

Fairmead Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123940
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380765
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Mascall

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Pallister
Headteacher	Diana Denman
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
School address	Mudford Road Yeovil BA21 4NZ
Telephone number	01935 421295
Fax number	01935 410552
Email address	sch617@educ.somerset.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Mascal

Additional inspector

Bob Coburn

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed 10 teachers. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body. Discussions were held with individual pupils about their work and their views of the school.

The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work and information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents. Questionnaires from 32 parents and carers, 28 staff and 52 pupils were scrutinised.

Information about the school

Fairmead Community Special School is a smaller-than-average special school. It caters predominantly for pupils with moderate and severe learning needs. An increasing number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is very small as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection there were a very small number of pupils in the care of the local authority. The school makes use of a number of alternative providers to support pupils in developing their academic, personal and social skills.

The school has no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and has had no children of this age in school for over five years.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Fairmead is a satisfactory school. It is improving at a very rapid rate as a result of strong and effective leadership and management.
- On her appointment the headteacher identified a number of key areas to address. These included the lack of accurate assessment of pupils' progress, very limited use of data to set targets for pupils and low expectations for pupils' achievement. She has successfully addressed all these issues.
- There is a real sense of commitment from all staff to move the school forward. The staff team has changed considerably in the last two and a half years and the present team is very positive about the direction of the school.
- Assessment procedures are now very rigorous and this is evident in the thorough analysis of pupils' progress. This correctly identifies that progress and achievement, although good for some pupils, are currently satisfactory overall. Underachievement is being successfully addressed and data show that, following the satisfactory progress made by pupils last year, most pupils are now on track to make good progress by the end of this academic year.
- Teaching strategies have improved considerably. In lessons teachers use their good knowledge of pupils to group them by ability. There are times though when tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities. This prevents pupils from making better progress in their learning.
- Pupils are clear about their short-term learning targets, but these are not always monitored carefully enough to ensure pupils know how well they are doing and what it is they have to do to improve.
- The curriculum is satisfactory because it is in the process of being developed. At present the opportunities for individual pupils to benefit from extended learning and challenge are narrow.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. The effective strategies to support pupils have had a positive impact on helping them manage their behaviour.

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' achievement by December 2012 by regularly reviewing pupils' short-term learning targets so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- By December 2012, improve teaching by ensuring that tasks in lessons are consistently well matched to the different abilities in each class and group.
- Expand the curriculum to provide a wider range of challenging activities that extend pupils' learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Although attainment is low, including in reading at the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are making progress in line with their peers nationally. The school is confident of this because it has a very clear understanding of the levels pupils are working at and is setting increasingly high challenges for pupils to achieve by the end of each academic year. These high expectations are reflected in the fact that pupils are now gaining passes at GCSE, accreditation in functional skills and entry level accreditation. All of last year's leavers were well prepared for the next stage of education and have continued into training or further education.

It is very evident in observing pupils how much they enjoy learning. They consider they are doing well in school. Parents and carers agree and only a very few raised concerns about the progress their children are making in school. Inspection findings show that achievement is satisfactory and that pupils are making increasingly good progress in their learning. Pupils enter classes cheerfully, settling to work quickly and with enthusiasm. They are improving their skills in reading and many make good progress. Pupils who read to the inspectors enjoyed talking about their books. For example, a Year 10 pupil went through all the work he had done on Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. He talked knowledgeably about the different characters and showed good empathy for the situations they were in. It was, he said, his favourite book. Younger pupils identify characters such as Biff and Chip and use pictures to help them understand the text. A few of the youngest pupils try to use their phonics knowledge when sounding out words, but this skill is more evident in the reading of older pupils. Literacy and numeracy are well promoted in lessons to support pupils in improving their skills. In food technology, for example, pupils were encouraged to use their numeracy skills to measure and select different coloured measuring jugs. Pupils are able to identify their short-term targets and more-able pupils can explain how well they are doing. For example, one Year 9 student was rightly, very proud of the progress he had made in meeting his target to improve his handwriting. However, not all pupils know how well they are doing or what they should improve next because their short-term targets are not always reviewed regularly enough.

The school's data are used well to track individuals and the different groups within the school. As a result, the school is quick to identify any areas of underachievement. For example, the school recognised last year that some pupils with autistic spectrum disorders were not making the same progress as others. It established strategies to

support these pupils and present data show that they are doing as well as others. There is no evidence of any group of pupils achieving less well than their peers, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are in the care of the local authority.

