

Ferndale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103982
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336213
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	K Davies
Headteacher	Nigel Edge
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons as well as a wide range of small support groups and one-to-one support sessions across the school, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessment and tracking records, its improvement plan and 148 parental, 61 pupil and 39 staff questionnaires.

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

- achievement and standards particularly in writing and the development of literacy and oracy across the school
- whether teaching is sufficiently challenging and work is well enough matched to pupils' needs
- The use of assessment and pupils' understanding about how to improve their work.

Information about the school

Ferndale Primary School is much larger than most primary schools. It has a maintained Nursery which children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon. Around a third of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over the last year, the school has admitted children who are refugees. Some of these children have never been to school and most of them speak English as an additional language. The school is an enhanced learning provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Therefore, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Children had recently joined the Nursery and Reception classes at the time of the inspection.

The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Active Mark and Healthy school status. In 2008, the school was awarded BECTA ICT Mark and were runners up in the National BCTA (BECTA ICT Excellence Awards) in the Learning Experience category.

The child care provision and the Children's Centre on the school site were inspected in January 2009.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Ferndale is an outstanding school. Pupils make excellent progress in their academic studies and their personal development. The majority of parents are delighted with the way the school supports and encourages their children.

Pupils are very proud of their school. They typically say 'I love my school because it is fun to be in' and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour, their very positive attitudes towards their learning and satisfactory attendance. They value the help they get from all staff and the opportunities they have to improve the school, for instance through a variety of exciting projects including working with local artists. The very active school council, extensive fund raising activities and highly-valued groups such as the 'playground buddies', demonstrate the pupils' outstanding contribution to the school and to the wider community at home and abroad. The school recognises that there is still more work to be done to improve the attendance of a small minority of pupils.

When they first start school, many children are well below average in language, literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. They make excellent progress in these as they move through the school and by the end of Year 6, their academic standards are broadly average, and their achievement is good. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously, any difficulties are identified rapidly and this triggers support, very closely tailored to individual needs. As a result, all groups of pupils make the same excellent progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language.

Outstanding care, guidance and support and an exciting and imaginative curriculum contribute significantly to pupils' progress. The school meets the needs of a significant number of vulnerable pupils by ensuring they are carefully nurtured so that they are able to learn effectively. These pupils are also exceptionally well supported through the school's very effective partnership with external agencies, and with the dedication of teachers and support staff. The school's commitment to, and pupils' involvement in, the local community is of the highest quality.

The head teacher is relentless in his pursuit of excellence. The senior leadership team work very hard to improve provision. They work in close partnership with parents and carers and actively seek ways for them to support their children's education. This, and the hard work and enthusiasm of the whole staff make a huge contribution to the very positive ethos in school. Excellent teaching enables all pupils to make outstanding progress. Lessons are very well planned and engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm but opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to work independently and explore ideas for themselves.

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The school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement. Extremely rigorous analysis of assessment data has enabled the school to pinpoint exactly where it needs to improve, and how. The sharp focus on improvement, combined with an accurate evaluation of the school's work, has ensured that standards have risen over the last three years and achievement has improved.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further, so that more is outstanding,
 - by increasing opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves and work independently in whole class activities
- Improve attendance
 - by more robust analysis of attendance data and more effective systems to promote attendance

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Children make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although some join Year 1 still below expectations in the key areas of communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, most reach or exceed the levels expected for them. Because of the excellent progress they have made in their personal social and emotional development, all are confident and enthusiastic learners and well prepared to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum.

Over the past three years standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been below average at the end of Year 2. However, pupils' progress is satisfactory. Pupils make excellent progress in Key Stage 2. Over the last three years they have consistently reached average standards in English, mathematics and science. In 2009, standards in English, mathematics and science were above average. The school's very strong commitment to equal opportunities means that the quality of individual support allows all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities and those with English as an additional language, to make excellent progress.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their school work and are keen to do well. Many pupils enter the school with under-developed social skills but they quickly learn to cooperate, to respect others and to take responsibility for their actions. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they are sensible, articulate, mature and a credit to themselves, their families and the school. Behaviour is exemplary both in and out of lessons. Pupils respect and value the exciting variety activities provided both indoors and out and take great pride in their contributions to improving their school, for example through their art work, wood sculptures and their gardening. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have are taken seriously. Consequently, they feel very safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep healthy and safe. Although attendance rates remain average they are improving and there are relatively few persistent non-attenders. Pupils' good basic skills, combined with high levels of self-belief and clear enjoyment of

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learning, means that they are well placed for future success.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Excellent teaching leads to outstanding progress and pupils' enjoyment of learning. Whole class activities are supported extremely effectively by extensive small group work and one-to-one sessions led by very skilful teaching assistants. This enables all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English, to learn very effectively. A good range of activities and teaching styles engage pupils' interest. Interactive White Boards as well as outside areas are used effectively, making lessons interesting and fun. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning very skilfully to extend and support pupils' thinking. Quite often pupils explore and discuss ideas with each other, which is highly effective in developing their speaking and listening skills. However this good practice is not seen in all lessons. Teachers are provided with excellent information about the attainment and progress of pupils in their class and they use this very effectively to plan work. Academic targets and teachers' marking give pupils very good guidance about how to improve

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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their work.

