

Fernhill School

Neville Duke Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 9BY

Inspection dates 12–13 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students' achievement is inadequate and the school's results are declining.
- Students' progress in English is significantly below what is expected and has decreased considerably in mathematics.
- Teaching is inadequate and not enough is good or better. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make inadequate progress because the school does not provide effective support for them.
- While governors and senior leaders have addressed important safeguarding concerns they have not dealt with weaknesses in teaching or students' achievement.
- Students are generally well behaved in lessons and are polite and considerate. They participate fully when lessons are well taught. When teaching is inadequate they become restless and inattentive.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate.
- Students appreciate the support provided by staff and say this has led to a reduction in bullying.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 29 responses to the online Parent View survey. They observed a total of 36 lessons taught by 36 different teachers.
- Meetings were held with a representative of the governing body, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and students of differing abilities and ages.
- Joint observations were conducted with three senior leaders. Students’ work was examined alongside key policies, the school’s self- evaluation and development plan and tracking data showing the students’ progress.

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Hugh Betterton

Additional inspector

Heather Leatt

Additional inspector

Stephen Black

Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This is a smaller than average sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is slightly higher than the national figure.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly higher than the national figure.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium is close to the national figure.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and several new staff have been appointed.
- At its previous inspection, the school was issued with a notice to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students' achievement and the quality of teaching are good or better by:
 - checking that teachers match their lesson planning to the needs of all students
 - making sure that students' targets are challenging
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of students' capabilities
 - making sure that teachers check carefully in lessons that students are making good progress
- Ensure senior and middle leaders hold teachers to account for students' progress by:
 - using the new Teachers' Standards to monitor teaching in relation to students' achievement
 - making sure that staff receive training and support in the areas where they need help the most.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in checking the school's performance and in holding senior leaders to account.
- Ensure that teachers enable students to take an active part in lessons by:
 - providing regular opportunities for them to share their views and respond to teachers' questions
 - make sure that students are given opportunities to work with other students and be expected to take responsibility for completing their own work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average in some years. In 2011 the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, was well below the national average. Provisional 2012 GCSE results indicate a substantial fall in students' performance.
- Students make inadequate progress in English. The proportion of students making anticipated progress in mathematics has diminished year-on-year with just over half of students making the expected gains.
- Inspection evidence supports the school's view that learning and progress are better in Years 8 and 9, particularly in English, where effective support has been provided by the local authority. However, there is not enough good teaching across all other year groups and subjects. For example, observation of mixed-ability modern foreign language lessons in Years 7 and 9 revealed good progress and challenge coupled with high expectations in one lesson, while teaching in the others lacked pace and tasks were not challenging enough.
- Students' views confirm that not enough teaching is good. Students say they appreciate the introduction of a homework policy in September this year and say that teaching is 'better' since the start of the term, because the expectations of students' behaviour are now higher. Older students in particular, reflect that this has not always been the case.
- While targets are set for all students, these often lack challenge. For example, students in Years 10 and 11 were set a target of a grade C for their GCSE work, although their attainment at the end of Year 9 indicated the potential to secure higher grades.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is inadequate because their work is not specifically targeted or adapted to meet their individual needs.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Students' learning and progress are inadequate because ineffective teaching does not meet their needs well enough. Teachers' expectations of students are too low and activities provided in lessons do not provide sufficient interest. Students told inspectors that teaching is typically uninspiring and that some teachers talk too much. Inspectors agree with this assessment
- In Years 10 and 11, students' work often lacks challenge because the targets set by the school's leaders are too low.
- While good progress was seen in some lessons, too much teaching fails to cater for students of all abilities in the class. For example, in some lessons observed in Years 10 and 11, two or three students did not complete any work and made no contribution, yet remained unchallenged by their teachers.
- While teachers do provide written feedback in students' exercise books, some do not know how to assess whether students have made enough progress. Too often, they check only whether students have completed a task rather than evaluating what has been learned. Teachers do not routinely check progress or provide feedback to students during lessons about how they can improve their work because they spend too much time talking to the whole class.
- Not all teachers have the skills to make sure students make good progress. This is because the school's performance management system has not accurately identified their individual training needs and the staff training programme has not helped them to improve.
- While leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching matched those of inspectors when conducting joint observations their evaluation of teaching overall is too generous.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Students on the whole are polite and welcoming. They are generally well behaved in lessons and respond positively to good teaching. No incidents of disruption were seen by inspectors. In lessons however students were often lacking in concentration and not engaging in during group discussions, and it is this aspect of students' behaviour that particularly requires improvement.
- The number of students excluded from school has been higher than the national average and a relatively high number of vulnerable and disabled students and those with special educational needs are being excluded than seen nationally. However, the school correctly identified this as an issue that needed to be tackled, with the help of the local authority. Consequently, the figures halved in the last academic year and are now closer to national averages.
- Students have a keen awareness of bullying and the varying types of bullying that can occur. They state that bullying does occur and that in the past there were a high number of racist incidents which the school has logged. The school's response to these matters has proved to be effective and all types of bullying are now rare, as records confirm. In particular the recent introduction of the 'house' pastoral system is appreciated by students and they attribute this provision to the reduction in bullying incidents. The emphasis on students supporting one another is proving to be effective.
- Attendance is below average, although it has improved. During the inspection students were notably punctual to school and to lessons. This has not always been the case.
- Although pastoral leaders actively monitor attendance and exclusions, they do not check on the impact this has on students' achievement. The significant drop in the attendance of the current Year 11 during the previous academic year has not been analysed to check how this has affected their progress.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers do not demonstrate the skills necessary to make the improvements which are needed. Raising attainment is given too little emphasis in the school development plan. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. The additional money provided by the government (Pupil Premium) to support improvements for specific groups of pupils has been subsumed into the school's overall budget and not used for its intended purpose.
- The leadership of teaching is weak. There are no clear links between the school's performance and its programme to develop teachers' skills. Senior leaders do not challenge middle leaders rigorously about their performance or that of the students. The arrangements for managing the performance of teachers is not strong enough and is not linked to teachers' pay.
- The curriculum makes an inadequate contribution to students' learning and progress. This is because teachers are not supported well enough in meeting the needs of individual students. The curriculum includes many opportunities for the development of students' moral, social, spiritual and cultural understanding, but these opportunities are frequently missed.
- Leaders' and managers' capacity to sustain improvement is inadequate. Strengths in teaching have not always been maintained, for example, in mathematics where a leadership decision to change the syllabus has resulted in a significant drop in performance this year. The decline in overall performance over time, variability across subjects areas and students' significantly weak progress in Key Stage 4 English have not been effectively addressed. Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs lacks specialist leadership and this contributes to their slow progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has had too little impact on the school's progress. Since the previous inspection, new governors have been appointed with the support of the local authority, and safeguarding and recruitment and vetting checks are now secure. However, insufficient progress has

been made in relation to eradicating inadequate teaching and raising the proportion that is consistently good and outstanding, and in improving students' achievement. The governing body has not checked whether the Pupil Premium funding has been spent on initiatives to support those students for whom it is intended.

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	116447
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	386022

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	838
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Sills
Headteacher	Peter Collins
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 June 2011
Telephone number	01276 702540
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