

Ferndown First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113667
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357389
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Hooper
Headteacher	Joanne Di Pede
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed 11 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils and a small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school were also spoken to. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' progress, records of governing body meetings, development planning and monitoring documentation, local authority reports, a range of policies and procedures including those associated with safeguarding, curriculum planning documents and a small sample of pupils' work. They also scrutinised questionnaires returned by 73 parents and carers, 113 pupils and 13 staff.

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

- the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils, especially in Years 3 and 4
- pupils' awareness of religious and ethnic diversity.
- subject leaders' contribution to school development.

Information about the school

This is a large first school where pupils in some year groups are taught in mixed age classes. A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although this varies considerably between year groups. The most commonly identified of these needs relate to specific and moderate learning and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school holds the Healthy School and Basic Skills awards and is a Rights Respecting School (Level 1). It also holds an award for financial planning. The school shares its site with Ferndown Children's Centre which is managed by a private provider and this was not inspected.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school which has made rapid improvement since its previous inspection. Pupils now achieve well throughout the school and in all classes the higher attaining pupils are challenged well so they make good progress. As a result of these strengths, attainment has improved and continues to do so. By the time pupils leave the school, attainment is above the level expected for their age.

The school's success is due to the very strong leadership provided by the headteacher and her success in building a team of staff and governors who are working together well to move the school forward. Their excellent commitment and enthusiastic approach is a strong factor in the school's improvement over the last two years. Rigorous and comprehensive self-evaluation underpins good development planning. The progress of this is analysed especially well, ensuring that remaining weaknesses can be clearly identified and speedily addressed. The deputy headteacher and senior leadership team support the headteacher well. Good professional development has helped subject leaders to play an effective role in supporting and monitoring improvement priorities. These strengths and the school's past track record give confidence that it has good capacity to improve further.

The determination and commitment to improve the quality of provision have resulted in good teaching and learning, and a curriculum which is meaningful and relevant so that it enthuses and motivates pupils to do well. Effective assessment and tracking of progress allows staff to set pupils individual improvement targets which help them to achieve well. Pupils gain important literacy, numeracy and science investigation skills at a good rate. Plans are in place to develop clearer and more detailed guidance in order to further enhance curriculum planning and target setting for these subjects.

Reception children get a good start to their education because their needs are met well. They settle in quickly and develop confidence and independence. This, together with the good level of care and support pupils receive, helps them to enjoy school very much, a fact noted by the vast majority of parents and carers. The support provided for the most vulnerable pupils is especially good.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour significantly support their good progress. Pupils develop into mature and friendly young people who are well prepared for the future and who make a positive contribution to the local community. They have a good understanding of world religions, but their knowledge of different cultures in the United Kingdom and around the world is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and science skills by developing clearer and more detailed guidance to improve planning and target setting.

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- Enhance pupils' awareness of different cultural groups in the United Kingdom and the global community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The strong sense of purpose, commitment and enjoyment amongst the whole school community helps pupils develop very positive attitudes to school. Pupils eagerly seek to increase their skills and knowledge. Attainment has risen well over the past two years as has the rate of progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to the effective care and support they receive.

Reception children start school with skills below the level expected, but good progress means that most reach average levels by the time they move into Year 1. By Year 2, attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, Year 2 pupils are very secure about place value, which helps them to round up numbers to the nearest 100. Pupils also read well because they become skilled at building up new words from sounds and using pictures and context clues to help them understand a story. By Year 4, exciting lessons engage pupils' enthusiasm for writing, so they intuitively use similes in description to make their work interesting. In mathematics, pupils' secure understanding of number and data helps them to solve mathematical problems easily. The emphasis on investigation in science helps pupils approach a new topic as 'scientists' so that they develop good understanding of important concepts. These strengths mean that their skills and knowledge are better than those of the majority of pupils of their age.

The very good teamwork seen amongst adults in the school helps pupils to develop the same skills, working well together, thoughtfully discussing their work and arriving at a consensus. Pupils' ability to reflect and question why things are a certain way supports their good spiritual development. Both lessons and play times are very harmonious occasions and good behaviour is the norm. Pupils' awareness of how to look after their health and safety is good and they develop a real sense of responsibility to the community and the wider world. For example, a small group of pupils visited Ferndown Town Council to explain how they would like to see their town develop. Pupils have a good understanding of the different cultures present in the school, with current development planning focused on enhancing their cultural understanding through links with schools in Bristol, Italy and Bangladesh. Despite the school's strenuous efforts, attendance remains average, partly due to term time holidays.

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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	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school has benefited from good support for the development of teaching and learning so there is a strong culture of reflection amongst all staff, who are keen to increase their skills. There is a consistent approach to important features such as planning and marking of work, which supports pupils' progress well. Teachers plan effectively to meet the different ages and stages of learning in each class and make sure challenging work is set, including for the higher attainers. Very strong relationships between adults and pupils, and high expectations of behaviour, encourage learning well. Teachers explain things clearly although they do not always make the best use of technology such as interactive whiteboards to boost pupils' understanding.

Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to learning, providing skilled explanations and support, most notably in the well-run guided reading and writing sessions. Pupils' individual targets are used to good effect to encourage their progress although some teachers miss opportunities in lessons to refer to these. However, teachers are good at getting pupils to pause in their work, and re-focusing them and helping correct misconceptions. This was clearly evident in a Year 3/4 literacy lesson where pupils were continually improving their descriptions. Well-established assessment systems provide opportunities for pupils to review and to improve their work.

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is promoted through activities that interest them and in tasks where they can see the point in carrying them out. For example, when a teacher

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explained that a mathematics task was related to racing cars, one boy stated, 'I love maths!' Where possible, subjects are linked together well. For example, a science activity is based on work undertaken in English, with pupils having already identified some of the words to describe their findings. Longer-term planning identifies challenging activities, helping improve pupils' progress well. Good programmes are in place to support pupils who find learning difficult so that the number who need extra help is declining. The school is rigorous in the systems it employs to secure pupils' welfare. For example, catch-up activities are provided for those pupils who are absent for any length of time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The shared vision of the whole-school community and their commitment to achieve the very best education and care for pupils has driven forward improvement especially well. Since the last inspection, rigorous and effective systems have been put in place for managing and monitoring all aspects of the school's work. Providing inspiration and support for staff and governors, the headteacher has benefited from an effective deputy headteacher and strong senior leadership team who support her well in the very good analysis of provision and progress. This has led to the formation of a development plan which focuses well on important priorities, resulting in improvement in all areas of the school's work. The close attention paid to the needs, abilities and outcomes of different groups of pupils means their equality of opportunity is good.

The governing body is well informed and supportive, with their effective reports on school visits supporting and challenging the school well. The governing body is increasingly proactive in helping to direct the school's work and governors use their very good skills in a range of areas such as finance, and health and safety to very good effect. Careful financial management ensures resources are well deployed to support provision. Good safeguarding policies and procedures ensure pupils are safe and free from harm at all times. An effective action plan is in place to promote community cohesion, which is now beginning to show evidence of impact. The school works hard to engage parents, providing good information on their children's learning and the school's work. Partnerships with a range of other schools and agencies, especially that with the East Dorset Area Schools, support pupils' education and welfare well.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into school and eagerly take part in the wide range of activities on offer. A good focus on language and physical skills, which are weaker than other areas on entry, helps children to catch up quickly. This is most notable in the work they do to learn the sounds in words and in the very good activities to help develop their fine motor skills. Progress is good across all areas of learning.

There is a good balance between activities led by an adult and those which children choose for themselves. Even early in their first term at school, children were confidently selecting what they could do and were working well together. Staff prepare carefully to meet the needs of Reception children in the mixed age classes. For example, a water activity helped a child explore how water flows whilst Year 1 pupils were working on measuring capacity. The accommodation has been very well organised to focus on different areas of learning and is effectively supervised so there is always an adult on hand to discuss things with children and extend their learning. A careful check is kept on children's progress to help plan for the next steps. The small outdoor area provides suitable opportunities for physical development although this is not available in inclement weather. However, good use is made of the school hall for 'Leap into Life' activities. Good attention is paid to children's welfare, with effective induction procedures in place. The provision is well led and managed, with good teamwork amongst all adults. There is close liaison with other phases of the school so that children benefit from the routines and expectations shared across all classes.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors are satisfied with the school, agreeing that their children enjoy being there. Only a very small minority expressed concerns. Inspectors' views support parents' confidence in the school and agree that children are very happy there. Of most concern to a few parents and carers was the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and how well their children are prepared for the future. Inspectors found that the robust behaviour management systems result in pupils' behaviour being good, and exemplary on occasions. The skills pupils acquire during their time at the school prepare them well for the future. A few parents expressed concerns about the reorganisation of some classes and would like more information. Inspectors feel that adequate information was given and that, where approached by parents, the school is very willing to further explain the organisation to help allay their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ferndown First 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.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	55	33	45	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	66	24	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	38	41	56	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	33	44	60	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	42	39	53	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	40	41	56	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	44	37	51	2	3	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)	29	40	38	52	2	3	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	42	35	48	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	32	38	52	6	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	34	37	51	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	44	38	52	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	52	33	45	1	1	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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">■ 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.



16 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferndown First School, Ferndown, BH22 9ET

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our time talking to you and seeing all the things you do. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us. We think your school is good and are delighted that you and your parents agree.

Here are some of the things we found out were especially good about the school.

- You make good progress and by the end of Year 4, attainment is better than that of most pupils of this age.
- You enjoy school and work hard, behave well and get on well together. We were impressed by the things you do for your school and the local area, like telling Ferndown Council how you think they could make the town better.
- Staff plan interesting activities and teach you well.
- Adults take good care of you and give you good advice on how to improve your work.
- Those of you who need a lot of help and support are especially well looked after.
- Your headteacher, together with staff and governors, is working hard to make your school even better.

Here are some of the things we have asked the school to improve.

- Provide guidance that makes it really clear to you and your teachers how you can carry on improving important skills, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Help you to learn about the different cultures of people elsewhere in this country and overseas.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson

Lead Inspector

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