Quality of teaching

The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about the quality of teaching. The inspection confirms that teaching is strongly improving and is satisfactory with many aspects that are good. Most evident of these is teachers' understanding of the different abilities in each class to group pupils by ability during lessons. Teaching assistants are used well to support each of the different groups and are clear about their roles in supporting learning. During a Key Stage 3 mathematics lesson about doubling, each group was given a different task to complete, linked to the topic. Tasks were well matched to the ability of the group and to individuals, enabling all pupils within the class to make good progress. In less effective lessons, class teachers provide the groups with the same task and pupils are too reliant on support from staff to help them complete the work. Effective curriculum planning ensures that lessons are often lively with lots of practical activities. Teachers use their skills well to capture pupils' attention. In a Key Stage 3 literacy lesson, pupils were totally absorbed when the teacher sieved flour on to black paper and then drew the letter 't' and then 'th'. The 'awe and wonder' in the pupils' faces was magical. In this lesson, those with moderate and severe learning difficulties made good progress. A pupil with autistic spectrum disorder struggled to stay on task initially but, through adapting the task, staff ensured he too was able to participate in drawing and sounding out 't' and 'th'. Teachers encourage pupils to work together and even the youngest collaborate well, for example asking politely for the glue when working on a science topic.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils talk positively about school and about all the different things they can do. The vast majority of parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school and this is confirmed by pupils and the inspectors. However, a very small minority of parents and carers feel that behaviour disrupts learning on occasions. One parent/carer commented that their children were sometimes bullied and that the school did not always help one of their children to improve his/her behaviour. Discussions with pupils and the school's records show that where there are incidents of name calling and teasing, the school deals with these quickly. Pupils did not consider there was bullying of any type. There is clear evidence in individual pupil records that behaviour over time has improved and the school's strategies to support individuals are successful in ensuring behaviour is good. Systems for supporting attendance are effective and attendance overall is above average.

There are pupils with challenging behaviours because of the nature of their special educational needs but the good range of strategies, such as one-to-one work, withdrawal and the much valued rewards system, helps these pupils improve their behaviour. Pupils' moral and social skills are promoted very well. Pupils get on well together and often provide each other with support in activities. There is a good awareness of what is right and wrong. One of the older pupils, for example,

acknowledged that at times he used to 'wind up' his friends, but admitted he knew this was wrong and was behaving a lot better.

Leadership and management

High expectations and a determination to ensure all pupils do well at school are ensuring that Fairmead is improving quickly. The large turnover of staff in the first 18 months after the headteacher's appointment meant that developments were not as fast as the headteacher wanted. However, since then the pace of change has picked up considerably and much has been achieved. Staff share the headteacher's drive and ambition and this has ensured that initiatives have been successful. The introduction of performance management by the headteacher has been valued by staff. Many commented on the much improved opportunities for professional development which have done much to broaden their skills. Well focused monitoring and good opportunities for training have improved the quality of teaching. The key issues from the previous inspection have all been addressed well. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas requiring further improvement. They are involved well in the life of the school and monitor its work through regular visits and discussions with staff. Minutes of meetings show a clear commitment to improving the school and the level of challenge provided is good. Good attention is paid to safeguarding arrangements and the vetting of staff is thorough. All these factors and the improvements already made to teaching and pupils' learning show that the school has the capacity to continue to improve at its present good pace.

Equality of opportunity is now assured and discrimination is not tolerated. Systems for monitoring pupils' achievements are very robust. The establishment of new procedures has enabled staff to have an accurate view of pupils' progress. Data are monitored regularly to check on pupils' progress. The impact of this, together with teachers' high expectations, has resulted in setting challenging long term goals for each pupil to achieve by the end of the academic year. This, in turn, has led to pupils now making faster progress in their learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides pupils with a range of experiences that they clearly enjoy and which support their learning. Opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation have been improved considerably, reflecting the school's high expectations for its pupils. Effective monitoring and evaluation have ensured, for example, that weaknesses, such as in the provision for information and communication technology, have been addressed through the appointment of a new subject leader and training for staff. The school is continuing to develop the curriculum by incorporating extension activities that further enhance the level of challenge. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and well supported by the personal, social, health and education curriculum. Cultural opportunities are well promoted and activities such as the class-led assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on a range of issues.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairmead Community Special School, Yeovil BA21 4NZ

Thank you very much for being so friendly and helpful when we came to visit you recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and a special thank you to those of you who took time to talk to us and show us your work.

We found that your school is satisfactory and improving quickly. You told us how safe you feel and that you think behaviour is good. We think the systems that are in place to help you improve your behaviour are good. You all said how you liked the rewards you get for hard work and behaving well. We were pleased how many of you knew about your targets but we think you could do even better in your work if the targets were checked more often. We have asked the teachers to make sure they check your targets regularly and to make sure you know how well you are doing and how to improve.

You clearly enjoy your lessons and teachers work hard to make sure lessons are fun. Sometimes though they do not always make sure the work you do is right for your ability, which means that sometimes it is too easy or too hard. We have asked the school to check that the work you are given is right for you. You have lots of interesting experiences during the day, but some of these are new and we have asked the school to make sure they meet your needs.

The school has improved a lot and the headteacher and her staff are committed to ensuring that you do the best you can. You can help by continuing to work hard and helping staff to make the school even better.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**