

Felsted Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114875
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378946
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Thawley
Headteacher	Lawrence Garside
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning. They also analysed 69 questionnaires from parents and carers, and 141 pupils' questionnaires.

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

- Has the school improved sufficiently to enable pupils to make outstanding progress?
- Have the previously identified strengths in pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development been sustained?
- To what extent have efforts made to improve teaching, assessment and the curriculum been effective?
- How well do the school's leaders and other staff work with parents and carers and the governing body to improve the school?

Information about the school

Felsted is an average-sized primary school that draws its pupils from the surrounding villages and towns in mid-Essex. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving part-way through their primary school education is above average. Most pupils are White British, with a small number of pupils from other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school has achieved the sports Activemark and the Silver Award for Eco Schools, and has Healthy Schools status. The school works closely with the separately run and managed pre-nursery, which shares the school site.

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

Felsted is an outstanding school. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the school's work; as one commented, 'It is the best school our children have ever been to. They love school and their skills and knowledge since being here have far exceeded our expectations.' It provides an exciting and varied curriculum and challenging learning opportunities that considerably enrich and empower all of its pupils and enable them to achieve outstandingly well. The school has long had a reputation for the excellent way it nurtures all pupils and supports their needs. Additionally, the exceptional headteacher and a talented and cohesive team have made a concerted and successful effort during the last two years to improve pupils' attainment and progress substantially. Their hard work and commitment are much appreciated by parents and carers.

By Year 6, pupils' attainment is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Improved progress has been most evident in mathematics and reading. Writing has also improved greatly through much improved practice, but the most-able pupils are not yet reaching the high levels seen in reading because of a lack of challenge in some learning activities. The school's rigorous tracking shows that most pupils in all years are now making outstanding progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress also and, as a consequence, their outcomes compare very favourably with similar pupils nationally, as do the considerable number of pupils who join the school in different year groups. Parents and carers of those pupils are very positive about the exceptional support that enables their children to retrieve considerable lost ground after coming to the school.

These significant gains have been made possible by:

- consistently good and often outstanding teaching that is planned very well to build steadily on pupils' reading, writing and numerical skills
- marking that relates closely to pupils' National Curriculum targets and provides very clear guidance as to how they can improve
- an outstanding curriculum that has been developed to provide a rich and varied experience that engages pupils fully through the many opportunities for creative, active learning
- a strong school ethos that encourages in pupils a consideration for others, a readiness to learn and a determination to improve.

All of the above ensures that provision in Years 1 to 6 is outstanding. Provision for

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the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, although there is some unevenness in the quality of provision and support, as well as limited space and facilities in some areas.

Pupils are very keen to come to school, as is reflected in their high attendance and eagerness to participate in lessons and other activities. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school, contributing very significantly to pupils' learning and the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and participate fully in a wide range of sports activities. The rigorous attention to safeguarding means that pupils always feel very safe. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided are based on very strong links with pupils' homes, careful tracking of each pupil's progress and expertise in meeting different needs. A commitment to developing the whole child is reflected in an outstanding range of activities that facilitate pupils' very active involvement in the community and a very well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

The school has an outstanding capacity to sustain improvement. Senior and middle leaders work exceptionally well to improve the school further through a readiness to reflect constantly and improve on their practice. The effective governing body is increasingly involved in the life of the school and, along with the senior leaders and other staff, has a well-informed picture of the school's strengths and areas for further development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more-able pupils, including those identified as gifted and talented, improve their writing to match the high standards reached in their reading by providing more challenging learning opportunities in lessons.
- Develop the accommodation and facilities in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing clear areas of learning to encourage independent learning
 - arranging accommodation and staffing to allow more free movement between the inside and outside areas
 - improving the toilet facilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children start school with skills that are broadly at the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy, with some strengths in their physical, social and emotional development. They make good progress quickly, as a result of good Early Years Foundation Stage provision. There has been considerable movement of pupils in and out of the school, caused by some transferring to a newly built school nearer their homes and pupils from other areas filling spare places. The school has been particularly successful in supporting those pupils who join after Year 1. The school has worked hard to improve classroom teaching and develop learning support to maintain and develop pupils' progress. That was very evident in a Year 6 English

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lesson, when pupils were able to work together to develop a wider range of language, including use of simile and personification, in writing a mystery story. Those efforts have ensured that almost all pupils reach National Curriculum Level 4 or better in English and mathematics. A considerably better-than-average proportion reaches National Curriculum Level 5 also, especially in mathematics and reading.

