

# Fernhill School

Neville Duke Road, Farnborough, GU14 9BY

**Inspection dates** 20–21 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, do not yet make good enough progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been below the national average for some time and too few students attain the highest grades at GCSE.
- Students eligible for additional funding attain less well than their peers, although their progress is improving as a result of the support they receive.
- Although much improved, not enough teaching is currently good or better.
- Planning is not always sufficiently focused on what skills or knowledge students need to learn in order to make good progress.
- Some teachers do not check carefully what progress students have made in lessons. Consequently, students are sometimes unclear about how well they have met their personal targets.
- A few teachers do not manage efficiently the time students spend on planned activities. In such instances, students' engagement in their learning is not good enough and their progress is too slow.
- A minority of teachers do not apply the school's good behaviour management systems consistently.
- Most students get on very well together. However, a small minority use racist or homophobic language inappropriately as part of their everyday conversations.
- Some students, particularly those who need extra help, find it difficult to attend school regularly.

### The school has the following strengths:

- The decisive actions of leaders and governors have led to discernible improvements in the quality of teaching and in raising achievement for those students currently in the school.
- Students achieve well in a few subject areas, notably in history.
- Students feel safe at school. Good care and support systems keep them safe. Leaders and governors monitor these systems carefully.
- Arrangements for setting targets for teachers and for supporting their training are comprehensive and effective.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was the fourth visit since the school was judged to require special measures in September 2012.
- Inspectors observed parts of 28 lessons and conducted a learning walk, visiting six lessons briefly. Inspectors observed teaching across a range of subject areas. Sixteen lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed the headteacher and three senior leaders giving feedback to teachers.
- Inspectors met with school leaders and staff, three members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. They observed a house assembly, talked to students in lessons and around the school site, and met with three representative groups of students from Years 8, 10 and 11. They looked at students' work in lessons.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers, 30 of whom responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also met with a small group of parents and carers and evaluated the results from a recent school survey of 258 parents and carers. They also took into account the views of staff by considering 50 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. They reviewed up-to-date information about students' achievement, behaviour and attendance. They also looked at the school's systems for keeping students safe.

## Inspection team

Christopher Wood, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Margaret Faull	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- Fernhill School is smaller than the average size secondary school. Most students are from White British backgrounds. Around one in 10 students are from Nepalese backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as a second language is slightly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, those with parents and carers in the armed services and children known to be eligible for free school meals, is broadly average but rising.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is average. The proportion of students who need extra help or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The main needs identified are specific and moderate learning difficulties.
- A small number of students attend off-site training, mainly in Years 10 and 11. The providers include Basingstoke College of Technology, the Military Preparation Training College and the Linden Centre.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum levels expected for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students are entered early for their GCSE English examination.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan lessons that focus on the specific skills and knowledge that students need to learn in order to make good progress
  - check carefully the progress that students make in lessons so that they know how well they have met their personal targets
  - manage efficiently the time that students spend on activities in order to maximise their progress and increase their engagement in learning.
- By improving teaching, raise attainment and increase rates of progress for all students but especially for those that are the most able or eligible for additional funding.
- Continue to improve students' behaviour and attendance by:
  - checking that all teachers apply the school's good behaviour management systems effectively
  - reducing further the number of students who find it difficult to attend school regularly, particularly among those students who receive additional support
  - ensuring that the small minority of students who use racist or homophobic language inappropriately as part of their everyday conversations, do not do so.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, do not yet make good enough progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been below the national average for some time and too few students attain the highest grades at GCSE.
- In 2013, the proportion of students in Year 11 that achieved five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was below the national average. Nevertheless, these students had made better progress, from below average starting points, than students in 2012. In English, the proportion of students making reasonable progress, albeit below average, had increased by 10 percentage points. There were also modest gains in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Students achieved well in a few subject areas, notably in history and music.
- Students who are from Nepalese backgrounds or who speak English as a second language typically make progress at a faster rate than their peers.
- The achievement of students currently in the school, including the most able, is improving steadily. Teachers have higher expectations about the rate of progress students ought to make. They usually plan activities that challenge students of different abilities. Mentoring for the most-able students in Year 11 is increasing the proportion on track to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
- Students eligible for additional funding attain less well than their peers, although their progress is improving. In 2013, eligible students in Year 11 attained about one GCSE grade below their peers in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, they had made better progress from their much lower starting points than similar students the year before. Gaps in attainment are closing steadily for students in the school. Leaders are using the pupil premium funding wisely. It has been used to employ specialist teachers, to provide one-to-one and small-group tuition, reading support and out-of-school hours revision sessions.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium, which is extra funding to support those students who did not achieve a Level 4 in reading and/or mathematics at Key Stage 2, has also been used judiciously to provide intensive support for reading and additional small-group support in English and mathematics. Many of these students, although not all, are catching up on their past underachievement.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although much improved, not enough teaching is currently good or better. The quality of teaching is inconsistent within and across subject areas. Consequently, teaching is not yet good because the rate of progress made by students in their learning is too variable.
- Teachers' planning is not always focused sufficiently on the specific skills or knowledge students need to learn. Some 'learning objectives' are too general or vague. Some teachers do not check carefully what progress students have made in lessons. Consequently, students are sometimes unclear about how well they have met their personal targets.
- A few teachers do not manage efficiently the time students spend on planned activities. Sometimes, too much time is spent on activities that are planned to be short and punchy or a lack of guidance means that students do not use their time productively. In such instances, students' engagement in their learning is not good enough and their progress is too slow.
- In general, teachers have positive relationships with students. They are smart, professional and act as good role models. Parents, carers and students told inspectors that teachers give of their time generously to help students reach their potential.
- Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and a tangible enthusiasm for the subjects they

teach. Over time, the quality of teachers' questioning, oral feedback and written marking have improved. In most cases, books are marked regularly and teachers' comments provide guidance on what students need to do to improve their work. Although not yet consistent, students are encouraged to respond to their teachers' comments, using their 'purple pens of progress'.

