

Finlay Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135727
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	362985
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Shorrock
Headteacher	Naomi Walsh
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Finlay Road Gloucester GL4 6TR
Telephone number	01452 530310
Fax number	01452 530311
Email address	admin@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons seeing eight teachers. They met with the senior staff, a group of staff, and with three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. They talked with pupils in lessons and during break times, and with some parents and carers before, during and at the end of the school day. They observed the schools work and looked at some documentation including records of pupils attainment and progress, the school development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Questionnaires were not used on this inspection. Some evidence gathered by the lead inspector at her visit to the school in October 2010 was also used.

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

How good is: childrens progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage; pupils progress in reading in Years 1 and 2; and progress in writing in Years 3 to 6?

Is the school currently maintaining for pupils in Year 6 the above average standards and high levels of progress seen in the previous year?

How good is teaching and, in particular, is mathematics being taught in applications across the curriculum?

How effectively are leaders and managers ensuring the school sustains high quality provision and outcomes given the temporary arrangements that currently pertain within the senior leadership team?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. It opened in January 2009, under the New School Competition process, on the same site as the predecessor school of the same name. It is supported by the Learning Community Partnership comprising the University of Gloucestershire, GL Communities, and a number of churches in the Gloucester City Deanery.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. About 80% of pupils are White British and others are from a wide range of other backgrounds, the largest group being Mixed White and Black Caribbean. The percentage speaking English as an additional language is broadly similar to many schools nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is well above average. The main difficulties or disabilities are behavioural, emotional or social, or in speech, language and communication.

The school has Healthy School status.

On the same site are a children's centre and an adult learning facility; these were not visited as part of this inspection. The breakfast club run by the school was seen.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding school has much to be proud of. A tremendous amount has been achieved for the benefit of pupils since it was re-opened in January 2009 because of the excellent leadership of the headteacher as well as the outstanding work of the governing body. Staff, governors, parents and partners in education and care have worked in great collaboration, and with much enthusiasm and commitment, in a successful drive to raise pupils achievements. Members of the school community, and especially parents and carers, speak highly of what the school provides not just for the pupils but also for their families.

Pupils attainment is above average. Moreover, pupils personal development has many strengths because the school fosters this extremely well through the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. The Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely effective so that the children in it make a good start to school life.

It is the totality and coherence of the outstanding educational provision that account for pupils excellent learning and progress. Very well established routines and excellent behaviour management make for calm, purposeful learning. Behaviour is good. A few pupils need help to maintain their calm and get it in the most unobtrusive way. Support in helping some pupils and their families overcome barriers to learning is exceptionally good. Pupils grow in confidence and willingly take on responsibilities. Teaching is mostly good; some is outstanding. At times, however, where teaching is not as strong, the pace of pupils learning slows. In most lessons, teachers are adept at gauging exactly what pupils know and understand and what needs to be done or said to prompt further progress. The outstanding curriculum supports greatly pupils personal as well as their academic development. It plays a huge part in making learning enjoyable in lessons and in the many enrichment activities and memorable experiences. Pupils beautiful topic books and displays in classrooms and around the school are vibrant and bear witness to the richness of the curriculum. Topics and themes are generally used well to cover the various subjects of the curriculum and promote the use of basic skills such as reading and writing, although the application of mathematics in meaningful and relevant contexts is less frequently seen.

There is much to praise in leadership and management. Most notable are the high ambition, the accuracy of self-evaluation, and the creation of a school where staff morale is high and all are constantly seeking to learn and improve further. Through the significant improvements seen in both provision and outcomes in recent years, the school has shown its outstanding capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the overall quality of teaching so that pupils outstanding progress can be maintained evenly across the school by:
 - taking even more opportunities to use and develop pupils basic skills through the topics being studied; ensuring, in particular, that mathematical skills are applied in relevant real-life situations
 - ensuring all teachers have highly developed skills in discerning exactly what pupils have learned, through good questioning and other means, so that next steps in learning are the right ones and speedily provided.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils learning and enjoyment of school are outstanding primarily because staff have set high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and work as one to ensure children and pupils are provided for extremely well and feel entirely safe and secure. In all lessons, pupils arrive calmly, fully aware of the consequences of less than perfect attitudes and behaviour, and eager to work hard. As a result, the progress pupils make is exceptionally high overall from starting points on entry to the school that are generally below age-related expectations. Progress is particularly high over Years 3 to 6. Learning and progress in lessons are never less than satisfactory. No striking differences exist in the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In 2010, however, pupils in Year 6 known to be eligible for free school meals, as a group, made better progress than those who are not.