Pupils respond very positively to the many opportunities the school provides for them to work together and take responsibility. The Year 5 classes, for example, were involved in an all-day mini-enterprise, when they made and promoted their own blackberry and apple jam. That involved them in practical activities and working in groups to design, advertise and present their product using information and communication technology (ICT). As monitors and members of an active school council, pupils respond very well to the considerable opportunities to show responsibility in this very democratic school. Pupils are very involved in purchasing equipment, ensuring the safety of playground facilities and organising their vegetable plots, as well as a wide variety of fundraising activities inside and outside school. Although well aware of healthy lifestyles and eating healthily, the pupils are surprisingly less involved in promoting and ensuring healthy lifestyles. However, almost all are involved in physical activities, from team sports to line dancing, and the older pupils run lunchtime games and organise sports festivals for pupils in other local schools. Pupils are very proud of their school and the buddy system is very active in helping new pupils settle into the school. Those experiences, supported by a strong cultural dimension to the curriculum, result in reflective and mature young people.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
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

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff have very positive relationships with pupils, who feel very well supported. Considerable training and development have taken place to provide better learning experiences for pupils. Staff use ICT resources, including interactive whiteboards, effectively in consistently interesting and engaging lessons. Questioning is used extremely well to develop and confirm pupils’ understanding and there are many valuable opportunities for pupils to collaborate and share ideas, or work independently. The school benefits from skilled and committed learning support staff who, ably, support individual pupils and lead group learning activities. All lessons have a clear purpose and, in many lessons, the support staff work with pupils to model possible answers and approaches, giving pupils the necessary building blocks to develop their own work. Learning activities are sufficiently varied in most lessons to challenge and improve pupils’ writing, though, on occasion, the tasks underestimate the understanding and skills acquired already by the most able. Marking is positive and shows pupils how well they have done. The best practice, now largely developed across the school, links the progress to pupils’ National Curriculum targets, which are pasted into their books. Also, it involves pupils in evaluating their own work and provides opportunities for them to refine and develop it further.

The school has worked hard to develop a creative and exciting curriculum that makes full use of the resources in school and the surrounding environment. Much use is made of visitors, various outside visits and links with the outside world. They include developing ties with a Kenya school, a shared Ancient Greek project with the nearby preparatory school, and visits to different places of worship.

The school has an excellent track record for supporting children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and others with additional needs. Pupils who have struggled elsewhere improve considerably when they come to the school, as one parent remarked, ‘Felsted is an amazing school for children with disabilities’ and that their child’s development has ‘been totally transformed by all the support given’.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

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All staff feel valued and make a positive contribution to a happy and successful school. The school’s commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in its very caring ethos and focus on developing all aspects of pupils’ development. The headteacher knows every child and uses the school’s comprehensive tracking to ensure that pupils meet their targets, and that gaps in performance between different groups, or different areas of learning, are closing. Excellent strategies support learning for all pupils, but particularly those at risk of falling behind.

All safeguarding requirements are met very well and the governing body works closely with staff and pupils to ensure all children are very safe. For example, the school responded rapidly and effectively to concerns raised about the old outdoor play apparatus. The headteacher is rigorous in his monitoring and very well informed, which is evident in his role as a mentor for the National College of School Leadership.

The governing body provides positive support and has increased its involvement in the life of the school. It works closely with the subject leaders to monitor and improve teaching. Governors are known to parents and carers and participate actively in the school/parent policy groups and all parents and carers consultation meetings. It has a good understanding of the school through close involvement in the school’s regular self-evaluation.

