

Farnham Church of England Primary School

Farnham, Bishop's Stortford, Essex, CM23 1HR

Inspection dates	October 20–21 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The senior leadership team and the governing body have secured rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders know the school extremely well. Leaders have a clear vision for future development based on a good understanding of the main priorities.
- Governors ask senior leaders searching questions to check how well the school is doing.
- Pupils make good progress in the school because they are taught well.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do in mathematics and in English, especially in reading where attainment is particularly high.
- Early years provision is good. Good teaching helps children to settle quickly and learn well.
- The pupils are great ambassadors for the school. Their excellent behaviour helps them to learn well.
- Pupils are very polite and respectful and quickly develop a love of learning. They readily take on additional responsibilities with maturity and confidence.
- Pupils are well cared for. They feel very safe in school. There is always someone they can go to if they have a problem.
- Leaders and staff have a very strong partnership with parents. They are highly positive about the work of the school and support it extremely well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment is lower in writing than in reading. There are too few opportunities for pupils to improve their skills by writing at length, and letter formation and handwriting are not taught always well enough across the school.
- In both classes, teachers do not always adapt work quickly when pupils are finding it too difficult or easy.
- Not all middle leaders are playing a full enough part in improving teaching.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close the gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing by giving pupils more opportunities to write at length, and by placing a stronger emphasis in all year groups on teaching handwriting and letter formation.
- Ensure that teachers always respond quickly if pupils are finding work too hard or too easy.
- Strengthen the role of middle leaders in improving teaching so that responsibility for doing this is shared more widely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher and assistant headteacher have been relentless in their pursuit of improvement since the previous inspection. They have left no stone unturned as they have tackled weaknesses and secured rapid improvement. They have established a culture in which pupils are flourishing both socially and academically, with staff working together well to achieve this. The 'Farnham Way' is well understood by the whole school community and reflects the high aspirations of senior leaders.
- Senior leaders have provided good challenge and support to teachers to help them improve. They set teachers challenging targets and observe teaching regularly to ensure that improvement is being secured and sustained.
- The partnership with Rickling CE Primary has been very beneficial in helping the school to improve. Training for teachers is shared across the two schools and is well matched to their needs. Staff plan together and share good practice. Good quality support and challenge from the local authority has also been an important factor in improvements over the last two years. Parents recognise these improvements in their very positive comments about the school.
- A start has been made on making more use of the good skills of middle leaders to improve the quality of teaching further, but at the moment too much responsibility for this lies with the senior leadership team. Middle leaders do, however, play a good part in checking how well pupils are doing. They look at pupils' books and analyse information on their progress. This helps them to identify any dips in attainment so that they can be tackled quickly.
- The school ensures equal opportunities for all pupils. Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding to support the very small number of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, they make the same good progress as others.
- Additional primary sports funding helps to extend opportunities for pupils to take part in sports clubs and to learn new skills. A specialist sports coach provides additional support at lunchtime and during enrichment afternoons, helping pupils to value the importance of staying healthy and taking exercise. The success of this is seen in the school's recent Silver Mark accreditation for its sports work, as well as its Healthy School Award.
- The curriculum (the topics and subjects taught) is rich and varied and is well matched to pupils' interests and skills. Reading is promoted especially well but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in different curriculum subjects. This is the main reason why there is disparity between pupils' progress in reading and writing.
- There are a good number of clubs and visits for a school of this size. These make a positive contribution towards pupils' progress and their enjoyment of school as well as to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show good concern for the needs of others by, for example, raising funds for charities. Leaders, including governors, successfully model and promote respect and tolerance for each other, and for various cultures and beliefs. These values help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The knowledgeable governing body has played a key part in helping the school to improve over the last two years. Governors have worked very closely with the senior leadership team to tackle weaknesses, ensuring that there has been a rapid pace to change.
 - Governors have good systems for checking provision for themselves so that they are not over reliant on the information provided by the executive headteacher. They ensure that funding provides good value for money and has a positive effect on pupils' learning. For example, they monitor and report on the progress of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that the pupil premium is being used to good effect.
 - Governors know where teaching is especially strong and how the school continues to improve it. Their systems for rewarding good teaching through performance management are thorough and are well understood by teachers.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding procedures are very thorough. Pupils' safety is given the highest priority by all members of staff. Rules and routines are well understood by parents and pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils make good progress because they are taught well. Parents are almost all in complete agreement about the quality of teaching and how well it helps their children to learn.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils, meeting their needs well most of the time. They have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and plan work that is fun and engaging. Pupils work without fear of failure because teachers are always encouraging them to try out new ideas.
- Although there are several age groups in each class, teachers take good account of the different starting points of pupils so that work is not repeated. Teaching assistants provide good quality support both in and out of lessons. They work with individual pupils or groups as needed and help pupils to learn new skills quickly.
- Teachers give pupils good feedback to support them to improve their work. Marking is thorough and clearly identifies the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of time at the start of the day for pupils to look at their previous work and to improve it where needed. Pupils say that they find this very helpful as it means that, 'We get things right next time'.
- Teachers make good use of homework to strengthen pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy homework, especially when it is used at the start of a topic to find out what they already know. Most pupils read very regularly at home and this helps their reading skills to improve particularly quickly.
- Teaching is not outstanding because there are occasions when teachers do not adapt work quickly enough when they can see that pupils are struggling with their work, or are finding it too easy. When this happens, the pace of learning slows. In addition, handwriting is not taught consistently well across the school. Teachers do not always pick up on pupils' poor letter formation or emphasise enough the importance of neat handwriting.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel very safe because, as one commented, 'All the grown-ups know who we are and look after us'. Pupils take very good care of each other because they are all friends. There is very little bullying and pupils are very confident that any 'falling out' is tackled very quickly.
- There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons. The very positive attitudes of pupils towards their learning are key factors in the good progress they are now making. They work extremely hard and are very keen to do well. Pupils show very good determination when given challenging tasks; they persevere and help each other willingly when needed.
- Pupils talk very knowledgably about how to stay safe in the wider world. They know that bullying can take many forms and understand what to do if they have a concern. E-safety is clearly understood because teachers talk about it at the start of each computing topic. Pupils are aware that they should not share information online. They understand clearly how to respond to any potential cyber-bullying.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility. Pupils are given good opportunities to contribute to school life. For example, the school council has recently been working with staff to improve school meals. In doing this, they have shown a very strong understanding of the need for balanced diets and healthy lifestyles.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that the excellent behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. School records confirm that incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. When they do occur, they are tackled very well.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They attend very regularly with none absent during the inspection. As one parent commented, 'My son cannot wait to get to school each morning'.
- Pupils are proud of the school and take very good care of the school building. There is no graffiti and pupils work together to keep the playground tidy.
- When moving around school, pupils conduct themselves extremely well. They have excellent manners and are very polite and courteous to visitors. They understand the school rules and why they are

