

Fair Field Junior School

Watford Road, , Radlett, WD7 8LU

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Teaching is never less than good, and is frequently outstanding, because teachers have high expectations of every pupil and make sure that they have work to do which challenges them.
- Achievement is outstanding because all groups of pupils make rapid progress and reach levels of attainment which are well above average in all subjects.
- Attainment in mathematics is particularly impressive. Some pupils reach levels which far exceed the expectations for their age because they are encouraged to progress as far and as quickly as they are capable of.
- Marking of books is exemplary: adults ensure pupils receive comments which encourage them and which give them something more to do. Pupils respond to these as a matter of course.
- Pupils are highly enthusiastic about learning and show great determination to improve what they do. During lessons they cooperate readily and help each other to learn well.
- Outside of lessons, pupils' behaviour is similarly outstanding. They are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, and they feel well cared for.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, have ensured that areas for improvement are identified accurately and addressed quickly. They have driven the improvement from a satisfactory to an outstanding school in three years.
- Well-focused training and support strategies have led to a sustained improvement in teaching.
- Senior leaders are highly skilled at using data to closely analyse the progress each pupil is making. Teachers share in this process and use the information to plan accurately work which develops the skills and knowledge of pupils.
- The headteacher and governing body show great determination to look for even more ways to improve the opportunities for pupils, and welcome challenge from each other as to how they can bring this about.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by nine teaching staff, as well as parts of sessions delivered by teaching assistants.
- Inspectors reviewed the work pupils have done, discussed this with pupils, listened to pupils reading, and looked at planning for lessons and the curriculum.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils and governors, as well as with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers informally at the start and end of the day, and considered the 47 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey of parental views.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Lafford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is below average.
- Most pupils are White British. Other pupils are from a wide range of other ethnic heritages. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language, although a very few pupils join the school at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported at school action, school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is below average.
- At the time of the inspection, the school were without a deputy headteacher and in the process of appointing a replacement, following the recent promotion of the previous deputy headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the involvement of pupils in evaluating and developing further innovation in the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- When they join the school, most pupils have skills and knowledge which are above those expected for their age. High expectations mean that they make a rapid start in Year 3 and continue the progress they have begun.
- At the end of Year 6, results in national tests have been well above average for some time, and reached a new high in 2012. This is because pupils are given every opportunity to do work that challenges them to the full extent of their ability and reach levels of attainment which are about a year ahead of pupils their age. About a quarter of pupils in the recent cohort reached exceptional levels of attainment in mathematics at Level 7 and, for a few, Level 8. These are very considerably higher than attained by pupils in most schools.
- Whatever their ability, pupils make rapid progress because adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that lessons move on at a brisk pace. Teachers frequently assess how well pupils have understood the concepts, and adapt their explanations or the task pupils are doing so that learning does not slow down.
- Pupils enjoy the challenges they are given and said that the harder work is much more fun. They are given considerable independence in deciding when they are ready to move onto the harder work, or whether they are finding the task too challenging. Pupils accurately assess how confident they feel and readily choose to do more complex examples. If work is too easy, older pupils, in particular, are determined to ask for more challenge.
- There has been an emphasis on improving reading, and pupils use their well-developed skills to make sense of reading across all subjects. Pupils benefit from excellent opportunities for writing, such as working with an author to develop characters for published stories. Mathematical skills are developed widely, for example when pupils presented the outcomes of surveys they had done in a geography lesson.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from support through carefully chosen strategies and resources, implemented by knowledgeable, caring adults. Consequently, these pupils also make rapid progress and are well on the way to making up ground.
- The school has ensured that additional funds to support eligible pupils are used effectively, for example by providing additional adult support where it is needed. As a result, this group of pupils make similar, rapid progress to their peers, exceptionally so in writing and mathematics.
- The very few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English are well supported and quickly develop the understanding that helps them to succeed. Other pupils make a significant contribution to this because of their kindness and the way they help their peers to develop their vocabulary.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The brisk pace of lessons and high expectations that teachers have of all pupils means that they make at least good progress; often their progress is outstanding.

