

# Farnham Common Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110344
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356724
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	June Woolhouse

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	188
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Fischer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Beaconsfield Road Farnham Common, Slough SL2 3HS
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by 3 inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observed all six teachers and held meetings with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan, safeguarding documents, school policies, school assessment information, pupils' work and displays. They analysed information from 94 parents' and carers' questionnaires in addition to those from staff.

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

- Are planning and teaching consistently good enough to improve pupils' achievement for all groups?
- How well do teachers use assessment in promoting pupils' successful learning?
- How does the school use self-evaluation to improve teaching, lesson planning and to analyse pupils' progress?

## Information about the school

Farnham Common is a smaller-than-average infant school. It has six classes, two for each year group from Reception to Year 2. Nursery-age children attend part time in the mornings. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average; their needs include moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication, and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Around 37% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school holds Healthy Schools status, silver Eco and bronze IT awards. It has received the Royal Horticultural Society school gardening award.

**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

Farnham Common is a good school. It has several outstanding features which contribute to pupils' continuing high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Children get an excellent start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage which has been further developed since the last inspection. This is due to the headteacher's passion for and deep understanding of how young children learn and thrive. In a very short time, under her enthusiastic leadership, the extensive woodland in the school grounds has been developed to promote a 'Forest School' where children learn very successfully in a natural, outdoors setting. She is supported ably by an enthusiastic and committed team of leaders who, between them, are tailoring the already good curriculum to enable all pupils to benefit from these exceptional educational opportunities. Parents and carers are as enthusiastic about the school as are their children. One parent or carer put it this way: 'The atmosphere at this school is happy and cheerful. This starts with the headteacher and spreads throughout the children and to the parents.' Another one said: 'Forest School is fabulous. I hope it continues. The more interactive learning suits my child.' As a result, pupils behave excellently. They also have an outstanding understanding of how to stay healthy.

Members of the governing body understand how well pupils achieve and know accurately the school's strengths and weaknesses. Many staff have benefited from expert professional development activities through outstanding partnerships with a range of providers. Self-evaluation judgements of pupils' learning are accurate and the senior leaders, as a team, are increasingly involved in tracking progress. These elements combine effectively to ensure the school has a good capacity for further improvement and consolidation of exciting developments. The headteacher is working on a more distributive leadership structure with responsibilities for all staff but it is too early to see the full impact of this initiative.

Pupils have above-average skills when they start in Year 1. They achieve well by the time they move to the junior school and reach well above average levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve well. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to being healthy are outstanding. They apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills exceptionally well when they collaborate in teams and this adds significantly to their enjoyment of learning and prepares them well for their next schools. They contribute to charities and take a very active role in preserving the environment through recycling and walking to school.

At present there is some variation in the generally good quality of teaching. Occasionally, some groups of pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Planned tasks suit the needs of most pupils but are insufficiently challenging for the more

