

Firs Farm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101989
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	323561
Inspection date	5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Whatson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	408
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Sue Fogden
Headteacher	Ms Frances Warhurst
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rayleigh Road Palmers Green London N13 5QP
Telephone number	020 8807 4292
Fax number	020 8803 9878

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the quality of provision and the progress made by Kurdish-speaking pupils, those of a Black Caribbean heritage and those pupils who have moderate learning difficulties
- the progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2
- confirmation of the school's view that pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding
- the impact of the school's efforts to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT), attendance and standards at the end of Year 2.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons and break times, from the school's documentation, particularly that relating to pupils' achievements, from interviews with staff, parents, governors and pupils, from results of national assessments, from samples of pupils' work and from parental views as expressed in questionnaires.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Firs Farm Primary School is much bigger than most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The school is ethnically diverse. A much higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attend the school than is found in most other schools. The three largest ethnic groups are those from a White background other than British, Black Caribbean and African heritage. For over half the pupils, English is not their first language. Many speak Turkish or Somali. This is a much higher proportion than in most for primary schools, although few are at an early stage of learning English. There is broadly the same number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and statements of special educational need as there are nationally. A substantial number of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Firs Farm Primary School is an outstanding school. The views of the majority of parents were echoed by two who wrote, 'The school has an excellent ethos of hard work and good behaviour with being welcoming at the same time', and another who said, 'Our son really enjoys school and speaks positively about his day-to-day activities and experiences'.

In relation to their starting points and capabilities, pupils make very good progress as they move through the school and many often make exceptional progress, especially in English. Over the last few years pupils have been making increasingly good progress and standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been rising because of better teaching of letters and sounds and more sharply focused intervention programmes. The school's tracking indicates that standards are likely to recover from a dip in 2008 that were a result of lower prior attainment and will be above average in the national tests of 2009. Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are well above those found in other schools and reflect those of previous years. School-based assessments indicate that pupils are on track to maintain similar levels.

Pupils learning English as an additional language, including Kurdish-speaking pupils, make exceptional progress and many achieve the highest levels in their work because of the intensive and structured support they receive. An example of this is the after school reading clubs where pupils receive individual support. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have moderate learning difficulties, make excellent progress because they receive high-quality and individualised support and guidance. This is strengthened by close ties with numerous out-of-school agencies.

Pupils' outstanding personal development makes a significant contribution to their learning. Pupils are very complimentary about and proud of their school. A frequently heard pupil comment was, 'We love school'. The school, including the governors, has become increasingly proactive in communicating to parents and pupils its expectations about good attendance and in monitoring attendance levels. Decisive action has been taken against persistent absenteeism and this has dropped significantly. The introduction of 'The Monkey' (a stuffed toy representing the school's adopted monkey) to award to classes for good attendance has proven to be highly effective. Attendance is now good and pupils are keen not to miss out on the fun and excitement of learning.

Pupils are fully aware of what it means to be healthy, reflecting the work carried out by the school to gain the Healthy School Award. Sports activities and clubs are popular and pupils are frequently involved in competitive sports. Pupils report feeling safe and commented that they do not think that there is any bullying and that staff and pupils are very friendly, kind and helpful. However, a few parents stated that they believed that bullying does happen and the school does not deal with it effectively. The inspection found that the school deals with any reports of alleged bullying well and has tight and effective procedures. Pupils' behaviour in and around school is very good and they have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. The singing in assembly of 'Just call me brother when you need a hand' epitomises the school's ethos and the support, kindness and respect the pupils display towards each other and adults. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and their life beyond that. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall but pupils' cultural development is not as strong. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures

nationally and internationally is not as good as that of local cultures. Pupils make a significant contribution to the school community. They successfully apply for positions as school councillors or post office workers at Christmas and manage their own funds. They have quite a good awareness of the similarities and differences evident in their local community but this is less secure when considering national and international communities.

In lessons pupils are very attentive, productive and confident and achieve exceptionally well because of the consistently high proportion of outstanding teaching. Lessons are very well paced, use high-quality resources exceptionally well, and are carefully structured to meet the needs of all pupils. Highly effective props are used well to stimulate pupils' learning. In a very successful English lesson, a picture of scary houses on the interactive whiteboard and the playing of music enabled pupils to role-play the parts in 'Rigoletto' and enact the casting of the curse in order to help them expand their vocabulary. Relationships are excellent and teachers' expectations are exceptionally high. As many parents stated, this includes a high level of challenge for the most able. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were given the independence and encouragement to think of their own questions to interrogate Year 4's data on their favourite television programmes. Pupils often work to a clear set of success criteria against which they measure their own success. Marking is detailed and because of these two features, pupils know what level they are at, what level they aspire to and how to get there.

