them. They make good gains in reading and writing so that at the age of seven standards are above average in these areas. This is illustrated in an effective Year 1 lesson when pupils began to understand more about alphabetical order when deciding which of three words comes before the others when using an alphabet line. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics but they do not always develop speedy recall of number facts and sometimes struggle to know what to do when faced with new work or a mathematical problem to solve. Data indicate that girls make slightly less progress than boys in some areas. This is, in part, because some girls are very quiet. The school is tracking their progress and supporting them appropriately. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets.

Pupils behave well in and around the school, as seen in their concentration and good behaviour in a whole-school celebration of Easter. Pupils from different ethnic groups get on well together. There is little evidence of bullying and, should minor mis-behaviour occur, staff deal with this well resulting in pupils having a good understanding of right and wrong. Pupils respond positively to the many opportunities to work together and develop their social skills. They develop good cultural awareness through exploring areas of the curriculum. The school, however, does not make full use of the diversity of the community as a learning resource. There are good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, such as acting as milk and register monitors. The school council is proud of how they have helped to improve the butterfly garden and recycling. Through links with a range of external agencies, there are good opportunities for pupils to develop an active lifestyle. School lunches are healthy but the sale of poor quality drinks does little to support healthy choices. The school encourages wise choices in packed lunches but much more remains to be done to persuade some families of the benefits of a healthy diet. Attendance is satisfactory and improving because the school works effectively to monitor irregular attendance and works with families to improve this.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

While the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, this is variable. Learning is good when staff plan carefully to meet the different needs of pupils within the class or in setting arrangements for older pupils in English and mathematics. Teaching is best in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is predominantly good in Year 1. For example, children in a Reception group made good progress in understanding hours and half hours when using their home-made clocks and learning where the minute and hour hands should be. In Year 2, the quality of teaching is more mixed because some staff do not make consistently effective use of information about the progress pupils are making to provide challenging activities for all groups within a lesson. In mathematics and writing activities, pupils within a set sometimes have to complete the same quite limiting work sheet that does little to extend their thinking.

The curriculum is broad and well balanced with an effective emphasis on the development of basic skills particularly in writing, although less effectively in mathematics. The school has done much to extend the opportunities for both factual and imaginative writing and to teach the skills of spelling well. Extra-curricular clubs and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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activities cover a good range of areas and are well attended.

The care, guidance and support of pupils is good because staff know the pupils well and recognise when they need additional support. This includes those new to learning English. While there is little mother-tongue support for pupils, the support given to help develop their confidence in speaking English is sensitive to the pupils' different needs. Transition arrangements into and within the school and subsequently into Key Stage 2 are all well managed. Vulnerable children are identified and additional help provided including through the role of the Family Worker. Pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties are supported well, although their targets are not always specific enough. At lunchtime, staff sometimes miss opportunities to help pupils develop good table manners and try foods they are unfamiliar with.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a good understanding of what works well and where improvement is needed. The deputy headteacher is developing her role well, and observations of the quality of teaching and learning by senior staff are accurate and secure. This places the school in a good position to identify where further improvement is needed. Some other senior roles, including subject leaders, are new but staff have had training in how to carry out their roles and are well placed to develop their effectiveness. Governance is good with experienced governors and the recently elected Chair having a good grasp of current provision and of their role and responsibilities. There is the potential for the whole group to be even more effective when those who were recently elected develop their involvement through a programme of focussed visits to the school. The school has quite a large budgetary underspend identified for specific projects and generally provides good value for money.

The school has developed good links with a wide range of agencies that support learning, including for pupils with additional needs. Staff promote equality of opportunity well and make effective use of tracking information to identify whether, for instance, girls or pupils from a specific ethnic group are falling behind and need additional support. Safeguarding procedures are good because the school has strategies and procedures to support pupils and all records are well maintained. But, the school could do more to help identify if pupils have concerns. The newly appointed coordinator for the small number of looked after children is making a positive impact on provision. The

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school works hard to promote cohesion between local groups within the community but has not yet fully developed the global aspects to this work. The links with parents from the various communities are generally good as shown in the very high level of attendance at Easter celebrations. While the school tries to involve everyone and has recently appointed additional Family Workers, staff miss some opportunities to further involve parents in the work of the school and help them to help their children at home.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Nursery and three parallel Reception classes is good and enables the children to settle well. On entry their skills and experiences are very mixed. Some of the children of second or third generation English-speaking families and are bi-lingual. Some are new to the country or have limited experiences beyond their home environment. There is a good system to check and track the progress children make as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage. This data and inspection observations confirm that children of all abilities and from different ethnic groups make good progress. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are generally good. Staff plan an interesting range of activities that include a balance of adult led and child chosen activities. Children particularly enjoy activities, such as planting seeds in a Reception class and making healthy sandwiches in Nursery, because they have opportunities to make choices in what they do. Staff make good use of questions to promote discussion. The leadership and management of the provision are good although hampered by the physical distance between the Nursery and Reception which makes liaison difficult. Staff are keenly aware that, during the period of uncertainty about the school's future, the

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outdoor areas and play resources have not been updated and are somewhat bland.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Relatively few parents replied to the inspection questionnaire. Of those who did, most like the quality of care and education provided. Several note that their children really like their teachers and one indicated, 'My daughter wants to go to school at the weekends and wanted to take her teacher on holiday with us.' The main concerns identified include whether the school meets the individual needs of all pupils, if staff deal well enough with behaviour and whether parental suggestions are taken note of. Inspectors agree that at times teaching does not meet the needs of a few pupils particularly well but believe that behaviour is good. School leaders take on board the comments of parents but are not always able to act upon these because of the very different views of the school community. Parents support activities such as Easter celebrations well but senior staff do not always do enough to inform and involve parents in the day-to-day life and work of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ferrars Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 337 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	65	15	33	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	63	16	35	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	57	16	35	4	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	41	22	48	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	52	22	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	43	22	48	4	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	39	28	61	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	39	19	41	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	39	19	41	7	15	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	28	24	52	5	11	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	24	27	59	5	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	33	25	54	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	46	24	52	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferrars Infant School, Luton, LU4 0LL

Thank you very much for making the inspection team welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to several of you, including those on the school council who were good at explaining what you all do. We also liked meeting several of you in lessons, at breaktimes and when we attended assemblies. I particularly enjoyed chatting to some of you at lunchtime and my colleague enjoyed the Easter hat parade. Thank you also for the questionnaire returns some of you filled in for the inspection. These are some of the findings from the visit.

We think your school is a good school, you make good progress and achieve well. We noticed that the staff care for you well and this means you feel safe and like school. We were pleased to see how well your school works with other groups and that if you need some extra help staff check carefully what you need. We were also pleased to see that you behave well and that you get on with those from different groups.

To improve your school further, we have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- make sure that teachers provide work that is not too easy for you and help you to develop the skills and confidence to solve mathematical problems more speedily
- find ways to involve your parents more in school activities so that they can support your learning.

You can also help your school by making sure that all of you, and particularly the girls, offer your ideas more in discussions. Also can some of you encourage your parents to think even more carefully about what they give you eat in your packed lunches and make sure you attend school regularly?

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector

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