

# Fernhill School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116447
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	357971
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanna Beckford-Hall

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	920
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Walker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clive Gilbert
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Neville Duke Road Hampshire GU14 9BY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 31 parts of lessons taught by different staff, five of which were jointly observed with senior staff. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the curriculum committee. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at students' work, school policies, improvement plans, minutes of meetings, assessment data for students' attainment and progress, and the school's self-evaluation document. In addition, inspectors looked at responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 89 parents and carers.

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

- The achievement of boys, particularly those working below Level 4 and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of learning of all students in English.
- The effectiveness of marking and the quality of feedback in challenging all students to meet or exceed their targets.
- The effectiveness of the range of strategies to help raise attendance.
- The capacity of all leaders to bring about improvement through self-evaluation, and the impact of their action planning to raise the achievement of all students.

## Information about the school

Fernhill School and Language College is slightly smaller than the average secondary school. The large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language and who are from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with national figures and rising. More students than is found to be the case nationally, are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school was awarded language college status in 2005.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the rigour and effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and the effectiveness of governance.

Although the school provides an acceptable standard of education, there are important shortcomings in the actions taken to ensure that policies and procedures for safeguarding students are robust and meet statutory requirements. Governors are supportive of the school but the governing body has not met its statutory duty to ensure that all the necessary checks on all staff who work with students have been undertaken, or that school policies are fit for purpose, implemented effectively and monitored regularly. Senior leaders recognise this and are taking action to urgently rectify the situation.

Since the last inspection, the percentage of students obtaining five GCSE A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has risen to be broadly in line with the national average. School data show that the current Year 11 students are on track to sustain these standards. This represents satisfactory progress, given students' average attainment on entry in Year 7. Leaders have introduced more focused interventions to accelerate progress made by boys, especially in English, and this is starting to close the gaps between boys' and girls' achievement. Performance in mathematics has been sustained at significantly above the national average for three years. The pace of improvement in the English department has been slower. The language specialism offers students a good choice of modern foreign languages in Key Stages 3 and 4. All students study a language at GCSE level and high achievement of students in modern foreign languages continues to be a key strength of the school's work. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because the support for their learning needs is becoming embedded in day-to-day teaching.

The quality of teaching is variable but satisfactory overall. Improvements in teaching are gradual but evident. There is some good and outstanding teaching, but also some weaker practice exists within and across departments. This is restricting a quicker rise in students' achievement. The quality of verbal feedback to students in lessons is often good. However, target setting for students is not consolidated through step-by-step guidance in marking to help all students understand how to improve their work. Leaders have not sufficiently reduced the variability of feedback to students nor ensured that all students regularly receive detailed written comments about their work.

The atmosphere in the school is positive. Good relationships between staff and most students support good behaviour around the school and in the majority of lessons seen.

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Students feel safe and speak favourably about how staff intervene to resolve disputes when needed. Attendance is average. Leaders are working effectively with heads of house and the educational welfare officer to drive up attendance and support the small minority of students who are persistently absent from school.

Through the newly introduced house system, older students enjoy mentoring younger students and are good ambassadors for the school. Students have good opportunity to develop their knowledge of business through for example, a Year 9 business and industry day, and women into technology workshops, supported through links with local employers.

The headteacher communicates his ambition for the school clearly to staff, students, parents and carers. Improvement and consolidation in provision and outcomes since the last inspection reflect the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further. Although overall judgements in the school's self-evaluation are not always accurate, leaders identify the right strengths and weaknesses. Senior and middle leaders are becoming more influential in their new roles and responsibilities. They are taking greater responsibility for driving improvement at their individual department level and in the house system.

Until recently, the governing body has not effectively challenged areas of weakness. An example is the underperformance of some student groups in English, notably boys. A lack of rigorous debate about data has led to insufficient insight about students' achievements over time. There has also not been sufficient evaluation about the relationship between levels of attendance and limited improvements in overall achievement.

