

Lower Farm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104169
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	355537
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Millward HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Birch
Headteacher	Mr Baker
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Twenty lessons were observed taught by 16 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the local authority representatives, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school development plan, pupils' work, progress data, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance data and safeguarding policies and records. They analysed 150 inspection questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and those submitted by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How pupils are challenged and to see if expectations are high enough for pupils.
- How well teaching and learning support pupils' progress.
- The impact of leadership and management on improvements to pupils' achievements.

Information about the school

Lower Farm is a much larger-than-average primary school with Nursery provision on site. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average, but the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower. The school has a before-and-after school club run by the governing body. The school holds the Investor in People award, the Basic Skills Award and has Healthy Schools status.

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

3

Main findings

Lower Farm Primary School is a satisfactory school. It has some good features. Pupils' behaviour is good, they are extremely polite and courteous and show good attitudes to learning. The extent to which they say they feel safe and their adoption of healthy lifestyles are good. Statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding are well met as are welfare requirements. Safeguarding records are very well maintained and safeguarding has a high priority in the school and among staff. Attendance is above average and there are few incidents of poor behaviour or racism. The school's relationship with pupil's families is a strength. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and value the contribution the school makes to their child's education.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is improving and currently satisfactory. Induction procedures into school are good and children settle into school life quickly. The quality of provision is satisfactory as opportunities are sometimes missed to give learning a purpose and provide children with the potential to extend their learning.

Overall pupils make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 6 attain levels that are broadly in line with national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. However, some more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they might. The school does not yet accurately monitor the attainment of groups of learners and hence some pupils fall behind in their learning. This is not detected early enough and strategies to help them catch up are not implemented quickly so they do not always have the desired effect. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with examples of good practice. In the more effective lessons, planned activities are closely matched to pupils' needs and active learning supports good progress. Teaching assistants are used well in these lessons. However, this is not always the case and some lessons are incorrectly pitched due to inconsistencies in the use of assessment and in pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across classes and subjects. In some cases, it provides clear, precise information to pupils on how to improve, but other marking does not impact on learning as it is celebratory and gives no indication of what to do next. The curriculum is developing and the school is beginning to use its knowledge of its pupils' background and context to plan a curriculum to better motivate and enthuse learners.

The headteacher is committed to the school and is aware of the need to improve achievement. While leaders are aware of strengths and weaknesses, there has been a lack of effective monitoring of the quality of provision. To date, this has been carried out by middle leaders in an ad-hoc manner. The governors are aware of the school's priorities and are supportive of the work in school. However, there are ways in which they could provide further challenge and hold the school to account to secure future improvements.

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Self-evaluation is therefore satisfactory and the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and improve rates of progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring the more able are sufficiently challenged
 - matching work to the needs of all learners
 - planning activities that will move on and extend pupils' learning.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment by:
 - ensuring marking helps pupils to make progress
 - ensuring assessment better informs teachers' planning and teaching
 - ensuring all teaching assistants are actively engaged in lessons and that they impact on pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that teachers draw effectively on the best practice in school so that all lessons are consistently good.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels to ensure that:
 - monitoring and evaluation arrangements are regular, rigorous and systematic
 - action planning is sharply focused on actions to improve outcomes for pupils based on an accurate understanding of priorities
 - governors further hold the school to account
 - all leaders hold an accurate view of teaching and learning and the attainment of all groups
 - middle leaders have greater impact on pupils' outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' good attitudes in lessons and positive relationships result in most pupils enjoying learning. They behave well in lessons and generally are actively engaged in their learning. However, this picture is not yet consistent across the whole school.

Children starting Nursery have levels of skills and knowledge which are generally in line with what is expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and leave Reception with attainment that is in line with national averages in all areas of learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage has focused on developing communication, language and literacy skills and gains can be seen in this area.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and leave Year 2 with attainment levels broadly in line with national expectations although statutory assessments show a decline in reading. When pupils leave school their attainment remains in line with national

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expectations with girls attaining better than boys. Current data held by the school indicate more pupils are now on track to reach age-related expectations although some higher ability pupils do not achieve as well as they should. During lessons observed, teachers did not always extend the more-able pupils which resulted in less progress being made. The overall progress made by pupils is satisfactory, although there are inconsistencies with the rates at which pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress which is commensurate with their peers nationally.

Pupils are courteous, well mannered and helpful. They show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the school council has been instrumental in making changes to the 'Red Rooster Restaurant' provision. Pupils enjoy raising money for charities and the school's global links with partner schools in Gambia and Napal are used well to benefit the work of pupils. Team building events are encouraged through residential visits, and development of satisfactory basic skills contribute to their future economic well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils show a good understanding of how to respect others, but there is a lack of understanding of their own heritage and that of others.

