

Fairfield First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116675
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	338862
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brad Ashton
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Hedar
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
School address	Stourbridge Road Fairfield Bromsgrove
Telephone number	01527 873081
Fax number	01527 873081
Email address	head@fairfield.worcs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with the pupils, teachers, assistant headteacher, headteacher and chair of governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents and policies. They also analysed responses to the questionnaire by staff and pupils and the 44 returned by parents.

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

- the extent to which the teaching, the assessment and the curriculum meet the needs of pupils in ensuring that they make good progress
- how effectively the headteacher and governors monitor and evaluate school improvement activities
- how well the school has planned and evaluated its provision for community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than average. There are considerably more boys than girls. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class.

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is small. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A very small number of pupils have statements of special educational needs.

The school has received a Healthy School Award, the Activemark and an Eco-Schools Green Flag 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils do well because of the effective teaching and excellent care, guidance and support they receive. The pupils make good progress from the time they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most reach the level of attainment expected by the end of Year 4, and many exceed it.

The teaching meets the needs of pupils well. Lessons are lively and interesting. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well. They tailor tasks to the pupils' needs and abilities so that they are well challenged and those who need extra help are well supported. The school is particularly effective in helping to remove barriers to learning for those who experience difficulties. The teachers carefully monitor the performance of each pupil, and plan out the provision needed to help them all to achieve well. The pupils enjoy lessons, participate fully, and respond very positively to their teachers. The teachers mark the pupils' work conscientiously, and extended writing is marked in detail to identify how each pupil might improve. However, these comments do not always have an impact on the pupils' subsequent work.

All of the adults who work in the school generate a very positive and welcoming environment that is greatly appreciated by parents. The vast majority of parents are highly satisfied with the work of the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors are striving to improve the provision that they make for all pupils. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of lessons are comprehensive and have successfully maintained a good level of performance. However, evaluation is not sufficiently focused on the pupils' learning and progress so as to raise this to the very highest standard.

The school has good capacity to improve and has been successful in improving aspects of both provision and particularly in outcomes for individual pupils. Planning for improvement, however, is not sufficiently sophisticated or precise to harness the ambition and drive of the staff to achieve excellent, rather than good, outcomes for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the monitoring of the quality of lessons has a sharper focus on learning and the progress made by pupils.
 - Improve school development planning by identifying more precise criteria against which the impact on outcomes for pupils can be measured.
 - Extend the use of marking that highlights how pupils can improve their work

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and ensure that they have the opportunities to respond and benefit from the comments made by their teachers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils are achieving well and enjoy lessons very much. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils make good progress and build on the effective start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The pupils are keen to do well, listen carefully to their teachers, and learn and practise new skills enthusiastically. In Years 1 and 2, the teacher engages the pupils in activities set in interesting contexts that encourage them to talk about new sentences and share them with the class. As a result, their confidence grows and they generate carefully constructed phrases and sentences connected with 'and' and 'because'. The teachers model the kinds of sentences they want the pupils to write. In Years 2 and 3 similar approaches were used to encourage the pupils to retell a story. By working in pairs, the pupils increased their awareness of the organisation of a story, and its setting and characters. The results of national tests, and the work that they complete in lessons, show that the pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average by the end of Year 2.

In Years 3 and 4 the pupils continue to make good progress. This is confirmed by the school's comprehensive analysis of progress and is evident in lessons. For example, in one lesson observed they made good progress in developing their mathematical skills of estimation, measuring and recording.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported by teaching assistants, who provide excellent care and patient guidance. In some cases the school removes many obstacles to learning and so allows individual pupils to make increasingly good progress as they get older, and to attain at levels close to their peers.

The pupils say they feel very safe in school and that they are increasingly aware of risks. For example, they know about the dangers of the internet. The pupils have adopted eco-friendly and healthy attitudes to life. They compost waste and turn off lights, and say they have a healthy diet. The pupils participate in community activities and raise funds for a range of charities. In lessons, behaviour is consistently good and pupils show great curiosity and interest in a wide range of activities. They enjoy school; rates of attendance are high, and pupils' attitudes to learning are good throughout the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The teaching and the curriculum consistently motivate and engage the pupils in tasks that are well matched to their needs and interests. In Years 1 and 2, for example, the teacher has developed an 'internet cafe' as a role-play area. It also forms the backdrop to writing tasks in English and problem solving in mathematics. In mathematics, the pupils were set tasks that involved selecting the best containers for drinks, which extended their mathematical vocabulary and provided a good introduction to capacity. The teaching assistant's lively and enthusiastic approach very effectively engaged pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in conversations discussing and comparing the size of the containers.

