

Firfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112516
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	337954
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Angela Kirk

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 of pupils on the school roll	402
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Robertson
Headteacher	Nicola Smith
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at an analysis of pupils' progress, governors' meeting records, development planning and monitoring, local authority reports, a range of policies and procedures and samples of pupils' work. They also analysed 99 questionnaires returned from parents and carers as well as responses from pupils and staff.

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

- the achievement of all pupils, especially in writing
- the quality of teaching, particularly with regard to pupil progress
- the effectiveness of the school's new creative curriculum in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being
- the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and its impact on improving attainment and progress
- the quality of teaching and the progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage across all the areas of learning

Information about the school

Firfield is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background or who speak English as an additional language is very low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, with most of those pupils' needs relating to specific learning difficulties. Fewer than average pupils are eligible for free school meals. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2009 after four changes of leadership in the previous three years. The school has gained a Healthy Schools Award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. It makes good provision for pupils' personal development and ensures that pupils are well cared for, safe and secure. Pupils' behaviour is good and they are friendly and welcoming. Parents are supportive of the school; typical comments include, 'Firfield is a very friendly, happy and inclusive school. Parents are always welcomed and staff are very approachable and caring.'

Children in Reception settle in quickly and are supported well by conscientious staff. They make satisfactory progress, but still enter Year 1 with skills in literacy lower than those nationally. By the time pupils leave the school, they have made satisfactory progress, reaching average standards. There are no significant ongoing differences in the progress made relating to pupils' gender or ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Across the school, progress in writing is not as good as in other subjects. The introduction of a dedicated phonics session in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 has already started to impact positively on pupils' progress. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills and these skills are not yet taught systematically to enable effective progression.

Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory. Positive relationships and good classroom management were evident in all lessons. However, the quality of lessons observed ranged from good to inadequate. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers do not always mark pupils' work effectively in order for pupils to understand the next step needed for their learning. For example, pupils' targets are in place and understood by most pupils, but are not regularly linked to their work. Pupils take much pride in their work, which is well presented. The school's new creative curriculum is broad and supported by a range of enrichment activities. However, some subjects, particularly science and information and communication technology are not well balanced over time and planned work on the progression of skills has yet to be completed.

The school is benefitting from the dynamic leadership of a new headteacher who has already monitored the work of the school carefully and identified the key areas for improvement. Senior leaders and governors are dedicated and understand the role that they have started to play in moving the school forward. Overall, this more effective leadership and management have impacted positively on the work of the school. Consequently, the school demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that at least 80% is good by December 2010 by
 - improving staff access to continuous professional development
 - ensuring that tasks accurately match pupils ability
 - linking marking more consistently to pupils' targets
- Improve the balance in the curriculum in science and information and communication technology, especially in Key Stage 2, and ensure that there is a clear progression in skills.
- Improve pupil progress in writing so that pupils make good progress by July 2011 by
 - increasing the opportunities for extended writing
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons, especially for more able pupils
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons. They work effectively across a range of subjects showing good cooperation and concentration. For example, pupils in a Year 5 literacy lesson share their ideas enthusiastically with each other when undertaking characterisation work about a young soldier in World War I. Good progress is made in reading, but pupils' skills in writing are progressing at too slow a rate. In recent years, standards overall have fallen from above average to average at the end of Key Stage 2. Writing at the end of Key Stage 1 has also declined although in 2009, significantly higher numbers of pupils attained level 4+ in mathematics compared to those nationally. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement, but school records show that achievement is improving again.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are well challenged in observed lessons resulting in good progress. For example in a literacy lesson pupils used a 'Little Red Riding Hood' text to identify descriptive language and write their own appropriate similes to enrich the text still further. Pupils' targets in literacy and numeracy have been introduced and in the Year 4 mathematics lesson which was observed, the learning of pupils was checked carefully on their various targets relating to measurement.

