

Fairlands Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117152
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358096
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Callaghan
Headteacher	Robert Staples
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 14 teachers in 23 lessons were observed. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of subject departments, minutes of governors' meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, a scrutiny of pupils' work and 115 parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- Pupils' progress across the school in English, especially boys' writing, mathematics and science.
- Whether the progress and learning of pupils is improving securely and quickly enough, especially for more able pupils.
- Investigate the weaker achievement of some groups of pupils i.e. boys at Key Stage 1, girls at Key Stage 2 and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities(school action).
- The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and its effectiveness in promoting improvement and the quality of teaching and use of assessment to raise standards further.
- The school's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Fairlands is larger than the average primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average and a small minority are in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meal is just over a third. The school provides a breakfast club. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery class and two Reception classes.

The school works very closely with the pre-school playgroup that was opened on the site in January 2009. This provision is not managed by the governors of the school and was not inspected by the team.

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

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Fairlands Primary School is satisfactory. It is improving quickly. It has some good features, and the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are particularly successful in improving the Early Years Foundation Stage, links with parents and safety. They are rightly aware that improving attainment remains the first priority, particularly in writing. While achievement is satisfactory overall, it is inconsistent, which means progress by different groups of pupils and across subjects is not yet fast enough to be good. As a result of rigorous monitoring by senior leaders, teaching is improving rapidly and the proportion of lessons where progress is good is increasing.

The headteacher and senior management team have a clear vision for its future improvement and have made many good changes and improvements in recent years. They are tackling weaknesses with determination. Procedures to closely track and assess pupils' progress are successfully in place. The school's current standards show an improving picture in all aspects.

Although pupils' progress has accelerated, there has not been enough time for this to push standards higher. Pupils acknowledge the growing success of the school. One expressed the views of the overwhelming majority, saying, 'We like this school, it helps us learn, we like all the lessons and the activities. We feel very safe in school; we know our teachers care for us.' Parents are positive about the school, one parent reflecting the views of many said, 'Staff at this school are a very approachable and hard working team of people, who really have the best interests of the pupils at heart. My child has just finished two years in the Early Years Foundation Stage and has had a fantastic experience.'

These are the main strengths of the school:

Pupils enjoy school and lessons because they like and respect their teachers.

The school ethos is friendly, warm and welcoming and relationships are good.

Pupils all feel very safe and secure in school and are confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns. Parents appreciate the efforts made concerning pupils' safety and the school site.

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved dramatically in the last two years and is good with outstanding features. Parents commented on how pleased they were with the progress their children made in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Links with parents are good. Most parents appreciate the school's communication through 'Parentline Plus,' the parent's forum and the weekly adult learning classes for parents who are in the early stages of learning English.

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Links with partners are good and contribute to the improving provision, for example, contact with the pre-school play group on the school site.

Aspects of safeguarding are good because senior leaders rigorously ensure attention to detail. Parents appreciate the meticulous systems in place to keep their children safe.

These are the key weaknesses of the school:

Although achievement is satisfactory and improving, attainment in English is still low. Key skills are not built quickly enough and pupils show weaknesses in their writing skills.

Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to match tasks closely to the learning needs of pupils, especially the more able, or show pupils clearly how to improve their work through challenging comments when marking work.

Some middle managers are new to their roles and do not yet monitor their areas of responsibility.

Recent improvements in teaching mean that the progress pupils make in lessons is accelerating, often at a good rate, and most groups of pupils are now on track to achieve better results than in recent years. Systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school are good. These, together with the effective work done to redress inadequate attainment by improving the quality of teaching and learning, improvements in reading at Key Stage 1 and improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, all demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and, by May 2011, raise standards in writing throughout the school by:
 - ensuring key skills in English are developed well
 - improving consistency of handwriting skills and spelling
 - helping pupils develop the use of a wide range of vocabulary to enrich their writing
 - ensuring every opportunity is given for pupils to use their writing skills.
- Ensure that, by May 2011, all teaching is of consistently good quality or better by:
 - making certain that all teachers use assessment more effectively to plan lessons that match the needs and provide appropriate challenge for all pupils, especially the more able
 - helping pupils understand how to improve their work through consistently good-quality marking.
 - enabling middle leaders to monitor progress and standards 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.