Results in the 2010 end of Year 6 tests improved from 2009 and were above average. Results were much better in reading than in writing, however. Results in the end of Year 2 tests in 2010 were broadly in line with national averages. The 2010 test outcomes pay tribute to successful work in overcoming the various barriers to learning that many pupils experience. They also show the schools success in speeding up the progress of more able pupils. Pupils work seen during the inspection and records of pupils attainment and progress show the school is keeping up these high levels of achievement. There is still work to be done, however, to lift the attainment of some pupils whose skills are relatively weak or who have gaps in their knowledge, in mathematics for example. Older pupils are generally confident at speaking. Reading and writing skills are being developed well although pupils written work does not frequently include a wide range of vocabulary. There are some examples of very well presented work but also some unevenness in the quality of handwriting.

Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because it is fostered exceptionally well and in many ways. Most pupils attend school well and the proportion of persistent absentees is being reduced so that attendance is improving but it is still broadly average. The many strategies used to promote healthy lifestyles have been extremely successful so that pupils understanding is of a high order. Pupils know that eating healthily is important but they also understand very well the need to keep physically fit and to show concern for their own emotional well-being and that of others. Inspectors witnessed many acts of kindness among pupils. Pupils enjoy calm, well-ordered and sociable times in the breakfast club and when having lunch at delightfully laid tables.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

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 various elements of the outstanding educational provision are carefully tailored to meet each pupils needs. Pupils excellent progress is underpinned not only by good teaching but also by the numerous strategies to ensure that the climate and conditions are right for learning. Foremost among these is the unequivocal stance taken by staff to promote positive attitudes to work, including good behaviour; this is done by gentle yet persistent reminders and swift action by teachers and teaching assistants to deal with any shortcomings that might occur. The system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood by pupils and very effective in motivating them to succeed.

The curriculum captures pupils interest and makes them want to learn. Teachers are enthusiastic and creative in their design of memorable experiences, especially in the expertly devised themed studies. Subjects are often linked together so that basic skills are developed and applied in interesting and relevant contexts; this is less true for mathematics than for reading, writing, and information and communication technology (ICT). Trips, clubs, visits and visitors all greatly enhance the curriculum.

In most lessons, teaching is good. In some, it is satisfactory and occasionally teaching is excellent. Relationships are consistently positive and supportive. Classrooms are bright, inviting and contain vibrant displays. The pace of learning is generally fast but sometimes slips when tasks are undemanding or cover work that is already well within pupils grasp.

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Occasionally, the teachers explanation of a task is overlong or lacks a little clarity. Teachers generally use the target-setting process well and match tasks to individual pupils next steps in learning. Without exception, teachers convey a sense of excitement. In the best lessons, pupils enthusiasm is maintained through the use of a wide range of teaching strategies that include drama, games, work in talk partners or in groups. Teaching assistants are extremely well deployed. They contribute greatly to learning and, where necessary, encourage pupils to maintain good levels of concentration.

Arrangements for ensuring the personal well-being and health and safety of pupils are outstanding. The vigilance of staff in noting and acting upon any concerns is excellent. The family support worker, alongside staff from external agencies including the education welfare officer, plays a central role in the schools outstanding care, guidance and support. The breakfast club is popular, well run and provides a very positive start to the day for the pupils who attend.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The schools vision and values, underpinned by the words Working Together are lived out fully in the exceptionally strong partnerships that exist with parents and carers, with a wide range of external support agencies and with the Learning Community Partnership. All partners play a huge part in enabling pupils to reach their potential, sometimes having to overcome significant barriers to learning and working with families to do so. The successful work on promoting community cohesion addresses issues not only in the immediate locality but is forging links with other schools nationally and internationally thereby increasing pupils understanding of many aspects of life and learning.