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

- Ensure that all staff are subject to the required checks to work with students and that safeguarding policies and practice are robust and monitored meticulously.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance by ensuring that the governing body:
  - meet all statutory duties with regard to the safeguarding of young people
  - monitors and evaluates the impact of the child protection policy, e-safety and equality of opportunity policies against outcomes for all students
  - has the capacity to ask challenging questions about the performance of student groups through rigorous analysis of assessment data, and sharper monitoring and evaluation of strengths and weaker areas of whole-school performance.
- Increase the proportion of students making good and outstanding progress so that more students achieve five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics by:
  - raising the proportion of consistently good and outstanding teaching within and across all departments and eradicating inadequate teaching
  - enabling all teachers to use assessment data to plan learning that is suitably matched to the individual needs of students
  - improving the frequency and quality of feedback and marking across the whole school so that students receive step-by-step guidance so that they know how to improve their work and reach or exceed their targets.

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## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Most students say they enjoy their learning, particularly in modern foreign languages, mathematics, physical education (PE) and the performing arts. In the best lessons seen, students are motivated to do well because teaching sustains high levels of interest. Students relish opportunities to work independently, in pairs and in small groups to debate and solve problems. This was especially evident in religious studies, science, philosophy, drama and some English lessons. Occasionally, students use self- and peer- assessment to analyse learning and develop their understanding. This is a particularly good feature in PE and some mathematics lessons, where it strongly supports the good progress of most students.

Most students are set challenging targets and in some lessons make good or better progress towards them. The quality of learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has recently improved. This is as a result of a new approach to the deployment of staff, and tighter tracking of students' progress. However, the degree of challenge for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has yet to result in their consistently good or better progress. Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress in lessons. This is because of good additional support. Despite good mathematics and information and communication, technology skills, and effective links with employers, weaker literacy skills restrict pupils' preparation for the future.

Students possess a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy the good range of sports in PE and through the enrichment programme. They understand why a healthy diet is important and have a good understanding of personal safety.

Students from a range of ethnic backgrounds are welcomed into the school community. Students socialise well together at break and lunchtime. Through a cross-curricular approach to citizenship, students acquire a good understanding of different religions, cultures and beliefs, and develop good moral and social awareness. A visit by students from Mexico gave some students at Fernhill the opportunity to take responsibility as 'Meximate' buddies. Students enjoyed learning about Mariachi bands through a musical concert, which enhanced their awareness and appreciation of different musical heritages.

Students take on a range of responsibilities such as prefects and helping teach modern foreign languages to primary school children. Many students also welcome opportunities to take leadership roles through the vertical house system.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<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?

There is some good and outstanding teaching, but teaching is inconsistent across departments and some is inadequate. In the most effective lessons, teachers sustain students' interest because the pace of lessons is demanding. In these lessons, the content is well matched to different students' needs and students are actively involved in discussion and peer assessment. This is because of inspirational teaching in for example drama, religious studies, Spanish and philosophy. All students are challenged in these subjects and consequently make good progress. There is good questioning that probes students' responses and tasks are planned well to build strongly on prior learning.

Where teaching is satisfactory, opportunities for independent learning are nonetheless not fully exploited. In these lessons learning remains very teacher led; this does not encourage students to think for themselves or evaluate the quality of their work, especially in judging their literacy and presentation skills. Learning is sometimes not consolidated sufficiently in homework and the amount of homework across subjects is too variable.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of most students. School leaders have started to include qualifications to develop students' functional and work-based learning skills. There are some vocational courses such as the BTEC in child development, and an engineering qualification is offered in partnership with a local college. Leaders are addressing the need to support low levels of literacy through cross-curricular working to raise overall achievement in English.

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Day-to-day care, guidance and support for students are good and well managed by heads of house and senior leaders. Good work with a range of external agencies, such as the educational psychologist and support networks, help those students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Looked after children make good progress during their time at the school. Students with specific emotional, behavioural and learning needs are well catered for through intervention and nurture groups. The inclusion room effectively supports the management of students with challenging behaviour. Leaders respond quickly to family circumstances that affect students' learning or attendance. Students receive good guidance about options for employment and further study after Year 11. Despite these good features, the inadequate safeguarding means that the quality of care, guidance and support for students is inadequate.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear ambition for the school, based on raising student achievement, and communicates this effectively to staff. Leaders work well together in teams to ensure good communication about students' welfare and their progress. Staff have a sound knowledge of individual students. However, their understanding of assessment data to track achievement of different student groups is not used sufficiently well to guide teachers' planning in some departments.