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able or sometimes too difficult for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The learning needs of boys have been addressed very well through Forest School provision, new teaching practices for writing and a curriculum based on first-hand experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Such planned experiences are now extending into Years 1 and 2. Pupils are well cared for and confident about who to consult if there is a problem. Safeguarding procedures are good and the governing body systematically monitors all aspects of health and safety. The school is a welcoming and harmonious place to learn, reflecting the cohesive school community and outstanding links with parents and carers. There is no discrimination and the school's vigilance regarding equality of opportunity means all pupils have access to whatever the school offers.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the consistency and quality of teaching to that of the best by:
  - ensuring teachers' planning matches the needs of all groups across the ability range
  - ensuring all teaching fosters the school's handwriting policy to teach joined-up writing.
- Further develop teachers' understanding of their roles as leaders of learning both in classrooms and when they have responsibility for curriculum subject areas.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Pupils make good progress in lessons and attain highly in reading, writing and mathematics. This is clearly demonstrated in the work they record in books, in a range of displays and in the enthusiasm with which they discuss their learning. Pupils have increased the fluency and creativity of their writing through improved teaching resulting from expert professional development activities. Pupils produce high quality writing because they know how to plan their stories and are also encouraged to discuss their ideas with each other first. In a particularly effective Year 2 lesson pupils wrote lively stories and had fun illustrating them with carefully-crafted illustrations. They skilfully checked at the end of the session whether they had included all the features of a good story by using well-organised prompts. They succeed because they talk a lot and are encouraged to revise and expand their ideas with each other or adults. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress because teaching assistants provide extra support to individuals or small groups. Pupils are also well equipped to write accurately because they practise their letter sounds daily and can link them to their spellings. Older pupils present their work well and most join up their writing. However, there is some inconsistency across the school because expectations vary about how handwriting is taught and developed. Pupils are fluent readers because they receive systematic teaching about letters and the sounds they make. All pupils participated enthusiastically in well-planned science-week activities. Year 1 pupils enjoyed first-hand experiences such as when exploring methods to produce energy to blow up large balloons. They enjoy learning because they apply their literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills to real-life situations especially at Forest School. Here, all pupils have time to reflect and experiment, work in teams and benefit from a very healthy outdoor learning environment. The impact

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on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good, is increasingly more effective. Attendance is above average and improving after a concerted effort to persuade parents and carers not to take their children out of school in term time.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

In most lessons pupils are fully involved in their learning because they are planned well and address the full range of ability. Outstanding teaching at times results in highly motivated pupils, enthused by the tasks they are completing and able to get on independently because they are expected to concentrate and finish their work. Teachers give pupils opportunities to share ideas and test their understanding by talking in pairs. In the best lessons interactive whiteboards are used exceptionally well to display how pupils can check their own progress. In turn, this independence means that the pace is brisk and pupils can get on with their work in their own style. Teaching assistants are well deployed to small groups who need further help and are then able to make good progress. Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils who know everyone is included and treated fairly. Excellent behaviour follows as a result. When teachers do not plan different tasks for different levels of ability, pupils make slower progress and more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. In addition, progress is hampered if pupils are not expected to check their work against the targets set for the end of the lesson. Pupils' progress is assessed accurately each half term. Teachers are increasingly more skilled in

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identifying gaps in learning and individual support is quickly provided to ensure that no pupil falls behind. The Forest School is used effectively for pupils who speak English as an additional language. They gain confidence from opportunities to practise language structures in real-life, natural situations which stand them in good stead back in the classroom. At present handwriting is not systematically taught or modelled by all teachers, resulting in presentation of variable quality.

The curriculum effectively meets the needs of pupils because it is broad, practical and involves them at the planning stage. Increasingly pupils learn through themes where a number of subjects are combined to bring coherence to learning. Extra-curricular activities are very popular and outstanding partnerships for sport and the environment contribute to pupils' often excellent personal development. Provision to promote healthy lifestyles and an understanding of the environment is reflected in a number of awards gained by the school.

Care, guidance and support have some particularly strong features in promoting pupils' pastoral care. Systems are in place to guarantee smooth transitions into school and on to the junior school resulting in pupils settling quickly and making good, all-round progress. Planning for pupils with specific language or behavioural and emotional needs is good. Staff know more precisely pupils' levels of attainment and rates of progress as a result of more rigorous tracking and assessment procedures. Pupils say they feel safe and cared for and this is strongly endorsed by parents and carers. External support is very well managed and partnerships with local authority services, external consultants and other schools contribute very well to pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has set her mark on the school and established a learning culture with pupils and staff at its centre. There is a strong belief, shared increasingly by staff, that children learn best when they do things for themselves. She is well on the way to persuading adults that this approach applies to them as well. Staff are enthusiastic and have taken on board a number of procedures that have enhanced provision, for example, a more creative curriculum and rigorous assessment of pupils' progress. Staff feel very involved, although not all are skilled yet in promoting their subject expertise through the school or in monitoring the work of others. Members of the governing body receive good quality information which now means they know how to support staff in school improvement. They are fully involved in school development planning and self-evaluation procedures and scrutinise pupils' progress to ensure there is no discrimination and