Procedures and policies to promote pupil welfare are robust. Pastoral care is excellent. The school's well-structured approach to behaviour management is consistently and sensitively applied and very responsive, and good support is offered to those who may be unhappy or vulnerable.

A significant amount of data on pupil progress is very thoroughly analysed, especially specific groups of pupils, such as Black Caribbean pupils, or other individuals who may be in danger of underperforming. Parents commented positively on the good intervention programmes to support pupils' learning. Carefully targeted support and intervention groups, coupled with opportunities for gifted and talented pupils and extension activities in lessons, provide excellent academic support and guidance. All interventions are sharply focused and effective in a range of ways. For example, 'Tiger Teams' not only provide pupils with enjoyable bursts of physical exercise but also help to improve their handwriting through better coordination. The school is rightly proud of its inclusive practices.

The curriculum is extraordinary because it is exceedingly well planned so that pupils use their basic skills in a wide range of subjects while maintaining high standards and enjoyment. In an end-of-year project in Year 6 pupils, following discussions with an architect and a visit to buildings of architectural importance in London, are designing and building their own structures. In recent years, the school's ICT provision has been greatly enhanced, and highly productive links with a local college have helped raise standards to above those found nationally. The curriculum is enriched very well by an extensive number of popular clubs, visits and visitors that build upon pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Since the last inspection the school's then good quality care and provision has been very well built upon by the headteacher who is fully supported by the staff. The school's leaders and managers all have very clear roles and responsibilities that help build on the school's strengths and accurately identify areas for development. The school has looked carefully at how it provides opportunities for pupils to understand and contribute to its local community. But they have not done the same amount of in-depth evaluation or planning when considering other communities either nationally or internationally. The governing body is well informed and

provides considerable amounts of guidance and is closely involved in supporting and monitoring the school's performance. It has taken an active role in spending the school's considerable budget surplus by looking at the spending patterns in other schools. Because of the strength at all layers of leadership, the school is extremely well positioned to take on new challenges in the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an excellent start to school. 'My child enjoys attending school every day and often shows disappointment when the weekend arrives!', is a typical parental comment. Children, including those learning English as an additional language, achieve very well from their starting points which are below average, especially in their language development. Because of their very good progress, particularly in this area, by the time children start Year 1, their standards are often above those of pupils of a similar age. Standards have been rising over recent years due to highly effective leadership that has introduced many new ideas, including the teaching of letters and sounds. Children settle extremely quickly and happily into school because of the strong nurturing environment and positive links with their homes. These are fostered very well through events such as family learning sessions. Relationships within the Reception classes are excellent and behaviour is superb. Teaching and learning are outstanding and the balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities is finely tuned. During the inspection, the sound 'sh' was extremely well taught using a wide range of activities that not only appealed to children (such as painting) but also reinforced their learning. The use of Angus the puppet, who only ate words that began with 'sh', like 'shoes', was a powerful approach in engaging children in their learning. Adults work together as effective teams, provide good routines, and have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. The use of the 'Wow' books, which showcase the best examples of a child's independent work, is a wonderful resource when assessing children's attainment and communicating with parents. It also helps staff to know their children exceptionally well and plan on an individual basis to meet their varying needs. Planning for indoor and outdoor provision is very thorough. Consequently, children benefit from a wide range of interesting, stimulating and meaningful activities. The outdoor areas are used well to support children's wider learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the impact of current provision and plan in more detail for the future in order to deepen pupils understanding of different faiths, ethnicities and cultures and socio-economic groups within the United Kingdom and internationally.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firs Farm Primary School, London, N13 5QP

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. You, and many of your parents, told us that you all really like school, and that there are many great things about it. We agree, and found that your school is outstanding. There are so many good things that I cannot list them all, but these are the most important.

- Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception classes. Adults in these classes are very caring and give the children a lot of fun activities to enjoy.
- Everyone is making very good progress because teachers are so good at helping you to learn. Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are higher than the national average.
- You are growing up into healthy, sensible, caring and confident young people. We were particularly impressed by your very good behaviour and how well you look after each other and get along.
- The adults keep a very careful eye on everyone and make sure that if anyone needs extra help they get it through 'Tiger Teams' or reading clubs.
- The school takes very good care of you, looks after you if you are upset, listens well and takes action if someone is being hurtful.
- The school gives you exciting opportunities for learning in different subjects and in the many clubs you can join and the places you visit, such as role-playing in opera or designing buildings.
- The adults, governors and headteacher, are very keen to keep on making the school better and have worked hard over the last few years, succeeding in making your school even better than at the last inspection.

Before we left, we talked to your teachers about how an outstanding school like yours could do even better. We agreed that they would look more carefully at how they can help you know and understand different cultures in this country as well as other parts of the world.

I hope that you continue to learn a lot and enjoy yourselves while at Firs Farm.

Yours faithfully

David Watson

Lead Inspector