

Fernhurst Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125877
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	381145
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	John Stewart

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M D Jenkins
Headteacher	Mr G Parkes
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who observed 11 lessons seeing six teachers. In addition, inspectors observed the school's work and visited each class to scrutinise planning, talk to pupils and look at their work. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school leaders. Inspectors also looked at school documentation, for example safeguarding records, monitoring files and the school development plan. They met some parents and carers and analysed questionnaires from staff and older pupils, as well as 66 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- What evidence does the school have to show that progress in writing is consistent across the school?
- How well does the curriculum meet the needs of different groups, especially with mixed-age classes?
- What is the impact of leaders at all levels on improving teaching and learning and the use of assessment?

Information about the school

Fernhurst is a smaller than average primary school in a rural setting catering for pupils from Reception to Year 6. The school was only for pupils up to Year 5 until 2009. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and from minority ethnic backgrounds are below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 are taught in mixed-age classes. Since January 2011 the school has had a new headteacher. The school has Healthy Schools status and has Eco School, Basic Skills and Activemark awards.

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

Fernhurst is a satisfactory school. After a period of turbulence, with high levels of staff absence in the past year, it is improving. This is mainly due to the positive impact of the headteacher and support from the local authority since January of this year. Staff, parents, carers and the local authority comment on the effectiveness of the headteacher's leadership and appreciate improvements in pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching. Almost all parents and carers consider that their children enjoy school, as reflected by one parent who commented that her daughter 'can't wait to get to school'. They appreciate the good levels of care shown to their children and the way that the school helps them to lead healthy lifestyles and feel safe in school. A few parents and carers express concerns about the progress that their children are making and the information they receive about it.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most reach expected levels by the end of Reception. Attainment and progress are variable across the school and any differences in the performance of individuals or groups tend to reflect the widely different needs of pupils in the small year groups as well as some variations in the quality of provision. Pupils are making satisfactory progress from their starting points. Current attainment is broadly average, though pupils are on track to make better progress in reading than in writing and mathematics, especially at higher levels. Pupils' writing in books shows that they are making satisfactory progress, though school data indicate that attainment is slightly below average in a small Year 6 cohort where the group have considerable barriers to their learning. Further improvement in writing remains a priority for the school. Teachers' marking and comments in books do not give sufficient help to pupils so that pupils know what they need to do to improve.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is improving because inconsistencies across the school have been identified by the headteacher and are being addressed. The school has enlisted coaching and support from local authority advisers and independent consultants. This has provided all staff with training so that inadequate lessons are now infrequent. New strategies which focus on planning tasks that offer suitable challenge to pupils are starting to make a difference, though high expectations and clarity of learning objectives are not always evident. The curriculum is adequately suited to the needs of pupils. Learning is based around themes and the school has produced a skills-progression map for all subject areas to offer suitable challenge to different groups in mixed-age classes. A range of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning, especially in sport and music.

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The school is harmonious and a very large majority of pupils say that they enjoy school, as reflected in their high attendance. One pupil stated, 'There is no other school that I would rather be in.' Pupils appreciate the good care that adults provide. Concerns about the behaviour of a small minority of pupils in the past are diminishing because of the effectiveness of school strategies to encourage good behaviour. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and underpins the positive ethos in the school.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - using assessment more effectively to plan tasks that consistently offer suitable challenges to all groups of pupils
 - making sure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are to learn
 - ensuring that teachers set high expectations at all times.
- Increase the impact of leadership at all levels by:
 - developing an effective senior leadership team with clear roles and responsibilities
 - monitoring the influence leaders at all levels have on improving pupils' progress and the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that leaders are accountable for their areas of responsibility.
- Raise attainment in writing throughout the school by:
 - providing regular, assessed, independent writing tasks for pupils and moderating the outcomes
 - setting clear targets for pupils and checking that they are met
 - providing effective feedback to pupils to help them know what they need to do to improve their work
 - encouraging pupils to become more independent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The numbers of pupils in all year groups are very small. The number of pupils in Year 6 has varied from nine to 20 over the past three years, with 10 in the current Year 5/6 mixed class. In 2010 the Year 6 group had 10 pupils and attainment was below average, whereas attainment in 2011 for 20 pupils

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improved significantly and was above average. Progress data are also variable and indicate that pupils in 2011 did not achieve as well as they should. This was mainly because girls did not perform as well as boys. Current data show attainment is broadly average and that the gap between boys and girls is not so evident. Higher attainment in mathematics is below average. Attainment and progress in writing are improving but it is still a focus for the school. There are significant factors in the variable attainment and progress data. Half of the current Year 6 group have been in a succession of different schools, are on the special educational needs register, or have recently arrived in the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. Pupils' ability to use basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology is satisfactory and this, with their good personal skills, gives them an adequate preparation for the next stage of their education.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around school. The school has had a recent history of poor behaviour by a small minority of pupils. Pupils have fewer concerns about behaviour now because, as one boy put it, 'The school has sorted it out very well.' Bullying is infrequent and pupils know that the school deals well with any incidents. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults in the school and were welcoming to inspectors. They know the benefits of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They are encouraged to eat fruit provided by the school at break times and enjoy healthy options at lunchtime. A good number of pupils participate in a range of sporting activities outside lessons. Pupils know that the buildings are secure and one girl commented, 'The school tries to protect us and that is really comforting.' They know that adults will listen when they have concerns. Pupils participate in maypole dancing at spring fayres, have good connections with local sports' clubs, host a village pancake day celebration and have arranged to sing carols at the church. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They abide by the school's moral code and values, and show respect to adults. The school is harmonious and there are no tensions between pupils from different backgrounds. Pupils are gaining understanding of different cultures through discussions with parents and carers from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds.