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everyone has an equal chance to do well. Safeguarding systems are fully up to date and all appropriate training for staff and the governing body is in place. Community cohesion is promoted well locally, nationally and globally and pupils are becoming more aware of how other communities live, for example through links to a Kenyan school. The school is a cohesive community where differences are valued and celebrated given pupils' different ethnic backgrounds.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have a wonderful start to their early educational experiences. They thrive because the headteacher has promoted a deep and informed understanding about how young children learn and develop. She is supported ably by an equally committed Early Years Foundation Stage leader. Children benefit from a magnificent wooded area which provides them with a Forest school in which they have space, freedom and challenge to explore and learn first hand what goes on in the natural world. Trained teaching assistants support their enquiry and curiosity very well with sensitive questioning and support so that all children are challenged further to reflect on what they are doing. For example, one boy tied up a branch with rope pretending that it was his dog and then went off into the trees for a walk. When he returned he tied his 'dog' to a tree to stop him running away. Children develop problem-solving skills very quickly in this environment and transfer them to indoor learning. The six areas of learning are reflected in well-thought-out activities in classrooms and outside. Children demonstrate high levels of cooperation and behaviour is exemplary. They have a lot of fun, share their equipment and talk about, explain and question what they are involved in. They gain a very good understanding of their numbers, letters and the sounds they make through direct teaching. Consequently, they make outstanding progress and achieve skills and understanding well above those expected of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This includes children



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with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Provision is well organised and resources are attractive. Adults show high levels of care and support and all welfare arrangements, including safeguarding, are fully in place. Children's progress is assessed accurately and regularly so that next steps in learning are appropriate and ensure that excellent rates of progress are maintained. Parents and carers are fully involved in their children's learning and receive excellent evidence in records of what their children have achieved.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire was above average. Views were very positive. The vast majority of parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school, and felt that the school keeps their children safe. Inspectors investigated two concerns raised by individual parents and carers concerning safety and how well the school supports parents and carers to help their children to learn, but evidence gathered indicates these aspects of provision to be good.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Farnham Common Infant 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 188 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	83	16	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	81	86	12	13	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	64	68	28	30	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	66	32	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	73	78	21	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	79	23	29	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	81	17	18	0	0	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)	56	60	26	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	73	25	27	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	63	31	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	73	21	22	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	80	85	13	14	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	88	10	11	0	0	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	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



30 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Farnham Common Infant school, Farnham Common SL2 3HS**

Thank you for helping us with our inspection of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you do your work. We were very impressed with the exciting things that happen in the woods where some of you built shelters. It is a splendid place to learn and to watch the changes that take place throughout the year. We were also as interested as you were watching the chicks hatch. We were amazed watching them struggle out of their shells and in a very short time standing up shaking their feathers. We will always remember being at Farnham Common and seeing the chicks in the incubators.

We think you go to a good school which has some extra special parts to it like the Forest School. We also thought you were very well behaved and kind to each other. Those are important parts of growing up that will help you even after you leave school. We thought you worked very hard in class and we saw some really good writing. We liked the way you added some drawings to your stories. All the adults who work in school look after you very well and this helps you to learn better. At the moment there are one or two things that your headteacher is going to improve. We have asked her to check that all the teachers make sure you check your work as you go along. We also asked that some of you who find work really easy have some different things to do to give you that extra challenge. The other thing we think you could practise now is doing joined-up handwriting as soon as you know how to write your letters correctly. This will help you to write faster and get those stories finished!

Your headteacher is also going to continue involving the teachers and other adults in planning more exciting activities in the curriculum so that you are involved as much as possible.

We hope the rest of the year is as successful as it has been so far.

Yours sincerely

June Woolhouse

Lead inspector

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