

Foxyards Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103788
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308422
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Barbara Crane

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 on roll	
School	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Sarah A O’Gorman
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002
School address	Foxyards Road Tipton DY4 8BH
Telephone number	01384 818740
Fax number	01384 818741

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area in which there are considerable social and economic challenges. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below average. Most of these children transfer to the school's Reception classes. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils come from White British families. About 10% of pupils come from families representing a wide spread of other ethnic groups. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Almost half of the teachers have joined the school in the past year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving and has weathered some challenging circumstances in staffing because of the headteacher's strong leadership. The staff's morale is high and there is satisfactory capacity to improve. Pupils are soundly prepared for the future in a safe and caring environment. They enjoy learning and have a good sense of responsibility for themselves and others. Pupils' good behaviour and feeling of security reflect the high expectations of teachers and their strong and trusting relationships in the school. Pupils make healthy choices and know how to stay safe. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. The school works effectively with a variety of support agencies to support pupils' well-being. The wide range of extra activities enhances the satisfactory curriculum. Pupils enjoy and value the after-school clubs.

Pupils' satisfactory achievement results from sound teaching. They reach average standards by the time they leave the school. Whilst pupils of all abilities make steady progress, it is slower in writing and mathematics. Targets are set for pupils but they are not always given sufficient guidance on how to reach them. There are some inconsistencies in teaching that prevent pupils from making faster gains in learning. There are times when the pace of lessons is too slow and teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently through the questions they ask and the tasks provided.

The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school. Satisfactory leadership and management ensure that the school is improving and is on track to meet its suitably challenging targets. Successful initiatives to improve teaching have raised standards and improved pupils' progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' progress is now tracked and checked regularly and those in danger of falling behind are identified and supported. The school's accurate self-evaluation recognises that some leaders and managers need support to become more focused in checking the school's provision and how this impacts on pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Well-managed provision ensures that children make good progress. They start in the nursery with skills that are well below expectations for their age. Effective teaching in the nursery and Reception classes mainly gives children what they need at the point that they need it. Consequently, children achieve well and standards are just below average by the time children start in Year 1. The exciting environment and activities indoors nurtures children's enjoyment in learning. They benefit from a good balance of adult-led and child-inspired activities. The children's skills in writing have correctly been identified as an area for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of how to reach their targets in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the pace of lessons, the level of challenge in teachers' questioning and the tasks set.
- Ensure that leaders and managers sharpen their skills in monitoring.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children quickly make up ground in the Foundation Stage and so standards rise to slightly below average by the time they reach the end of Reception. They make particularly rapid strides in their personal, social and emotional development, linking sounds and letters and calculation. These high points in children's progress reflect the successes of initiatives in teaching to adapt work to more closely to meet children's needs and abilities. In common with pupils of other ages, children's skills in writing do not move forward at a consistently good rate.

Standards for Year 6 pupils in 2007 rose to average and reflected the school's work in overcoming difficulties and eradicating pupils' previously widespread underachievement. The current picture of standards remains average, but is rising. The increased level of challenge in teaching for more able pupils is a significant factor in this. Pupils of all ages and capabilities make particularly good progress in reading because of the consistently good level of challenge for all abilities. The small number of pupils who are learning to speak English make satisfactory progress, as do pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pockets of slower progress in mathematics and writing, for pupils of all abilities, prevent pupils in Years 1 to 6 from making better than satisfactory progress, overall. Pupils have good skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and use these confidently.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. From starting school in the nursery, children quickly learn to care for each other. They develop a good level of independence and enjoy persevering with new tasks. Throughout the school, pupils are friendly and polite and their cheerful attitude enhances the school's happy atmosphere. They show a good sense of self-discipline and behave well. One pupil expressed the school's guiding principle as 'Make the right choice. Don't let other people tempt you into doing the wrong thing.' Pupils are mindful of others' needs and quickly respond when help is needed. They know how to lead healthy lives and talk knowledgeably about the importance of eating a balanced diet and exercising frequently. Pupils say that this can be 'fun and not a chore.' The principles of acting responsibly and keeping themselves and others safe are well known and practised sensibly. Pupils are proud of the good contribution that they make to the community. The school council, for example, have been involved in the selection process of staff. Whilst pupils' social skills prepare them well for the future, their achievement in their work is only at a satisfactory level.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are good features to teaching in all year groups. Throughout the school, pupils' learning benefits from the calm atmosphere in classrooms. This springs from teachers' high expectations of behaviour and their good management of pupils. Teachers use ICT well to gain pupils' interest.