In a well-managed guided reading lesson in Years 3 and 4, the teacher successfully matched a range of interesting tasks to the ages and abilities of the pupils, using both text and illustration to develop their understanding of story settings. The teaching assistant provided particularly effective support for individual pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for the pupils. It makes full use of its rural location and ensures that the pupils get a broad insight into the wider world through visits and visitors to the school. The pupils spoke enthusiastically and thoughtfully about a recent visit to a Hindu temple and the links that they are developing with a school of the same name in the United States of America. The building creates some limitations which have an impact, particularly on provision for physical education. The school makes the best of the available space. The very small hall is used for dance. For example, Years 2 and 3 developed very energetic routines to

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Bill Haley's 'Rock Around The Clock'. At the moment, a walk to the village hall and a minibus journey to the gymnasium at the middle school ensure that the pupils receive a broad physical education. However, there is much excitement that plans for a new multi-purpose hall are coming to fruition.

One parent encapsulated the views of many in saying that the pupils have 'very varied and interesting activities... the school offers its pupils an excellent environment in which to thrive'. The excellent care, guidance and support that the pupils receive underpin the very positive atmosphere within the school. Strong links with families, partnerships with agencies and very carefully planned provision combine to enable those who experience difficulties to overcome barriers to learning and make good progress.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff have high expectations and a very rigorous approach which ensures that the needs of all pupils are promoted equally. The procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are thoughtfully and carefully implemented. The governors are kept well informed about the school's work through visits to school, discussion at committee meetings, and the headteacher's comprehensive reports. The governors have increased their capacity to challenge the school's performance by broadening the range of their expertise, and are now playing an effective role as a 'critical friend' to the school.

The monitoring of the quality of teaching is comprehensive. Along with the many other strands of the school's self-evaluation, it provides leaders and managers with an accurate picture of the school's performance. Records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching are rigorous and provide helpful points for development. However, too few lesson observations focus incisively enough on learning and progress to provide a sharp insight into how the school might build on its good performance and thereby achieve excellent outcomes for all pupils.

The school development plan clearly outlines areas for improvement in all aspects of the school's work. While the plan will ensure that the school's good performance is maintained, it is unlikely to move its performance to outstanding because timescales are not precise enough, and the criteria against which success can be measured are too broad.

The school has taken effective steps, based on a secure appreciation of its rural context, to develop a cohesive community. Within the curriculum it promotes an understanding

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of religious diversity and, through links with a school in Birmingham, encourages an understanding of communities with greater ethnic diversity. One of the key features of the school's work within the wider community is the 'eco' work undertaken by the pupils. The partnership with Eco-Schools has benefited pupils' attitudes considerably.

The resources available to the school are used well to achieve good outcomes for pupils, and provide good value for money.

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

The children get off to a good start in the Reception class because they are well taught and are encouraged to be independent. They participate in an interesting range of activities, both those led by adults and ones that they choose themselves. As a result, they grow in confidence.

A number of parents commented on the smooth transition from pre-school settings to school, which they feel 'was handled extremely well, with open days, home visits and half-days in school'.

The children listen carefully, and most enter confidently into conversation - for example, during a session on letters and sounds the children offered a range of interesting words being with 'sh'. When choosing tasks themselves they concentrate well when using a computer or listening centre.

The teachers and adults make the best of the facilities available to them. The outdoor area is used creatively, but it is not easy to manage and does not allow an easy flow from indoors to outdoors. There is no covered area. Nevertheless, with wellingtons and

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coats the children enjoy the opportunities provided for them, while adults take every opportunity to extend learning, for example by using clipboards to record the score in a game where they were throwing beanbags into hoops.

The children make good progress and attain a secure level of development in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. They are well prepared for Year 1.

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

Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire are very pleased with the school. They feel that arrangements when children first start school are very effective. Most feel that the school meets the needs of their child well, whether they need additional help with learning or greater challenge to stretch them. Parents are particularly pleased with the welcoming environment and how easy it is to approach the staff.

The inspection findings are very similar to views expressed by most parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fairfield First 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 99 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	80	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	68	14	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	75	9	20	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	73	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	73	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	86	5	11	1	2	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)	30	68	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	64	15	34	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	68	10	23	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	57	11	25	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	82	7	16	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	89	5	11	0	0	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 Fairfield First School, Bromsgrove B61 9LZ

This letter is to tell you about what we found out during our recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your work and your school. I am also grateful to those of you in Years 3 and 4 who completed the questionnaire. Almost all of you said that you enjoy school, and one of you wrote that 'everyone is very kind at this school'. You attend a good school which is very caring. You all said that you feel safe at school, and those of you I spoke to told me that there was 'nothing' about the school that you would like to change.

The interesting activities you do at school have made you very thoughtful about staying healthy and about the environment. Many of you told me about the after-school clubs and visits to places of interest which you really appreciate and enjoy. You found the visit to the Hindu temple particularly interesting.

The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants are helping you to make good progress. The teachers mark your work, so that you know what you have to do to improve. Some of you told me that you don't always have the chance to respond to the teacher's comments. That's why I have asked the headteacher and teachers to look very closely at how you can get the most benefit from the comments they make on your work.

The school is led very well, and the headteacher is constantly checking how well it is doing so that improvements can be made to the opportunities that the school provides. I have asked that these activities and plans for improvement become clearer so that school can help everyone to reach the highest standards.

I hope that in the future your school is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector

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