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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is varied across the school. As a result, pupils' rates of progress alter. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use resources well. The most successful lessons are based on effective questioning, good deployment of additional adults, and work which is sensitively matched to pupils' abilities and which ensures pupils quickly move on in their learning. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not make full use of assessment information resulting in pupils of different abilities being given similar tasks. This results in some pupils not making the progress of which they are capable. Teachers' planning does not always support pupils' next steps and is not always suitably tailored to the needs of the class.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is developing a more creative curriculum which is capturing the pupils' imagination, such as the current topic on the 'wild west'. There are limited opportunities to attend extra-curricular clubs, but trips and residential visits, including a trip to Paris, are very popular with pupils.

The school generally takes effective care of its pupils and particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff know their pupils well and aim to provide careful guidance and support to ensure their well-being and personal development. The well-attended before-and-after school club provides a safe and supportive haven for pupils.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders are aware that levels of achievement need to improve and have plans to support the driving of improvement. Action planning is based on self-evaluation although some plans lack clarity and focus. Tracking of pupils' progress ensures all staff are aware of the levels of attainment of all pupils. However, the way this information is used does not always ensure further improvements are brisk enough. The school is in its infancy of tracking and monitoring groups of learners and, as a result, some pupils' underperformance remains undetected. Middle leaders make an enthusiastic contribution to school improvement. They analyse data and carry out a range of monitoring activities.

The governing body is satisfactory and takes a keen interest in the school. It provides support and fulfils all statutory duties. Governors are becoming more aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses although they need to challenge the school to a greater

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degree. The Chair of the Governing Body is highly visible in school and acknowledges that procedures for monitoring the school's work need to be more rigorous.

Leaders promote equality of opportunity satisfactorily for all pupils and are beginning to plan more carefully to check all groups achieve equally well as they move through the school. There are strong links with parents and carers and the school seeks their views and acts accordingly. Planned actions are in place to develop community cohesion as the school understands its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. However, little has been done so far to evaluate this aspect of the school's work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Generally children develop independence, concentration and teamwork well and are generally tolerant of others, assisting and encouraging one another. They work safely, take turns but also take managed risks. Home visits ensure a smooth transition into school and children settle quickly into school life.

Effective questioning by adults develops children's participation, language and social skills. There is a mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities which take place in the enhanced environment, although the use of the outdoor environment is still developing. In the more effective practice, adults provided children with independent activities which are challenging and carefully matched to learning outcomes. Adults carefully support children to guide and model the learning to ensure they both enjoy their learning and make progress in all areas.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has correctly identified areas for development, for example improving the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1. Plans are in place to ensure improvements, leading to children's personal well-being and

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academic development, for example by making teachers' planning purposeful and challenging. Staff are vigilant and as a result safeguarding and welfare arrangements are good.

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

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire was around the national average for primary schools. The great majority of them were fully supportive of the school. Almost all considered that the school keeps their children safe and were confident that their children enjoy school. They were pleased that their children are encouraged to have healthy lifestyles. One written comment summarised the view of many: 'The school provides a wide range of opportunities for my children to develop academically but also they develop the whole child by offering and providing excellent extra-curricular activities, eg whole school productions.'

Parents and carers who spoke to the inspectors were pleased with the open lines of communication and felt they were well informed about the progress of their children. A few parents and carers voiced concerns with poor behaviour and the school's approach to dealing with behavioural issues. The inspection team found behaviour to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lower Farm 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 150 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 415 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	54	65	43	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	49	73	49	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	36	84	56	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	39	79	53	12	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	40	80	53	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	36	86	57	8	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	29	96	64	7	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)	44	29	81	54	11	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	33	89	59	3	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	21	92	61	12	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	21	90	60	13	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	41	27	88	59	11	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	38	82	55	4	3	1	1

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



8 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lower Farm Primary School, Walsall, WS3 3QH

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. As you know we came to see how well you were doing and what you said helped us with our findings.

Lower Farm is a satisfactory school. We were very impressed by your behaviour; you know about healthy lifestyles and know how to keep safe. You attend school regularly and the school has good links with your parents and carers. Your attainment is satisfactory and the leaders in school are determined to improve your levels of achievement. Teachers are developing a curriculum to help you learn better and the school makes sure you are safe and your welfare requirements are met.

It is our job to find out how schools can do even better. We have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to work on three things in particular. These are:

- to raise attainment and improve your progress in English and mathematics
- to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- to improve leadership and management in school.

We know that you will want to help in every way you can, so please continue to try hard in lessons, keep up your very good behaviour and continue to attend school regularly. I wish you every success in your education.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward

Her Majesty's Inspector

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