necessary. They respond well to the house point system, taking great delight in being chosen to sit at the 'special table' if they have won the most points by the end of the week.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress across the school from their different starting points. Although attainment varies from year to year because the number of pupils is so small, it is generally above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils acquire new skills and knowledge quickly and apply them well in a range of subjects. They are well prepared both socially and academically for the next stage of their education.
- Attainment and progress is especially strong in reading. Pupils read with confidence for a range of purposes. Older pupils express preferences for authors or types of text, and have very positive attitudes towards reading. Attainment in phonics (letters and the sound they make) is good, with most pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Year 1. Younger pupils use their good phonics knowledge well to sound out new words when reading.
- Pupils' progress is slightly slower in writing than in reading. Although pupils enjoy writing and have a very good vocabulary, they do not write often enough at length so that they can practise and improve their skills more quickly. Handwriting improves only slowly. Too few pupils use a joined handwriting style as they get older and letters are not always formed correctly in Key Stage 1.
- In mathematics, younger pupils quickly learn different ways to independently add and subtract increasingly challenging numbers. As they get older, pupils carry out increasingly complex calculations and use this knowledge extremely well to solve problems.
- The school successfully ensures that all groups, including the most able and the very small number of disadvantaged pupils, make good progress over time. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good support, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge quickly.

Early years provision

is good

- Staff establish very strong partnerships with parents, who are extremely positive about the early years provision. They unanimously report that their children have settled very quickly into school life. As one commented, 'I could not have wished for a better start for my child'.
- Good teaching in the early years means that all children, including those with specific needs, such as the disabled or those who have special educational needs, make good progress. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Adults have good expectations and focus strongly on teaching children about the importance of good behaviour and staying safe. As a result, children behave extremely well and are very happy at school.
- There are good systems for assessing children's prior learning, including interviewing parents when their children start school. Adults use this information well and take good account of their differing needs when planning work. This ensures that there is good challenge for children most of the time. There are occasions, as elsewhere in the school, when adults do not respond quickly enough to move learning on, or to help children who are struggling.
- Reading is taught well and children quickly gain an understanding of the sounds that letters make. Children make a good start to learning to write, but there is too little focus on correct letter formation so errors are not always tackled quickly enough.
- Adults make good use of the outdoor area to allow children to explore their own ideas and to extend learning. For example, children improved their understanding of numbers quickly as they 'painted' them on the playground and counted different objects provided to help their learning.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough. There are no breaches of welfare arrangements. Adults know the children very well and cater for their individual needs with great care. They ensure that children are kept safe.
- The new leader for early years provision, who works most of the time at the partner school, has not yet had a chance to play a big part in developing teaching further. Nonetheless, she regularly visits Farnham and has quickly established a clear picture of which parts of the provision are stronger or weaker. She has made a good start to tackling the areas that need to improve. For example, she has already strengthened links with local pre-schools so that procedures for establishing children's starting points are improved further.

School details

Unique reference number	115189
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10001921

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Martin
Headteacher	Gillian Napier (Executive Headteacher)
Telephone number	01279 771339
Website	www.farnham.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@farnham.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2015

Information about this school

- This is a very small primary school with two mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is very low and there have been none in Year 6 for the last four years. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided to give extra support to looked after children and those pupils known to qualify for free school meals.
- The school is federated with Rickling Church of England Primary School. The executive headteacher leads and manages both schools and there is a shared governing body. Many middle leaders manage subjects in both schools, with the majority based most of the time at the partner school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in nine lessons, most of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher. In addition, the inspector made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspector took account of the views of 26 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also talked to parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspector heard pupils read, and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information and health and safety documentation.
- The inspector analysed 13 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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