- In the most effective teaching, teachers skilfully plan a range of challenging activities that combine well to maximise students' learning. In these lessons very little time is wasted. In a successful drama lesson, students were fully engaged in supporting each other to improve their performance skills because routines were firmly embedded and there were very clear criteria by which they could evaluate their own and their peers' progress. In a successful history lesson, students made quick progress in their understanding of women's equality before, during and after the First World War because the planned activities and resources were well sequenced, challenging and of a very high quality.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Students told inspectors that behaviour is better than at the time of the previous inspection. They welcome the fact that 'teachers are stricter' and generally deal quickly but fairly with poor behaviour. However, behaviour is not yet good because a minority of teachers do not apply the school's good behaviour management systems consistently. In weaker lessons, students sometimes go 'off task', are too chatty or occasionally disrupt the learning of their peers through immature behaviour.
- Most students are polite, welcoming and smartly dressed. They conduct themselves very sensibly in lessons and around the school site. The vertical tutor system enables students of different ages to mix well and helps to create a cohesive school community.
- Most students get on very well together. However, a small minority use racist or homophobic language inappropriately as part of their everyday conversations. Leaders are tackling this issue robustly. The few racist incidents are dealt with quickly. Students are fully involved in promoting more positive behaviour among their peers. For example, during the inspection, two Year 9 students led a thought-provoking assembly focused on tackling forms of discrimination based on appearance, sexuality, social background or language.
- Attendance has improved steadily for most groups of students and is now close to the national average. The attendance of pupils eligible for additional funding has recently improved. Most students arrive at school punctually and ready to learn. Nevertheless some pupils, notably those with special educational needs who need extra help, find it harder to attend school regularly.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe at the school and say that bullying is rare. Students told inspectors that, typically, teachers deal quickly with any issues when they arise. Students express their opinions confidently and respect the views of others. Older students take responsibility for supporting younger students through 'buddying' arrangements, reading schemes and running tournaments.
- Students have frequent opportunities to develop their sporting and artistic talents. At the time of the inspection, around 70 students were involved in rehearsals for the forthcoming musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*. Students have a proud record of raising money for charity. At the time of the inspection, students were part-way through a 24 hour 'cycle-thon' for Sport Relief.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher, who was newly appointed at the time of the previous inspection, has been instrumental in the school's improvement. His charismatic leadership, coupled with a tenacious determination to ensure that students and staff achieve their potential, has been infectious. Other leaders and staff share this ambitious vision and understand the role they play in achieving it.
- The decisive actions taken by leaders and governors have led to improvements in provision and outcomes. The proportion of good and outstanding teaching has increased. Levels of attainment

are rising for most students. Attendance has improved and exclusions have fallen.

- Middle leaders collaborate well and most play a full role in securing further improvements. They carry out a range of monitoring activities and share effective practice. Consistent line management arrangements hold them to account for performance in the areas they lead.
- Arrangements for setting targets for teachers and for supporting their training are comprehensive and effective. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and use the accurate information they collect to plan an appropriate range of training opportunities. Most staff who responded to the staff survey agreed that their individual development needs were met well. Inspectors noted the positive impact of this work in lessons.
- The range of subjects on offer is reviewed regularly. It contributes well to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students now have better opportunities to choose a range of relevant academic and vocational subjects. Students are given helpful guidance on their future studies or careers from an early age. For example, at the end of Year 8 students select a number of subjects for 'specialist study' in Year 9. This has led to better engagement, increased progress and better informed subject choices at GCSE. A small number of students are entered early for GCSE English. Examination results demonstrate that such decisions are well considered. The proportion of students who do not go on to further study, training or employment is small.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and tackle discrimination with determination. Nevertheless, students' achievement, although improving, is currently too variable. Leaders are taking firm action to eradicate inappropriate racist and homophobic language used by a small minority of students as part of their everyday conversations. They have already successfully raised the profile of this issue among students and staff.
- The school's systems to keep students safe and secure are good. Leaders monitor carefully the safety of the small number of students who attend off-site provision and ensure that these placements help students to achieve their potential. Safeguarding meets requirements.
- Links between the school and the local authority are positive. Support from the local authority has helped to increase leadership capacity and to improve provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Under the effective leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, governors have contributed fully to the school's discernible improvement. They have a good range of skills and benefit from regular training and timely induction. Attendance at governing body meetings is usually high.
  - Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and the areas that need to improve further. They visit the school regularly in order to check at first hand whether the actions that leaders are taking are having a positive impact on provision and outcomes. They meet with staff and ask challenging questions. They monitor the quality of teaching and the progress made by different groups of students. They know how this compares with similar schools nationally.
  - Governors ensure that the school's finances are well managed. They check that teachers' performance objectives and decisions about pay progression are linked to improvements in students' achievement. They monitor carefully the impact of the school's use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium funding. They check thoroughly that the school's arrangements for keeping students safe and secure meet statutory requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116447
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	432541

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<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>	780
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bill Alexander
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Collins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–13 September 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01276 702540
<b>Fax number</b>	01276 702541
<b>Email address</b>	admin@fernhill-comp-hants.sch.uk



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