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Strong relationships contribute to a positive climate in which pupils enjoy learning. While achievement is satisfactory overall, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the quality of learning throughout the school is improving rapidly in English, mathematics and science. Expectations are rising but are not yet sufficiently consistent. Too few pupils reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. There are many good initiatives in place help pupils settle into their new school quickly. The school's tracking information and inspection evidence currently indicate significant improvement in attainment and progress for most groups, including boys at Key Stage 1, girls at Key Stage 2 and pupils identified for school action support. However, there has not yet been enough time for these improvements to show in national test results.

Good progress was observed in a Year 6 literacy lesson, where high expectations, brisk pace and rigorous use of challenging questions ensured all groups of pupils made significant gains in understanding, enabling them to compare and evaluate newspaper articles. However, the quality of learning varies too much. In some classes, tasks are not matched closely enough to the needs of all pupils, especially the more able. A few pupils and parents say the work is too easy. Key skills are not consistently practised and applied; this affects pupils' achievement and future economic well-being. The quality of writing especially handwriting and spelling is too variable.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Pupils behave sensibly because they enjoy coming to school. They say they feel very safe in school and that they can discuss any problems with staff. Pupils also show good awareness of how to keep safe outside school and when using the local roads. The school is working successfully towards the Healthy School Award and pupils' show good awareness of how to stay healthy. They describe a healthy diet and talk about the beneficial effects of exercise. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. Pupils work well with others and opportunities to discuss work with a partner are well developed throughout the school. School council members talk sensibly about their contribution to 'Anti-bullying' week. Their awareness of cultural differences, both in the United Kingdom and globally, is developing satisfactorily.

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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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

A significant number of lessons observed during the inspection were of good quality, but the use of assessment information is not consistent or rigorous enough in all classes. This means that the match of work to pupils' abilities is not always precise enough to ensure consistently good progress, especially for more able pupils. Some pupils commented, 'If you are in the top set the work is too easy.' Teachers use questions well to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and pupils appreciate well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas with others during 'talking partner' sessions. Teachers mark work conscientiously but the quality of feedback to pupils on how to improve their work is too variable.

Pupils enjoy the new creative curriculum, which links skills and knowledge in different subjects very well. They are enthusiastic to learn, with one group stating clearly, 'We like everything we do.' The curriculum however, is not always well enough adapted to meet those of more able pupils, particularly in writing. Curriculum enrichment is good and pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and activities; these are well attended.

Pastoral care is strong and parents agree, this is a strength. Support for pupils who need additional help and who are in the early stages of learning English is adequately planned. The school works very well with support agencies. Induction and transition arrangements are good. Levels of attendance, although average, continue to improve because procedures for checking attendance are good. 'The Green Room' is not always used

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effectively. The strategy of having a permanently staffed Green Room for pupils who need additional help is confusing parents and pupils who are unsure how well it helps those who need additional help and why pupils are sent there.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and governors demonstrate drive and ambition to take the school forward. The headteacher has a clear vision and is determined to secure improvement. He has an accurate view of teaching and uses this information to sharpen provision and target the most important areas for improvement. The governing body supports and challenges the school satisfactorily. Middle managers support senior managers well but are not yet fully involved in monitoring their areas of responsibility.

The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities to raise the effectiveness of the school from satisfactory to good. Close partnership with the local authority has effectively helped the school to strengthen the leadership team and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school has established an extensive range of partners and these are already beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes. For example, the school works very closely with the pre-school playgroup and social services and this is having a positive impact on transition and the most vulnerable pupils. The school has developed the Early Years Foundation Stage area well and this is now a strength of the school.