- Activities are well planned so that tasks typically include a variety of levels at which pupils can work. Teachers have ensured that pupils are confident to choose their own starting point, or to move on to the next level of difficulty as soon as they feel able to do so.
- Pupils who may be finding work difficult are quickly identified because all the adults in lessons take responsibility for checking on the progress of pupils and will step in with additional explanation or adapt the task where necessary. Teachers ensure that teaching assistants know what they can do to help pupils make the most progress, while ensuring that pupils do the work for themselves. This ensures the rapid progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Excellent systems to record, track and analyse the progress that each pupil makes have been developed by leaders and these systems are used well by all the staff when planning lessons. Together the staff evaluate the progress of all groups of pupils and consider how to maximise this.
- Marking is exemplary. This has been a focus of professional development and, as a result, agreed strategies are implemented with impressive consistency. Teachers and other adults make sure that they make written and verbal comments which encourage pupils to reflect on how well they have achieved the intended outcomes for the lesson. Most comments include additional actions for pupils to take, and time is allocated for this to happen, which reinforces the progress pupils have made.
- Pupils are frequently given the chance to make their own judgments about how well they have tackled a task and write their own comments about what they need to do next. They also get opportunities to do this for each other and provide helpful insight for one another.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Around the school, the behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They are always polite and considerate, and are very understanding of those who may be facing difficulties or who find it more of a challenge to always live up to the highest expectations of behaviour. These very few pupils are well supported and this helps them to improve the choices they make.
 - During lessons, pupils want to work hard and they relish the prospect of challenging tasks. Their attitudes to learning are excellent and this makes it easy for their teachers to get the best out of them. They strive to do work for themselves but they know that they will be supported if they need it.
 - Parents and carers agreed that behaviour is exemplary and many said that their children are making excellent progress because of well-focused support and the quality of teaching.
 - Pupils feel valued and the school's work on developing pupils' resilience and self-confidence are highly effective. Their views are respected and they have many opportunities to participate in making decisions about their environment. However, the quality of their input about what topics they study and how they develop their skills is not yet as high as in other areas.
 - Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe, for example when using the internet. They feel very safe at school and well prepared for staying safe outside of school, for example when riding
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their bicycles.

- They know what bullying is but were insistent that it almost never happens at their school. If it did, they feel very confident it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. They said that the strong emphasis on the need to encourage one another means that unkind words or unacceptable phrases are not tolerated by pupils or adults.
- Pupils indicated that they feel they are recognised for consistently excellent behaviour. They have opportunities to encourage one another, for example by nominating their peers for the 'Golden Book'. Their personal well-being is strongly promoted through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, and, as an example, through the use of 'I am likeable and capable', an approach used by the school to develop resilience and confidence.
- The extensive range of highly popular after-school clubs and activities enables pupils to participate in exceptional experiences such as singing on national television or leading the production of *Joseph* among local schools. The breakfast club gives those who use it a good start to the day because of the care of the staff and the activities available.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- There is a strong determination to pursue excellence in everything that the school does, which has been brought about by the exceptional insight and effective actions of the headteacher and the senior leaders. This is demonstrated in the unflinching self-evaluation, involving leaders at all levels, that has moved the school so rapidly forward from satisfactory to outstanding.
 - The use of data, the quality of teaching, support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, the highest possible expectations that teachers have for each pupil, and the quality of marking are all examples where leaders have driven and sustained improvements.
 - The highest levels of attainment have been sustained and all groups of pupils are enabled to make progress to the full extent of their ability, including beyond the highest levels usually expected.
 - Impressive skills in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology are achieved because they are given a high profile across all year groups and within all subjects.
 - Senior leaders understand that the quality of teaching is the key reason for the excellent progress pupils make and provide all staff with clear direction and further insight into how they can improve their teaching and support for pupils. This is backed up by opportunities to observe others teach, professional development, and training outside of the school. Together, these engender a strong sense of a learning community.
 - Although the school has been without a deputy headteacher, the strength of the wider leadership team means that others have readily taken up the responsibilities for identifying and implementing effective strategies to continue improvements. Leaders at all levels share the vision for providing pupils with exceptional opportunities for learning.
 - The development of the curriculum has focused on providing rich experiences, ensuring all pupils
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benefit from opportunities such as the residential trips or interaction with an author. However, these developments have been overly reliant on the views of teachers and have not yet made the best use of the well-informed views of pupils.

- Parents indicated that they feel the school is well led and managed; many were highly positive about the way the school listens to their concerns or helps them when there are difficulties. They particularly appreciate the chances they have to find out more about their children's learning, as well as the opportunities to learn themselves.
- The local authority has been supportive of the school in developing the accuracy of their self-evaluation, as well as the training of leaders across the school. The school helps to develop the skills of leaders from other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is outstanding, because governors are highly committed to the school and bring considerable expertise and insight alongside their willingness to seek training to improve their own understanding
 - astutely balances the levels of challenge and support it provides for the school, to help senior leaders achieve the best possible outcomes for the pupils
 - works with all staff to ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and that all staff are regularly trained to keep up to date
 - establishes an accurate view of the work of the school through governors' links with subjects, visits to the school and their impressive grasp of what the data show about the performance of the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117228
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401654

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Bowbrick
Headteacher	Matt Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 November 2009
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