

# Firs Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131725
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	341206
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Faysal Mikdadi

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	437
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Diane Brownhill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicholas Harris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Dreghorn Road Castle Bromwich Birmingham
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4643792
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 4645519
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@firs.bham.sch.uk

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

T: 08456 404045

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Over half of the time was spent looking at learning. Ten lessons taught by ten different teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its development plan, its data on attainment and progress, school policies and findings from 69 parental questionnaires and staff and pupils questionnaires.

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

- the school's data on attainment with specific reference to the large number of pupils who join at different times throughout the year, and only a small minority attending school from Reception to Year 6
- provision for enhancing pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

## Information about the school

The school is a larger than average primary school in an area of high unemployment. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. An increasing proportion of pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds. Over a third of all pupils use English as an additional language. The large majority of pupils join year groups at different times in the school year because their families move out of the area into new housing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is nearly twice the national average. The school has been awarded the Artsmark Silver Award and it is currently awaiting a decision on its Artsmark Gold Award application.

**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

Firs Primary School provides its pupils with a good quality of education and takes excellent care of them. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment and basic skills are broadly average and pupils' understanding of economic well-being is satisfactory. Pupils develop well because the adults in the school give them effective opportunities to enhance their social, emotional, personal and moral development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Enhancing social and moral development is a particular strength of the school. Pupils feel safe and they have a clear understanding of how to maintain a healthy life style. They learn effectively within a cohesive school community. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding.

The headteacher, senior and other leaders, teachers, staff and governors work productively together to ensure continuous improvement. They fully recognise the barriers to learning due to the pupils' low prior attainment on entry, and that the overwhelming majority join all year groups at different times in their school lives. Senior leaders have put in place procedures to provide a warm, happy, supportive learning environment, although the impact of the constant changes in the school population can be seen in the fluctuating standards. Pupils reflected the general views held when saying, 'I love my school because it makes me feel safe' and, 'I like my school because it helps me learn.' Some parents expressed concerns about safety outside the school. The inspectors found that the school supervises both arrival and departure carefully to ensure safety.

Staff have been particularly successful in improving pupils' social and communication skills. Pupils' literacy skills have advanced, and they genuinely enjoy the opportunities recently introduced in the creative learning journey project, which is beginning to show good results. Given pupils' low attainment on entry, these developments show good progress in basic skills. Senior leaders and subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning in a rigorous way. Their efforts have led to significant improvements in assessment strategies, the results of which help with planning lessons. Consequently, pupils' individual needs are effectively met. Teachers monitor progress effectively, which helps them to set realistic targets for pupils. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

The headteacher is well supported by deputy and assistant headteachers. Governance is good. Governors give effective support and, where necessary, challenge the school. Many governors visit the school regularly and observe what happens in classrooms. Both staff and governors have a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school. They have set up procedures that help allay the impact of irregular attendance, change of school population and the low prior attainment. For example,

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staff visit homes, keep in close touch with parents and carers, and make links with appropriate agencies that are involved in the children's lives. The school has also offered parenting classes, but the uptake has been disappointing.

Parents and carers and pupils speak well of teaching. Lessons effectively address the pupils' widely differing needs. The teaching seen was almost always at least good. A particular strength is the opportunities for pupils to enjoy their learning, to work independently and to be creative. Assessment strategies are successful in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work further. The curriculum is satisfactory and improving because of the recent addition of a strong focus on creativity, but this initiative has not yet had the full impact on learning that is intended.

Links with parents and carers are effective, and very helpful in settling new pupils into school quickly and in helping those moving on. Attendance is below average. Many parents choose to take unauthorised holidays during term time, and many children do not attend school on a regular basis.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
  - further developing strategies for countering the barriers caused by the high number of pupils joining the school at different times.
- Improve the curriculum by:
  - developing the creative curriculum started in September 2009.
- Improve attendance by:
  - exploring ways to encourage a significant minority of parents and carers to ensure their children's regular school attendance
  - training staff to use attendance data more effectively to target persistent non-attenders.
  - Contact the local authority as a matter of urgency to discuss the issue of road safety around the school.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

All groups of pupils make good progress. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress alongside other pupils in classes of wide ability. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who use English as an additional language, progress well and gain full access to the curriculum. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, although attainment is still below the national expectations, children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as well as in their creative skills and understanding of the world around them. By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is still below average, but by the end of Key Stage 2 it rises to be broadly average. Pupils are also successfully encouraged to use information and communication technology (ICT) successfully. A great deal of art and performing work

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takes place with the result of an increase in personal confidence and self-esteem. Pupils understand exactly what is expected of them and they respond well to, and have excellent relationships with adults in school. Pupils play collaboratively and considerately when in the playground. There are very few incidents of bullying or of racial harassment. When these occur, the school deals with them effectively, often contacting parents and carers and other agencies where needed. A careful record is kept of such incidents. Pupils feel comfortable in school and successfully take on responsibilities, including performing an assembly in front of the whole school and the few visiting parents and carers.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The quality of teaching is good. Assessment has improved and is effective in helping pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next in order to improve. In one lesson seen, pupils spent some time discussing the quality of their writing and linking it specifically to the criteria shared with them. They were able to present clear areas of their strengths in writing and to list their areas for improvement.