The school uses extensive partnership links very well to support its excellent work in developing the curriculum and care, guidance and support. Its engagement with parents and carers is exceptionally strong and reflected in the very positive parental comments. Well-attended headteacher briefings and consultations each term, various information sessions on all aspects of the school work, focus groups of parents and carers, governors and staff to develop school policy, together with many opportunities to attend various assemblies and meet teachers daily, all reflect a very open and responsive school. The school liaises closely with parents and carers to develop learning plans for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has carried out a detailed audit for community cohesion and uses extensive links with the local community to enhance pupils’ learning. The outstanding curriculum provides considerable opportunities to develop pupils’ appreciation of other faiths and cultures. Some links with Kenya and with schools in contrasting areas are beginning to provide more direct experience for pupils, but these are at an early stage of development.

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	2

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met	
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress across the areas of learning for this age group, particularly in physical and social development. The good progress is made possible by the good learning opportunities that gain children’s interest and stimulate their curiosity.

The curriculum includes many activities to develop imaginative and structured play, both in and out of the classroom. The activities provide adult-led work and opportunities for children to explore for themselves. However, there are no permanently set-out learning areas that children can see and choose from easily, partly because of the small size of the classroom. The outside area is well resourced, but there are few opportunities for children to move freely between the inside and outside. The skilled staff are sensitive to the children’s needs and help them become more confident learners. In the sessions observed, the learning was well planned and based on observations of children’s progress in previous lessons. Children worked together well, despite being in school for just a few days. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides a good role model for other staff, particularly in the use of effective questioning to help children learn from their chosen activities.

Leadership is founded on a thorough knowledge of Early Years Foundation Stage practice. Children are cared for very well and staff are very effective in providing safe learning areas. The use of an unconverted demountable classroom limits the number and accessibility of toilet facilities. Children’s progress is assessed carefully and tracked and work is recorded in the good learning journals. Parents and carers are encouraged to be involved fully with their children’s education, including working with them in the school. The school has strong links with the pre-school and home visits make a positive start to the outstanding relationship the school has with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A high level of parental satisfaction reflects the considerable efforts made to consult and inform parents and carers about all aspects of the school. A significant number of parents and carers took the time to write comments praising the school leadership, the excellent quality of additional learning support and the high levels of pupils' interest and involvement in their learning. The headteacher was praised for knowing every child and their needs and having a considerable presence around the school.

The inspectors found considerable strengths in all those areas. However, a very small number of parents and carers felt their children could be challenged more in terms of the level of work set. Inspectors judged that pupils' progress is much improved across the school, though agreed that some higher-attaining pupils could be challenged more to enable more of them to reach higher National Curriculum levels.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Felsted Primary 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 227 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	74	18	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	84	10	14	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	64	22	32	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	55	27	39	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	65	20	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	47	68	19	28	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	59	22	32	3	4	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)	36	52	24	35	1	1	2	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	41	59	21	30	5	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	62	21	30	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	55	22	32	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	51	74	16	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	57	83	12	17	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 8 April 2011 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 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"> ■ 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.



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Felsted Primary School, Dunmow, CM6 3EB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Your school gives you an outstanding education and ensures that you achieve extremely well. It was good to hear that so many of you feel safe in school and find it a fun place to be. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how you work well together in lessons. That was very clear in the 'Apprentice' project in Year 5, when pupils cooperated very well and showed considerable initiative in planning their product advertising and presentations. We were very impressed that so many of you take advantage of the many opportunities to take an active part in school to ensure it is a safe place, for example by improving the safety of outside play areas. Your concern for others can also be seen in your work as 'buddies' to welcome new pupils and help them settle in. We recognised that you understood the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are keen to get involved in different sports, including the 40 of you that do line dancing.

Many of your parents and carers told us how much you like school and this is reflected in your high attendance and excellent behaviour. You get on well with your teachers and like the opportunities to be actively involved in discussions and group work. We spent some time looking at your books and could see the care many of you put into work. Very many of you said how much you appreciated the help you get from teachers and support staff and a number we spoke to felt they had made much progress in their mathematics and writing. We could see that the excellent progress was possible because of the very clear guidance and support teachers and support staff give you to help you improve. However, we think that some of the most-able pupils could improve their writing further and we have asked the teachers to help them do that. We have also asked the school to improve the facilities for children in the Reception class, who are making good progress but could do even better.

The governing body, headteacher and all the staff are working hard to maintain and even improve the school's high standards. You can all help by maintaining your high attendance and continuing to take an active part in school activities.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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