Pupils have a good attitude towards their learning. Behaviour and relationships are good and the pupils are immensely proud of their school. They say that they feel safe and are very confident that adults in school provide good support for them. Minor disputes are quickly and effectively dealt with and pupils say that there is no bullying or racism. A 'worry box' is provided just in case a pupil does not want to raise an issue personally. Pupils understand the need to stay healthy and choose to make healthy choices. Participation in sport and other physical activities is good. They are willing to take on

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responsibilities in school and pupils participate in a wide range of functions and events in the local area. Attendance is above average and rising. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop capabilities for enterprise and work place skills. For example, the School Council interviewed candidates for the post of deputy head recently.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

There are clear pockets of good practice in teaching. Teachers plan interesting activities and pupils are usually very engaged in their work, participating well in discussions. New planning introduced this term has proved effective in improving the quality of teaching, together with the introduction of pupil targets and more effective teacher assessment. Teachers have only just started to receive significant effective professional development to improve teaching. Teachers do not always match tasks accurately to pupils' ability; especially for the more able and pupils' targets are not closely linked to marking. The curriculum is broad and is enriched through a variety of initiatives such as multicultural arts week. There is good take up extra-curricular provision and there is

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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some account of adapting provision to pupil need for example in writing. However, the curriculum, especially in Years 3 to 6 lacks balance, particularly in science and information and communication technology. All staff make a good contribution to ensuring that pupils are well cared for. The school is proactive in ensuring extra support for pupils when appropriate, adapting practice to maximise progress and ensuring that pupils feel safe, happy and secure. There is targeted support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and its impact is effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There has been a marked improvement in the last eight to ten months in the quality of the school's self evaluation and in the enthusiasm and impact of senior leaders in key areas. School self-evaluation is now good and the school has identified the right priorities. Areas of weakness are being tackled systematically although the school acknowledges there is much work still to be done. The strong and effective leadership of the new headteacher has been instrumental in these improvements and the school has had excellent support from the local authority. Target setting is now realistic as well as challenging and there is substantial evidence that outcomes for pupils are improving. The governing body is well organised and visible in school. The monitoring of a range of subjects has taken place and the governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They hold the school to account, but their monitoring is not always focused on the priorities in the school improvement plan to ensure maximum impact for their hard work. The school provides equal opportunities for learning for all pupils and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. Improved links have been made with parents and carers, for example, pupils' target have been shared. The school works effectively with its partners; transition to secondary school being particularly supportive. Safeguarding is secure and meets requirements. The school has put in place its policy for improving community cohesion. Pupils know about other cultures and religions, but have not had significant first hand experiences of mixing with people from backgrounds and cultures different to their own.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Reception with skills and understanding that are expected for their age, but are much lower in communication for language and literacy. Children make satisfactory progress, but are still below average in literacy when their enter Year 1. Staff provide a secure and supportive environment for learning. Relationships with parents and carers are satisfactory. External support from the local authority has led to more structured schemes of work and activities which are now more closely linked to the areas of learning. New assessment systems are providing the school with more accurate measurement of baseline information and the progress of children. There is a good balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities and satisfactory teaching is developing the children's interests, curiosity, independence and social skills. The school is beginning to develop effective outdoor learning, but this has not yet been extended across all areas of the curriculum.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are happy with the school's work. A few parents expressed concern about the number of changes in the leadership of the school in recent years and the inspectors agree that these frequent changes have impacted negatively on the performance of the school. Parents felt particularly well informed about the progress of their child and a number commented that they appreciated the new and helpful report that had been sent home this term.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Firfield Primary 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 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 402 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	71	27	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	72	25	25	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	51	48	48	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	40	56	57	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	45	51	52	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	44	54	55	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	42	51	52	5	5	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)	38	38	52	53	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	42	49	49	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	25	59	60	3	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	26	61	62	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	29	59	60	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	58	38	38	1	1	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.



25 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firfield Primary School, Breaston, DE72 3EF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed the discussions we had with you and learnt a lot about the work and activities that you do at school. We think that Firfield is a satisfactory school. The youngest children settle in well and learn through a wide variety of interesting activities. You are kind and considerate and behave well. We talked with a number of pupils, and you explained about the good understanding that you have about living healthily and about various activities that you have taken part in locally. You make satisfactory progress and reach average standards overall by the time you finish in Year 6. It was clear to us how much you enjoy school and you told us that you feel safe and that the staff care and look after you very well.

We have asked your school to do three things to help it improve further:

Improve teaching by enabling your teachers to learn about the latest methods and ideas in teaching, ensuring that tasks accurately match your ability and by linking marking more consistently to your targets.

Improve the balance in the curriculum so that science and information technology are taught more often, but in smaller blocks.

Improve pupil progress in by increasing the opportunities for extended writing and increasing the level of challenge in lessons, especially for those of you who are more able.

Remember, you can help to make your school even better by continuing to work hard and by always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Angela Kirk

Lead Inspector

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