<sup>1</sup> 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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The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as the increasing number with English as an additional language. The school's Artsmark Award confirms the commitment to developing pupils' creative abilities. Initiatives have not yet had the impact intended on pupil's learning. The curriculum is further enhanced by extra-curricular activities, including visits, although take-up varies depending on the school's capacity to support events financially.

Pastoral care is outstanding. Teachers know the pupils very well and they are able to offer one to one support in a highly successful way. Those pupils who need immediate and continuous support show significant improvements as a result of being cared for so effectively. Links with other children's services are very helpful in making sure that the pupils continue to feel safe and secure in the school. Progress is carefully and accurately tracked and realistic targets are set. Tracking performance is used in planning future learning. Links with the home are good. The school does a great deal to get parents and carers involved in their children's learning. Well thought out measures are in place to help with parenting skills and with the management of learning at home. However, pupils' attendance remains a concern and staff do not use attendance data effectively to identify persistent non-attenders. Pupils who do not attend regularly lose the opportunities for learning. Parents and carers are welcomed into the school, and every morning and afternoon staff are on hand to talk to them. Typically, parents and carers approach the school regularly seeking teachers' help with their children's upbringing and receive valuable support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Self-evaluation is rigorous and leads to sustained improvement. Since his arrival, the headteacher has ensured that teaching continues to improve by empowering colleagues to be innovative in lessons to get better results from pupils. Leaders ensure that the school is a cohesive and happy community, where all pupils are intended to receive equal opportunity to achieve well and make improvement.

Senior leaders understand the needs of the local community, and maintain good links with homes and with children's services to create a cohesive and safe community within which pupils are effectively safeguarded at all times. Pupils' understanding of a wider

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national and global context is less secure. Staff recruitment is secure.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and attendance is satisfactory. Children enter with low prior attainment and quickly begin to make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in their creative skills and understanding of the world around them. By the time that they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, their attainment improves, but is below average in literacy and numeracy, partly because so much effort and time are devoted to dealing with other aspects of their personal development. Teachers make effective use of both indoor and outdoor facilities to help develop their pupils. Tracking progress is rigorous with excellent records kept on each child, showing how well they are doing and what needs to be done next to improve further. Learning through play is much enjoyed by children who take some responsibility for what they learn. The widely differing developmental needs of the children are well catered for with good results.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Parents' and carers' survey returns are largely positive and contain mostly supportive written comments. Although 14% consider that the school does not successfully help them get involved in their children's learning, inspectors found examples of good practice. Parents and carers expressed some concern about the traffic outside the school gates being potentially dangerous at the beginning and end of the school day. Inspectors agree that this is the case, especially because the road is rather narrow and gets even narrower with parents and carers parking briefly to drop their children off. This causes congestion with some accompanying impatience from drivers eager to move on. The headteacher and senior staff supervise children at the school gates every day in the morning and afternoon, and do what they can to dissuade particular parents and carers from parking irresponsibly.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Firs 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 437 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	62	24	35	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	55	30	43	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	41	36	52	5	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	38	40	58	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	41	39	57	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	32	37	54	9	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	36	42	61	2	3	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)	24	35	36	52	5	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	25	45	65	6	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	33	44	64	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	30	45	65	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	45	36	52	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	45	35	51	3	4	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



Thursday 4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firs Primary School, Birmingham, B36 8LL

Thank you very much for making our visit to your school so successful and so enjoyable. It was a pleasure watching Year 5 pupils perform so well in front of their friends and parents and carers. Thank you also for answering our questions and for showing us the many interesting things that you have done especially in your Creative Learning Journey.

Firs Primary is a good school. Your teachers and other adults in the school take excellent care of you. We understand why you said that you liked coming to school and that you enjoyed learning. Your school helps you to learn well and to make good progress. Your behaviour around the school is excellent. Your headteacher is given good support by everybody including the school governors.

To help your school become even better, we have asked your headteacher to do the following:

- raise standards of attainment so that you do better at all times
- make sure that you do more creative learning journey work
- make sure that attendance numbers go up
- ask the local authority as a matter of urgency to discuss the issue of road safety around the school.

You can help by making sure that you come to school regularly and on time and that you continue to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Faysal Mikdadi

Lead inspector

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