

Fernhill Primary School

Field Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 9FX

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is not yet consistently good. Recent improvements in the teaching have not yet led to more rapid progress for all groups of pupils.
- Not enough pupils are making good progress in writing. Too few pupils have attained the higher levels in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Teachers have not always developed pupils' speaking skills and their understanding of grammar well enough. This hampers pupils' ability to become accomplished writers.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has not always been targeted precisely enough to make sure that they achieve well.
- Sometimes teachers do not use the information from their checks on pupils' understanding to move the learning on quickly, especially for the most able.
- Leaders' checks on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement have not been rigorous enough. These checks are precise enough about the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils.
- Governors have not checked the impact of improvement plans on how well groups of pupils are achieving. As a result, they have not been able to hold leaders to account extensively enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The capable headteacher has grasped quickly the most important areas to be tackled. She has introduced changes which are having a significant impact on teaching, safeguarding and attendance. As a result, the school is improving.
- The early years provision is good and children make a positive start to school. They settle quickly and soon become confident learners.
- Reading is taught well. Over the past year, most pupils have made good progress and, as a consequence, their attainment is rising.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite and friendly and have positive attitudes to their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school, some in conjunction with the headteacher. In addition, she made a number of visits to classrooms, the breakfast club, the dining hall and the playground.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and school leaders. The inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to enable analysis. Some parents were spoken to informally before the start of the school day and during the inspection. The inspector took account of the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's improvement plans. She examined information on pupils' current progress, minutes of governing body meetings and the plans for the use of the school sport fund.
- The inspector heard pupils read, talked to them in classrooms and evaluated samples of their work.

Inspection team

Sandra Woodman, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are organised in seven classes, two of which are currently mixed age.
- The very large majority of pupils have a White British background.
- All children in the early years (Reception class) attend full time.
- The school provides extended care with a before-school club.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils who are eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after. Currently, there are no children on roll who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The current headteacher took up her post in April 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement through improving the quality of teaching, so that it is good or better, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - develop their ability to use the information from their assessments to re-shape tasks so that pupils, especially the most able, make faster progress
 - encourage pupils to speak in full sentences when talking about their work and explaining their ideas
 - reinforce the skills of grammar and sentence construction in pupils' writing at all times.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all leaders evaluate the quality of teaching in terms of its impact on the achievement of different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
 - governors have a clear understanding of the achievement of the different groups of pupils and hold leaders fully to account.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because in the past leaders have not secured enough effective teaching to enable all pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Since the previous inspection, considerable changes to the school's leadership and staffing led to a high degree of turbulence which slowed progress. Now that staffing issues have been settled, the pace of improvement is increasing.
- Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the issues facing the school. However, their checks on teaching do not focus sharply enough on the achievement of different groups of pupils. Consequently, their judgements about the impact of improvement plans are not accurate enough.
- Decisive steps taken to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, are starting to make a difference. Better rates of progress and higher standards indicate that there is the capacity to improve further.
- The arrival of the current headteacher has seen a transformation in the confidence of the staff, pupils and their parents. Without wasting any time, she has established a well-targeted programme for improvement which is being carried out thoroughly.
- Over the past year, teachers' targets for improvement have been more rigorous and incisive. As a result, teachers are being held to account more robustly for their pupils' progress. Increases in teachers' pay are based on good performance.
- Middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects and key stages, have introduced new ways to improve teaching. These have been particularly successful in promoting reading skills, with more pupils making good progress and developing a love of books.
- Leadership of the early years and special educational needs has become more effective. Specialist teaching in developing children's language skills is starting to show impact. The more precise targeting of support is helping to raise progress rates for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The school now demonstrates a clear commitment to promoting equality for all pupils and avoiding any discrimination. Provision for disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding is proving successful in closing any remaining gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils.
- The range of subjects, together with visits and after-school clubs, enrich pupils' learning experiences. All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well. British values, including respect and tolerance, are reinforced positively through policies, assemblies and special events, such as 'Cultural Awareness Day'.
- Checks on plans for the use of the government's primary sports funding show that more pupils are physically active, in sports such as swimming, football and netball. Staff have received training to sustain these activities.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector or who completed the school's own survey are positive about the school's work. They are very appreciative of the efforts of the headteacher and her staff to involve them more in their children's learning.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and systems are checked thoroughly. The school has comprehensive systems to maintain pupils' well-being, and child protection has a high priority.
- The local authority has provided some effective support for the school during the period of great turbulence. Useful training for governors, senior and middle leaders has helped to bring about positive developments in the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Following a review of their practice, governors have restructured their work to become better organised. They are very committed to moving the school forward and to fulfilling their statutory duties. They undertake relevant training, including good-quality sessions provided by the local authority. They know how the performance of teaching staff is being managed and that it is linked to pay progression. They focus on the correct priorities in improvement plans. Increasingly they check the school's work for themselves alongside school leaders. However, these checks do not give them precise enough information about the achievement of different groups of pupils. This means that they are unable to hold leaders to account extensively enough for the quality of the teaching and pupils' achievement.
 - Governors are thorough in their checks on safeguarding procedures. They ensure that staff have the appropriate training to protect all pupils in their care.