The headteacher communicates clearly her high expectations to staff and pupils and supports them assiduously in rising to them. Staff at all levels are encouraged to study and gain qualifications; many have done so and are proud of their achievements. Staff morale is high. Highly effective in the smooth day-to-day running of the school, as well as the teaching staff, are the finance officer and the school secretary. All staff play a part in seeking to ensure each pupil is given specific support so that the differing skills and talents are nurtured and new ones uncovered. The headteacher is currently being supported by two acting senior leaders. Although the school lacks an established senior team, the temporary arrangements to cover maternity leave and a secondment are working well. The schools systems for assessment are robust so that the progress of groups of pupils as well as of individuals can be easily determined and supported thereby ensuring equality of opportunity. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are outstanding.

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The governing body works with equal determination and skill to secure high quality in all areas of management, to develop extended services, and garner expertise in support of the school so as to enrich educational provision. Governance is excellent but the governing body might nevertheless set out more clearly its key performance indicators for the school, beyond those relating to attainment and progress, and review them more formally lest any of them slip. Governors and leaders are continuing to develop the school with further ambitions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The same drive and energy given to ensuring the best possible educational provision are as visible at this stage as elsewhere in the school. Provision is constantly being improved, in the learning garden for example, to enrich childrens experiences. Although there is still more that can be done, such as setting more of the mark making activities in relevant contexts, provision is already outstanding. This is because assessment and planning are undertaken so carefully to build on what each individual child can do through well-chosen, inventive and timely activities. Staff are alert and grasp opportunities to develop childrens own interests and ideas.

Conversations staff hold with children extend their vocabulary and test understanding in a gentle, supportive yet sharply focused way. Sessions as a whole group are balanced well with times when children set their own agendas. The good, large spaces, indoor and outdoor, allocated for these young children are attractive and used well to cover all the required areas of learning. The children clearly enjoy being in this setting and flourish. While not all children reach the learning goals for their ages, many do, often from lower than expected starting points on entry into the Reception class. Childrens safety and well-being are assured extremely well.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

On this inspection, the views of parents and carers were sought in informal meetings with them at the start and end of the school day, during an open afternoon in the Year 3 class, and in the Family Learning group. Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise for the school and find very little to say about what could be better. One parent said Its not just a school, its a family and others made similar comments. Parents value the school not just for encouraging their children in their learning but for all it does to help families in many ways. They see the staff as very supportive and mention with great appreciation the work of the headteacher and family support worker.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsteds questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 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 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.

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.



4 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Finlay Community School, Gloucester, GL4 6TR

Thank you for your warm welcome and friendliness when inspectors visited your school recently. I write to give you a summary of our inspection findings.

Your school is outstanding. Staff and governors are rightly proud of you and your achievements. The vast majority of you make extremely good progress in your learning and in the way you develop as hard-working, polite and considerate young people. You help each other and are ready to take your next steps in life. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and we could see that in the way you work and in your good behaviour. Those pupils who left Year 6 last year did extremely well and standards were above average. We saw in your work and lessons that the school is keeping up these high levels of achievement. Your topic books are delightful. They cover subjects in exciting ways and show how very well you are learning.

Teaching is good. The school provides you with many excellent opportunities to learn, not just in lessons but also in many additional activities. Teachers and helpers take extremely good care of you, especially those of you who need some extra help for all sorts of reasons. The parents we spoke with praised the school greatly not only for what staff do to keep you safe and help you learn but also for the way it supports them in many ways.

The headteacher and governors have worked extremely well to build up the new school from its fresh start in January 2009. They and other staff seek constantly to develop it even further and do so with much commitment and enthusiasm.

We have asked them to make even more lessons good or outstanding by:

giving you even more opportunities to use and develop your skills in reading, writing and mathematics through the interesting topics you study

making sure teachers are skilful at finding out exactly what you have learned, so that next steps in your learning are the right ones and speedily provided.

Please all carry on contributing your ideas as to what can be even better in the school and what you would like to learn about. Please also make sure that your attendance is as high as it possibly can be so no work is missed.

I wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector

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