The school's satisfactory promotion of equality is reflected in the effective support and achievement for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Support in withdrawal groups in the Green Room is variable. Safeguarding procedures are strong and meet requirements well. Whilst the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and links locally are sound, leaders have suitably well-advanced plans to broaden pupils' understanding of people in different parts of this country and overseas.

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Rigorous preparation, home visits and links with parents ensure that children settle extremely well into the Nursery and Reception classes. Most children enter Nursery and Reception with very low levels of skills and knowledge in all areas of learning. Children make good progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes in all areas of learning although they are still below the expected standards when they enter Year 1.

Children make outstanding progress in their personal development because relationships are extremely strong. Staff provide an exciting range of activities, both indoors and outdoors, and children have good opportunities to learn through a good balance of activities led by adults and those they choose for themselves. They learn to play co-operatively with each other. For example, forming a band to perform their tune to others. Children thoroughly enjoyed using magnifying glasses to investigate a selection of bones and identified animals such as dinosaurs that lived in the past and animals such as cows and sheep that live today. They know how to look after Freckle and Flapjack the class guinea pigs.

Teaching is consistently good or better with some outstanding teaching in some phonics and outdoor activities. Teachers encourage children to respond individually to questions and talk to each other; consequently they make good progress in their speaking and communication skills. Excellent learning was seen in a phonics session where children loved telling Kevin the class puppet exactly how to sound out new words. High expectations and a good, well planned curriculum that is well matched to children's needs contribute to the good progress. Most activities are fun and challenging. Opportunities, however, to challenge children who are working on the computer are sometimes missed and there is only one computer available to the three classes on a daily basis.

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Care and welfare are good and this contributes to children's positive achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good with some outstanding features. The co-ordinator is an excellent role model. Good links with the pre-school, parents and carers and well-planned induction arrangements contribute successfully to children's enjoyment of school.

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

Most parents and carers are satisfied with the school. They regard the school as happy, welcoming and friendly. They say their children enjoy attending and most are happy with their progress. Parents and carers regard the school as caring and supportive. They identify strengths of the school as: the Early Years Foundation Stage, the links with parents, the way the school keeps the pupils safe, the relationships with staff and the leadership of the headteacher.

The majority of criticisms were offered constructively and were mainly concerned with the way the Green Room is used and the progress some more able pupils are making. Inspectors found that although progress is satisfactory, there are clear signs that it is improving rapidly this year.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fairlands Primary School and Nursery 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 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 350 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	60	42	36	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	58	44	38	4	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	48	41	61	53	5	4	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	40	54	47	11	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	53	46	52	45	8	7	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	39	61	53	6	5	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	33	68	59	10	9	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)	33	28	61	53	11	9	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	40	53	46	11	9	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	32	56	48	9	8	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	28	65	56	10	9	5	4
The school is led and managed effectively	47	41	57	49	6	5	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	53	47	41	5	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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.



6 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairlands Primary School and Nursery, Hertfordshire SG1 3JA

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We enjoyed your assemblies and will remember how enthusiastically you decorated your tee-shirts for 'Anti-bullying' week. You told us how much you enjoy school and all the activities. We found your school a satisfactory and improving one. It has some good features:

You like coming to school and your attendance is continuing to improve.

You get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress in all areas of learning.

You all feel very safe in school.

You enjoy and benefit from the many activities, clubs, visits and visitors.

Your school cares for you and teaches you to be healthy and safe.

Your school council is well organised and is working well to help improve the school.

All staff and governors work well together to ensure your school continues to improve.

Your headteacher has high expectations of you and he gives a strong lead to everyone.

There are three things that we have identified for staff and governors to improve:

Make sure that you all reach higher standards in writing.

Ensure that all your teachers use assessment information to plan work that always challenges you especially those who find the work easy and give you challenging comments when marking your work.

Ensure that your senior teachers check how well you are doing in all your subjects.

You can help with these improvements by telling your teachers when your work is too easy and continuing to work really hard. Thank you for a very enjoyable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector

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