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

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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The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Although teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory in the main, school monitoring and discussions with the local authority indicate that the quality of teaching is not consistent across the school. Teachers have created bright and interesting classrooms and corridors with displays which reflect the themes that are being studied. New systems of planning are thorough and identify progressive skills for each area, but teachers do not use them consistently to set high enough expectations or challenge for all pupils. Very warm relationships underpin pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to work. Pupils stay on task and collaborate well with partners.

Some classes are trialling a system of class organisation which has groups doing different subjects at the same time. In some of these lessons teachers do not offer consistent challenges to all groups or make learning intentions and expectations clear enough at the start of the lesson. Pupils make good progress when they are clear about the purpose and expectations of the tasks and are challenged to think and act independently. This was evident in a Year 3/4 physical education lesson, led by a local sports coach, when they made good gains in decision-making and exploitation of space in rugby. They could also evaluate their own skills and those of others accurately. Year 2/3 pupils made good progress in a literacy lesson because they had tasks which challenged them to think for themselves when creating a story from a picture or drawing a picture to represent text. Music is strong in the school. All pupils in class 3 learn the recorder, all pupils in class 4 learn the ukulele and a range of other pupils learn different instruments.

The school is inclusive and provides a good level of care for its pupils. Transition arrangements help pupils to settle quickly in their new class or at their secondary schools. The school provides good care for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including effective links with a wide range of outside agencies. These are having a positive impact on their behaviour, social skills and progress.

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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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. He is fully committed to addressing weaknesses and his ambition is now shared by staff and governors. One teacher commented, 'He has transformed the school and is the driving force behind all of the positive change.' The headteacher's monitoring quickly identified areas for improvement, especially in producing more consistent planning, teaching and the use of assessment to ensure that lessons offer suitable challenges to pupils. Since that time, the school has developed new systems which are being embedded in these areas, but the use of learning objectives and use of assessment data to plan are still not as consistent as they should be. Governors have improved their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are now playing an active role in supporting the school and holding it to account.

Parents and carers express their appreciation of the recently introduced parent workshops and forums which enable them to raise questions about their concerns. Most parents and carers consider that the school takes note of their views. The school produces frequent newsletters for parents and carers, provides them with information on the themes that their children are studying and has introduced systems for direct electronic communication with the headteacher. The school is forging partnerships with other primary and secondary schools to promote pupils' learning, for example a local 'moodle' is helping to create online courses and all teachers meet each term with their counterparts in other local primary schools. The school promotes community cohesion well, especially with the local village. Pupils support local and national charities, learn about different cultures in discussions with parents and carers, and are sending furniture to help a school that they are linking with in Kenya. Governors ensure that safeguarding and child protection procedures are rigorous. The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively and all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities play a full part in school life.

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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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Reception class went through a long period of turbulence earlier this year due to staff absence. Although the current teacher is new to the Reception class, she is experienced and her leadership skills are developing. She has quickly identified areas that need improving. Assessment procedures have been revised to ensure that judgements accurately reflect children's progress. Children enjoy coming to school and parents and carers speak highly of the transition and induction arrangements which help them to settle quickly. They enter the school with skills that are, generally, at age-related expectations, though their language skills are often weaker than those in other areas. Most make at least expected progress in Reception and meet the early learning goals. This is because teaching is at least satisfactory and improving. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. A group of children working with the teacher in a literacy-focused activity made good progress. This was mainly because of the reinforcement of phonics skills to help them reflect and write about what they are good at. A physical activity enabled children to enhance their understanding of the reasons for warming up. They practised new skills of catching and throwing and made good progress in following instructions. The class environment is bright and welcoming and the school is improving the outdoor area. Most children respond and behave well, especially when they are engaged in activities and supervised by adults. A small number of boys do not always behave well when left alone. Adults provide a safe and caring environment and safety issues are raised as opportunities arise.

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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

Most parents and carers expressed positive views about the school. Almost all parents and carers consider that their children are kept safe and enjoy school. The vast majority appreciate the way the school is led and managed, reflecting their perception of the positive impact that the headteacher has made. There were a few negative comments with some continuing concern about progress and communication about their children's progress, with concerns about behaviour, but most parents and carers acknowledge that progress has been made.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fernhurst 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 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	61	25	38	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	55	26	39	3	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	35	34	52	7	11	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	35	31	47	10	15	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	28	42	31	47	4	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	41	34	52	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	44	36	55	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)	19	29	35	53	6	9	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	42	29	44	8	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	32	32	48	7	11	4	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	35	35	53	6	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	41	34	52	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	50	27	41	5	8	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



25 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fernhurst Primary School, Haslemere Road, Fernhurst GU27 3EA

Thank you for the welcome you showed in our recent visit to your school. We were impressed by your politeness and courtesy. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you work hard in lessons.

I would like to share with you some things we found out about your school.

- Your school is giving you a satisfactory education and you are doing well in some areas.
- You really enjoy school, as shown by your high attendance.
- You get on well with your fellow pupils and like your teachers.
- Behaviour is improving and most of you behave well in class and around school.
- Adults take good care of you.
- You have a good understanding of what you need to do to keep fit and healthy.
- You participate well in village activities.

There are things to be improved and we have asked the headteacher to make sure that:

- in all lessons teachers plan tasks for you that are matched to the stage you have reached
- you fully understand what you are going to learn
- the school monitors its work closely to help you make the best progress that you can
- you are clear about how well you are doing in writing and what you need to do to improve your work.

Thank you again for making our visit so enjoyable. You can play your part in helping the school improve by working hard and making sure that everyone does the very best they can.

Yours sincerely
John Stewart
Lead inspector

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