The curriculum effectively engages and motivates pupils. It is particularly effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A recent focus on literacy has led to significant improvements in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Provision for information and communication technology is exemplary and enhances learning very effectively across the curriculum. Similarly, the provision for art and music is very strong. Pupils benefit from working with local artists and sculptors. An excellent variety of extra-curricular activities, including a very wide range of clubs, visits, including residential visits, and visitors all contribute to making learning fun.

Pupils are very well known to staff and are valued as individuals. Excellent relationships are a characteristic of the school. Pupils who find learning more difficult than most, are exceptionally well supported. The school works very effectively with outside agencies, such as speech and language advisors and other specialists, to meet individual needs. The support received, including the focused provision in the 'Nurture Group', allows pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the very best of their learning opportunities. The school is working to improve attendance, although the approach is not sufficiently systematic.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team work tirelessly to achieve their vision of all pupils reaching their potential. All staff share this vision and play an active part in achieving it. Resources are used to very good effect to produce excellent value for money. Self evaluation, including the monitoring of teaching and learning and improvement planning, accurately reflects the school's work and clearly identifies priorities for improvement. Frequent and very thorough analysis of pupil progress involves all staff and reaches down to lesson planning and the support for individual pupils. It is this that drives improvement and enables all pupils to achieve their potential. Safeguarding procedures are robust and include thorough vetting as to the suitability of all adults in the school, highly effective risk assessments and safety procedures with very close monitoring and supervision of pupils.

The school serves its local community and promotes community cohesion extremely well, through its work with the Children's Centre, in particular. The school is seen as a centre of excellence for the way it supports pupils with special educational needs and/or

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disabilities and, as a result, receives pupils from a wide area. A measure of the school's success is the respect with which wood sculptures, produced by pupils and placed outside the school's boundaries, are cared for and respected by the local community. Governors are enthusiastic, committed to the school and extremely well informed. They not only challenge effectively, but are a good channel of communication between parents and teachers. The school is very active in the local network of schools and works with other institutions to improve its work further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle very quickly in a safe, secure and very welcoming environment. They enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are often very low compared to those expected for their age. They get off to a flying start because of the expertise of the staff and the very effective use of the good facilities. By the end of Reception the majority reach, and some exceed, the level expected in the Early Learning Goals, and the progress they make, particularly in personal, social, emotional development, is exceptional. Children explore and learn very effectively through planned activities indoors and outside. They work and play together well and take turns. Speaking and listening skills are developed effectively as a result of skilful questioning. Well planned phonics lessons enable children to make great strides in developing reading skills. Parents are delighted with the induction procedures. Children's welfare needs are attended to carefully. Rigorous assessment procedures are used to measure children's progress and plan activities that move their learning on. Children who are finding learning more difficult than most are quickly identified and very effectively supported.

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Excellent leadership and management have created a very effective team and a stimulating and exciting place to learn.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are very happy with the school. Very many commented positively on their children's enjoyment of school, the approachability of teachers, the excellent leadership and the support their children receive. A very small number of parents would like to be better informed about their child's progress. A handful of parents had some concerns about level of challenge provided for more able youngsters. Inspectors found that, on the whole, activities were very well matched to pupils' capabilities; however opportunities were sometimes missed in lessons for pupils to work independently.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ferndale 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 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 424 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	59	59	40	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	82	55	66	44	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	57	38	80	54	11	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	38	77	52	11	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	42	81	54	3	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	40	78	52	9	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	41	84	56	2	1	1	1
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)	53	36	82	55	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	36	82	55	7	5	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	34	85	56	7	5	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	30	89	60	8	5	6	4
The school is led and managed effectively	70	48	72	49	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	48	85	49	2	1	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 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.



7 October 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Ferndale Primary School, B43 5QF

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. The inspection team really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You told us how much you enjoy your learning and how proud you are of your school. We agree with you. You go to an outstanding school. It's an exciting place to learn with lots of things to do. You told us how much you appreciated the help you get from teachers and we were very impressed by the way the school provides exactly the right help for each pupil in the school so that you can all do your best.

We enjoyed listening to you talk about the good work done by the ECO committee and the school council, who have done some great work in improving the school and the environment. We were very impressed by your lovely art work, the wood sculptures and the garden you are working on. Your behaviour is excellent. You have good manners and make visitors very welcome indeed. We think that you all make a really important contribution to your school.

Younger children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception classes and you are all making outstanding progress. Your teachers work very hard and their teaching is outstanding. We noticed how well you got on when you are given the opportunity to explore ideas for yourselves and so we have asked your teachers to make sure they give you more opportunities to do this in lessons. You told us that the staff look after you very well indeed and we agree. A small number of pupils do not attend regularly enough and this is affecting their progress. We have asked the school to do more to ensure they come to school every day.

The head teacher and staff are working very hard to make your school even better. We wish you every success for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley (on behalf of the inspection team)

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