Self-evaluation by senior leaders is sometimes over-generous, with little critical review by governors. Despite this, leaders take appropriate steps to raise the quality of teaching, with some positive impact in helping staff review their teaching skills. Through joint observations with inspectors, senior leaders demonstrated secure judgements about the quality of teaching. This is not the case in the evaluation of the quality of marking and feedback in books, and there is a lack of consistency in the regularity and quality of marking. Leaders carefully guide developments to improve weak literacy throughout the school, and training staff to improve the quality of their teaching.

Safeguarding is inadequate because the statutory guidance relating to this has not been followed by the governing body and senior leaders; this has led to serious shortcomings in policy, procedure and practice. Governors have not monitored or evaluated whole-school policies for safeguarding, safety with e-learning and equality of opportunity, nor have they ensured compliance with statutory requirements relating to employment of staff. Consequently, governance is inadequate.

The school has a range of partnerships with local organisations. These support the well-being of students and enhance the curriculum through business and enterprise links.



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However, partnership working has yet to raise overall achievement. The effectiveness of the school's work to promote equality of opportunity is no better than satisfactory because of the remaining gaps in the achievement of boys and girls in some subject areas.

Academic review days for parents and carers and students are well received, and there is good communication with parents and carers through the newsletter, giving up-to-date information about school events. Parents and carers who speak English as an additional language can also request the translation of the newsletter to ensure good access to the information available.

Leaders promote good community cohesion and possess a perceptive understanding of the local context in which the school operates. Leaders have established good international links, which support students' cultural understanding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>4</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>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Of the small proportion of questionnaires received from parents and carers, a large majority indicated that the school is well led and managed. Almost all parents and carers who responded are positive about the enjoyment of their children at the school. Several questionnaires include positive comments about the good support offered to their child, citing an effective response to catering for special educational needs and/or disabilities and good transition arrangements from Year 6 into Year 7. A few parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour. During this inspection, inspectors considered the attitudes of students to their learning and observed behaviour in lessons and around the school, and judged that most students demonstrate good behaviour. A few concerns were raised about how much marking and feedback is evident in their children's books. Inspection evidence concurs with this.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fernhill School and language College 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 920 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	33	56	63	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	27	30	60	67	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	34	56	63	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	29	57	64	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	30	56	63	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	21	60	67	8	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	11	67	75	8	9	1	1
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)	24	27	57	64	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	21	62	70	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	21	56	63	10	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	16	64	72	5	6	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	24	27	59	66	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	28	56	63	7	8	0	0

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

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><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.**



23 June 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Fernhill School and Language College, Farnborough GU16 9BY**

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you to gather your views, and seeing you working in lessons.

Your school has some good features and these include:

- the high levels of personal support you receive to deal well with any challenges that may affect your learning
- good working relationships with your parents and carers
- the good behaviour of most students
- your good understanding of different cultures and religions, and your ability to work together as a student community
- a good commitment to enable you to support many different charities and your local community, such as the languages work with local primary school children
- some good teaching that you told us helps you enjoy your learning in certain subjects
- good enrichment activities in sports and the arts which many of you enjoy.

However, there are some important things which need to improve urgently. In particular, the school and governing body fails to meet legal requirements with regard to procedures for safeguarding. The school has been given a 'notice to improve' because of this.

There are several other things we have asked the school to improve. These are to:

- raise the proportion of consistently good and outstanding teaching to accelerate your progress and help you all achieve good outcomes by the end of Year 11
- make sure work in lessons always challenges you
- improve the quality and regularity of marking of your work so that you all receive helpful guidance about what to improve, and how.

You can all support the school in this by reading teachers' comments on your work carefully and acting on the guidance provided. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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