For example, Year 4 pupils' thoughts about why people pray were well stimulated in a religious education lesson by a slide show of images set to music. Teachers' clear explanations mean that pupils settle quickly to their tasks. However, the work is not always fully tailored to meet the complete range of pupils' needs, including for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and this slows their learning. Pupils know the level at which they are working in writing and mathematics, but they are not always clear about precisely what to do to reach the next step. The slower pace in some lessons means that too long is spent by pupils in consolidating their learning. There are times when teachers' questioning does not sufficiently probe pupils' understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage has a good balance of activities indoors and outdoors. Children frequently choose activities for themselves but have too few opportunities to stimulate them to write in play activities. Pupils of all ages have plenty of chances to use their ICT skills but fewer opportunities to practise and extend their skills in writing across subjects. In mathematics, pupils in Years 1 to 6 lack some chances to use and apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. The good range of additional activities and residential visits supports well pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities to keep them active and build their skills as team players. Good planning for pupils' social and emotional development boosts their capacity to cope with daily life's stresses and strains and the quality of their relationships. Effective partnerships with outside agencies promote pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are rigorous and effective. Good relationships add to pupils' feelings of well-being and security from the time they start school. Adults give a good level of daily care for pupils. Pupils are provided with effective advice on how to cope with personal problems. The full involvement of partners-in-care for vulnerable children secures their well-being. The academic guidance provided for pupils is less consistent. Pupils are beginning to develop a better understanding of how to improve their work. Whilst pupils have targets to aim for, they are not always sure how to reach them. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. The school's review of the individual plans for these pupils has revealed that targets need to more securely reflect their precise needs and be followed more closely in teaching.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and of where improvements are needed because of sound self-evaluation. The staff face the future with optimism and a determination to improve. Principled leadership by the headteacher has ensured that the school has not shied away from taking difficult decisions. Her well-focused monitoring of teaching and learning has been a significant factor in helping the school to raise its performance. The system for tracking pupils' progress more closely has been worked on successfully. The information gained is used effectively to hold staff to account for any discrepancies in pupils' rates of progress.

Consequently, the upturn in standards in 2007 has been maintained. Teachers who are new to the school are well supported. Several managers are new to their roles. Good support from the headteacher and outside agencies is proving effective in steadily developing their skills. However, these are not yet sufficiently well developed to accurately pinpoint exactly what is needed to promote pupils' good progress. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have ensured that the investment in improving staff skills and resources has raised pupils' competency with ICT. They are steadily developing their ability to question the school about its performance. The school's track record indicates that there is satisfactory capacity to further improve.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Foxyards Primary School, Tipton DY4 8BH

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We enjoyed the discussions we had about your work and activities. We found Foxyards to be a satisfactory and improving school. Here are some of our findings.

- Nursery and Reception children make a good start to school.
- Those of you in Years 1 to 6 achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards in your work. This is because of satisfactory teaching.
- You told us that you enjoy your lessons and taking part in all of the extra activities.
- You are polite, friendly and behave well. Congratulations on helping to make your school such a happy place for everyone.
- You are helping the school improve because you let the staff know about your ideas.
- You know that keeping healthy and fit can be fun!
- You go to a caring school. Everyone has your best interests at heart and wants you to be safe and happy and to do as well as you can.
- The people in charge are working hard to make sure that your school is getting better.

We have asked the school to do a few things to help it improve further.

- Make sure that you know how to reach their targets in writing and mathematics.
- Make sure that that teachers give you more challenge in the questions they ask and the work they set for you. This will help lessons go faster for you.
- Ensure that leaders and managers know exactly what needs to be done to help you to do your best.

Keep on working hard and enjoying your time at Foxyards. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Crane Lead inspector

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Yours sincerely

Barbara Crane
Lead inspector