

# Firs Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106303
<b>Local Authority</b>	Trafford
<b>Inspection number</b>	342863
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael McIlroy HMI

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	250
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Leigh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lorraine White
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Firs Road Sale Cheshire M33 5EL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 973 7350
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 962 2803
<b>Email address</b>	firs.admin@trafford.gov.uk

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

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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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Seventeen lessons, 11 teachers and two assemblies were observed. Meetings were held with nominated staff, two groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. Telephone conversations were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and one of the school's partners. School assessment data and action planning were scrutinised as were 63 parental questionnaires.

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

- the attainment and progress of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and that of more-able pupils
- the quality of teaching
- the use by teachers of assessment information to promote the progress of pupils
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers and how they use data to ensure the accountability of staff.

## Information about the school

The school is average in size and most pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is nearly twice the average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. An above average percentage of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, as the school hosts a local authority specialist unit for 10 pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

The school hosts an after-school club, which is run by a private provider and was subject to a separate inspection. The school holds a number of awards, including the Activemark. At its previous inspection in May 2009, the school was required to make significant improvement in relation to the pupils' achievement and standards. Since then, there have been some changes in staffing. The school has been led by an interim headteacher since the start of the academic year.

**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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school now provides a satisfactory level of education for its pupils. The school's chief strengths lie in its effective Early Years Foundation Stage, which ensures that children get off to a good start in their education, and in the good care, guidance and support which it provides for its pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the school has succeeded in improving the achievement of pupils so that this is now satisfactory. The attainment of pupils in both Key Stages 1 and 2 has improved and is now average. Pupils performed more strongly in mathematics than in English, due partly to weaknesses in writing. The progress made by pupils in their learning has also improved and is now satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those within the specialist unit, make good progress. A key factor in these improvements has been the introduction by the interim headteacher of new assessment procedures which track and record more accurately the attainment and progress of pupils. The resulting data has been well used to identify where underachievement lies and to make staff more aware of which pupils have fallen behind in their learning. The better deployment of additional adults and the considered use of specific programmes to tackle underperformance, for example in reading, have contributed to the rise in standards.

The curriculum is satisfactory as is the overall quality of teaching. There have been some improvements in teaching since the last inspection and there is a proportion of good, and sometimes better teaching, which has contributed to the rise in results. However, not enough teaching ensures that all pupils make consistently good progress and that the most able are fully challenged. The school's good care, support and guidance contribute well to pupils' good behaviour, their good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and to improving results. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils feel safe in school. However, pupils' average attendance and attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science mean that they are only adequately prepared for their future studies and careers.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The interim headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although some monitoring systems are not robust enough. Under her good leadership, and with the effective use of support provided by the local authority, she has strengthened the focus on standards and raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. The reorganisation of staffing has appropriately increased the accountability and responsibilities of staff. Middle leadership

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is satisfactory as key staff are still developing in their new roles. The interim headteacher has also strongly developed the school's engagement with parents and carers and this is now good. Governance is satisfactory.

The school's satisfactory leadership, its broadly accurate self-evaluation and the recent, upward trend in attainment all show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The school now provides adequate value for money.

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

- Increase the proportion of good teaching, by:
  - – ensuring that planning takes more account of the needs of more able learners
  - – providing extended training to staff by December 2010 to strengthen teachers' understanding of what constitutes good and better teaching
  - – developing the use of questioning so that pupils are more engaged in their learning and so that pupils fully understand what they have to do
  - – reducing the use by pupils of worksheets and mini whiteboards.
- Raise standards in English in Key Stages 1 and 2, by:
  - – developing pupils' writing skills by providing them with greater opportunities to write independently and at length
  - – ensuring that literacy activities for more able pupils are appropriately challenging.
- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
  - – increasing the frequency and rigour of the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders
  - – training subject leaders in action planning and how to monitor and evaluate outcomes in their areas of responsibility.
- About 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.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

In 2009, results rose in Key Stage 2 so that the overall attainment of pupils was average. Pupils' attainment in mathematics and science was stronger than it was in English. Provisional results from the most recent national assessments for pupils in Year 6, suggest that the improvement in overall results has been sustained and strengthened. As a result, the progress made by pupils is now satisfactory. Inspection evidence from lesson observations indicates that pupils' writing is underdeveloped as there are not enough opportunities throughout the key stage for pupils to write independently and at length. In Key Stage 1, attainment was also average in 2009. Recent assessments indicate that attainment has also improved in this key stage but that results in writing for more able pupils, remain low. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than their peers due to the good support they receive. Pupils behave well in and around school and are polite and courteous to each other and to visitors. This reflects their particularly strong moral and social development. They