- Governors manage the school's finances well. They know how additional funds are used to support disadvantaged pupils and develop sporting activities, such as swimming. They know about the impact the funding is having on pupils' achievement and their general levels of participation in sport.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically they are friendly, polite and keen to talk about their learning.
- In classrooms, pupils settle to work quickly, concentrate hard and persevere well with their tasks. They produce impressive amounts of work, especially in mathematics. These positive attitudes are contributing to the faster progress now being made.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because pupils' attitudes are not exemplary across the school.
- Relationships throughout the school are effective and secure because pupils are well known to staff. The school is successful in fostering good relationships and tackling any discrimination. The playground is a lively and happy place because pupils have plenty of games and sports equipment.
- Pupils, their parents and the staff are positive about standards of behaviour. Pupils say their views are listened to and they are proud of their contribution to the new behaviour system. They find the 'gold stars' very motivating.
- The school's behaviour log shows that the incidents of poor behaviour are few. The few small number of pupils with poor behaviour benefit from carefully planned support. This is helping to promote acceptable behaviour and is successful in eliminating the need for exclusions.
- The school has taken rigorous steps to promote regular attendance and reduce unnecessary absences. As a result, attendance has improved over the past two years and currently is above the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because of the stringent measures in place to ensure their safety.
- Pupils are very clear about what constitutes bullying and the different forms this can take, such as verbal bullying or racist name-calling. They say that since the arrival of the current headteacher, such instances are very rare. They trust the adults completely to help sort out any minor problems should they occur.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe from any potential hazards. They are prepared for maintaining their personal safety through appropriate training, for example in water safety.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time there has not been enough consistently good teaching to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Teachers do not consistently develop pupils' skills in speaking extensively enough. They do not always insist that pupils speak in full sentences when explaining their ideas.
- Teachers do not place enough emphasis on developing an understanding of grammar. As a result, teachers do not enable pupils to achieve high standards in their writing.
- Increasingly, teachers plan appropriately challenging activities for all groups of pupils. On occasions, they do not use the information from their checks on pupils' understanding to re-shape tasks and move the learning on quickly. This means that levels of challenge are not always maintained throughout activities, and this slows the learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are now beginning to work effectively to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well those supported by additional funding. However, this has not been the case in the past. The teaching for small groups was not always targeted precisely enough to enable these pupils to make good progress.
- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils about their work is consistently good. Pupils appreciate the way teachers show them how to make improvements. This guidance is helping them to make better progress now, especially in mathematics.
- Reading is taught well. The teaching of phonics (the sound letters make) is very effective and younger pupils soon learn to read. Teachers encourage older pupils to read a wide range of literature and try different authors.
- Classrooms are bright and welcoming, with displays and resources that support learning well. Teachers take full advantage of pupils' willingness to learn and ensure that pupils work hard at all times.

- Teachers are keen to improve their practice and readily engage in training activities. Recent training in improving the teaching of calculation skills in mathematics is having a good impact on the pace of progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not all pupils have made good enough progress. This has been particularly the case in mathematics and writing across the school. However, the school has now addressed this legacy of underachievement and progress rates are improving.
- Attainment has been below average in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in recent years, especially in mathematics. As a result of focused teaching, current groups are on track to attain more highly. Pupils now demonstrate good skills in calculation and a strong work ethic in the amount of work they complete.
- When writing, pupils do not always demonstrate the necessary understanding of grammar and sentence construction to become good writers. Younger pupils' spoken language is not always as well developed as it should be.
- The most able pupils have not made rapid enough progress in recent years. The levels of challenge in the work have not been consistently high and so too few pupils have reached the higher levels.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have not made enough progress. Until recently, they did not receive enough precise support and challenge in order to reach their potential.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding often make better progress than their classmates. The gaps between their attainment and that of their classmates, in Year 6 in 2014, were less than a term in all subjects, though both groups attained below average. Current groups are progressing well, with attainment similar to their classmates' and closer to national expectations.
- In 2014, Year 1 pupils attained well above average in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This rising trend reflects a greater emphasis on the teaching of the sounds that letters make.
- Older pupils have responded enthusiastically to the school's reading challenges, tackling an impressive number of books. They say they love the new range of authors on offer in the library.
- More pupils are participating in sports clubs such as football and netball, supported by the school sport fund. All pupils enjoy and benefit from learning to swim in the school's own pool.

The early years provision

is good

- Good links with parents and a caring environment ensure that children feel happy and secure when they start school. Positive relationships between the adults and children are quickly established so that children are soon ready to learn.
- Often from starting points that are below those typical for their age, children make good progress. They catch up quickly, especially in their personal development because of well-planned activities such as games for turn-taking and sharing. Increasingly, more children start Year 1 demonstrating the skills and understanding expected for their age.
- Teaching is effective because the learning activities are designed carefully to promote good progress. Children have ready access to a wide range of imaginative resources both indoors and out. They behave well because there are clear expectations of what is acceptable behaviour.
- Leaders have identified that children's speaking skills are frequently low when they start school. Children now receive specialised support in small groups, which helps them to converse more confidently. Nonetheless, children are not routinely encouraged to speak in full sentences, which hampers the development of good grammar.
- Leadership and management are good, ensuring that staff are well trained and that there is a good system for assessing children's progress. However, checks on teaching are not yet precise enough to make sure that all children are challenged sufficiently.

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	116240
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	449001

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	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katy Harris
Headteacher	Sue Masters
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 December 2012
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