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enjoy school and feel safe. They are confident that any concerns or worries they have will be dealt with promptly by staff. Attendance is average and the school has appropriate systems in place to tackle at an early stage any unexplained absence. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and local community. They have a number of positions of responsibility in school, such as serving on the school council and on the healthy food stall at break times. Pupils have a good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet and there is a good level of involvement in sporting activities.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</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>3</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>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The good care, guidance and support which the school provides begin with the effective induction procedures that pupils receive when they enter the school. Similar good arrangements ensure that pupils transfer smoothly between key stages and onto secondary school. Staff are knowledgeable about which pupils are vulnerable and these, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well integrated into classes, well cared for and supported. Pupils receive good guidance on behaviour and attendance. The good relationships with parents and carers has enabled the school

<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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to respond quickly and appropriately to instances where vulnerable pupils have required particular support to improve their learning and well-being.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Relationships between pupils and staff are generally good and learning activities are relevant to most pupils' needs. Learning objectives are routinely shared with pupils and additional adults are well used, for example, in supporting less-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Planning is satisfactory as is the use of assessment procedures, including questioning, to improve learning. The pace of teaching is satisfactory. In some classes, time is not always well used as there is too much teacher talk. The overuse of worksheets and mini whiteboards prevents pupils from writing sufficiently at length in their books. Some tasks are not always fully explained and modelled by teachers so that all are clear about what it is they have to do. Not all teaching ensures that more-able pupils are set work which challenges them sufficiently.

The broad and relevant curriculum is aptly focused on mathematics and English. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology, for example, in helping pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. There are some good examples of cross-curricular links, such as that observed in a technology lesson in Year 2 where pupils studying the Great Fire of London learnt how to bake bread. The curriculum is enriched by a suitable range of extra-curricular activities, such as music, drama and sports clubs.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<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?**

The interim headteacher has developed the school's ethos so that there is a much stronger emphasis on improving pupils' attainment and a greater awareness among staff of what pupils can achieve. Regular meetings with staff about assessment data are held where the progress of individual pupils is analysed and action to improve this is agreed. Improvements to performance management procedures and the revision of teachers' responsibilities have suitably increased the accountability of staff. As a result, subject leaders have drawn up action plans for their areas. However, due to a lack of training for middle leaders, these vary in quality. Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled. Although opportunities have been provided for some staff to observe good practice in teaching, there has been little formal training on the features of good and better teaching. Some procedures for checking the quality of the school's work are informal.

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The school's engagement with parents and carers has been developed well. Frequent newsletters inform parents about school developments and parents evenings have been improved to provide parents with more information on their child's academic progress. Opportunities have also been provided to enable parents to learn how they can best contribute to their child's learning. Satisfactory partnerships exist with outside agencies, including the Greater Manchester Challenge. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are satisfactory and the school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It evaluates its work well in this area and has developed good links with other schools with contrasting intakes of pupils. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. Instances of discrimination are tackled swiftly and the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met. However, the school is less effective in ensuring that the needs of more able pupils are consistently met in lessons.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are below those typically found for children of their age. They make good progress and by the end of their time in the key stage many are achieving at or above the national average. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and also make good progress. Children are well cared for and receive good guidance. Consequently, they are polite, behave well and get on well with each other. Teaching is good. Planning is detailed and there is a good match of child-initiated and teacher-led activities, which are imaginative, carefully focused on learning and of a good length. There is a good level of resources in both indoor and outdoor areas and these are



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effectively used by staff. Classrooms are safe, bright and well decorated and displays are interesting and stimulating. Leadership and management are effective and there is a good sense of teamwork amongst staff. Assessment procedures are well used to track the progress of pupils, to target work with specific groups of children and to inform planning so that learning activities are pitched at the right level for children.

*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**

There were 63 questionnaires received from parents and carers during the inspection. Most were happy with their child's experience at the school and believe that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour. The vast majority of parents and carers were of the view that the school keeps their child safe and that the school takes account of their views and suggestions. Inspectors agree with these views.

## 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 250 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	70	19	29	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	67	21	32	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	50	32	48	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	58	28	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	67	19	29	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	50	31	47	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	36	40	61	1	2	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)	31	47	31	47	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	50	30	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	58	25	38	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	42	35	53	2	3	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	41	33	50	2	3	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	56	27	41	1	2	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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. 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.**



11 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firs Primary School, Sale, M33 5EL

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when we inspected your school recently. Last year, your school was asked to make a number of improvements. Your school has made these improvements and is now a satisfactory school. Some of the best things which we found during our inspection were:

- your behaviour is good
- you have a good understanding of how to keep healthy
- you feel safe in school
- you are well cared for and supported by your school
- your school is led well by the interim headteacher
- you are now making satisfactory progress in your learning and some of you are making good progress.

We have asked the interim headteacher, staff and governors to make some more improvements. We have asked them to ensure that you learn more in literacy lessons, especially in writing, and to make sure that all teaching is as good as the best which we saw. We have also asked that the school checks up more on how you are doing in your work and provides training for staff to help them do this. You can help improve your school by making sure that you come to school every day.

Once again, many thanks for being so polite and helpful when we visited your school.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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