

Fernhill School

Neville Duke Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 9BY

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The actions of leaders and governors in the past have not had sufficient impact on improving teaching and raising outcomes.
- Difficulties of staff recruitment have had a detrimental impact on school improvement.
- Attainment and progress, over time, have remained significantly below national averages. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are not closing. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make less progress than their peers.
- The attainment and progress of pupils in key stage 3 is not high enough. In these year groups, pupils who have special educational needs or disability are underperforming and the progress made by pupils in Year 9 in mathematics and science is not good enough.
- Teaching has not ensured that all pupils, especially those who have special educational needs or disability, disadvantaged pupils, the most able and pupils in key stage 3, make sufficient progress given their starting points.
- Teachers do not all have high enough expectations of what pupils, especially the most able pupils, are capable of achieving.
- Feedback to pupils is not consistent with school policies and too variable, ranging from supportive and helpful feedback to little or no feedback.
- In a small number of lessons, teaching fails to engage pupils and low-level disruption hinders involvement, learning and progress as well as preventing others in the class from learning.
- Recent improvements have not yet resulted in teaching that is consistently effective.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders and governors, is determined to improve teaching and raise outcomes. The school's strengths and weaknesses are well known and ongoing professional development is rigorous.
- The governing body has a clear and realistic view of the school and a good awareness of pupil premium funding and performance management. Statutory requirements are all met.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and supportive.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and bullying is actively challenged. Pupil absence, persistent absences and exclusions are reducing. Determined careers guidance ensures that almost all pupils move on to further education, employment or training when they finish school.
- Lesson observations, book scrutinies and moderated assessments suggest that the 2016 results will show marked improvements and that gaps for different groups will reduce.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to raise pupils' progress across all years and groups, by ensuring that:
 - all staff actively support the learning and progress of all pupils, especially those who have special educational needs or disability, disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those in key stage 3
 - all staff have high expectations of what pupils can do and can achieve
 - written and verbal feedback to pupils is undertaken in line with the school policy
 - the good and outstanding practice that already exists is shared across the whole school.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that all pupils are fully engaged and all staff address low-level disruption in line with the school policy.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that senior and middle leaders regularly monitor, review and take effective action to address the underachievement of different groups.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because outcomes are not yet good enough and the quality of teaching is too variable. Challenges regarding staff recruitment have had an impact on teaching and behaviour especially in English and science.
- Across the school there is a clear desire to improve teaching and raise outcomes, but this is repeatedly thwarted by staff shortages necessitating supply teachers. The school reports that it will be fully staffed in September 2016, including specialist teachers in English and mathematics.
- Arrangements to develop and enhance the quality of teaching are rigorous and a bespoke programme of support and challenge is in place to improve weaker teaching. Senior leaders' judgements of the quality of teaching across the school are precise and accurate. Performance management is well considered and effective in ensuring that all staff are clearer about expectations.
- The headteacher, ably supported by his senior team, has had a positive impact on the school since the follow-up monitoring visit. There is now a well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- There is a clear sense of direction as well as a determination to improve teaching and raise standards. There is no hint of complacency across middle leaders who have been encouraged and supported to further develop their expertise and knowledge.
- Information about how current pupils are performing is thorough and extensive, but available data is too unwieldy and it is difficult to see how this is being used to identify issues, pursue actions and check impact. Available information is used well to provide individual and group intervention.
- Staff morale is high and the very large majority of those who responded to the online staff survey said they were proud to work in the school and that leaders supported them in managing behaviour. They agreed that leaders did all they could to ensure that staff were motivated, respected and effective in their role. They felt that they were treated fairly and with respect.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The promotion of British values is well supported through assemblies, tutor time and the active citizenship programme, with a timely focus on the European Union referendum. Literacy and numeracy are secure across the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities provide a range of rich and varied experiences for all pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength, with backing from personal, social, health and economic education as well as English, mathematics, history and religious studies. For example, moral education is well supported through the focus given to slavery and the Holocaust in history. Cultural understanding is championed through music, drama and art such as the Year 7 art class where pupils were making masks based on the Mexican festival of the 'Day of the Dead'.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are well known and supported. The school is precise in its monitoring of the impact of pupil premium spending, which is now beginning to narrow the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Year 7 catch-up spending is improving the basic skills for those with low English and mathematics attainment on entry.
- The school has employed a family support worker who has been instrumental in supporting families to engage with the school through home visits and parenting programmes. Regardless, the school acknowledges that further work needs to be done.
- The local authority has provided regular and effective ongoing support for leaders, as well as quality assurance visits focused on pupil premium and teaching, to inform improvement work.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has a clear and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Statutory requirements are well known and actively supported.
 - Governors have a good awareness of the use and effectiveness of pupil premium expenditure.
 - The management of teachers' performance is well understood.
 - The board provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge to the leadership of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures to identify and follow up any concerns are rigorous. The school undertakes checks on staff which are recorded in line with current requirements. There is a culture of safety across the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as there is too much variability across the school. Teaching has not ensured that all pupils, especially pupils who have special educational needs or disability, disadvantaged pupils, the most able and pupils in key stage 3, make sufficient progress given their starting points.
- Sometimes teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, are capable of achieving. Extension work is quickly finished and, in a small minority of lessons, the most able pupils did not have their knowledge developed and extended.
- Staff turnover and weaker subject leadership in the past have meant that teaching within and across subjects is inconsistent and some is typified by low expectations. Senior leaders are well aware of this and have a series of strategies and training in place. The impact of this support is still to be fully seen.
- Teaching assistants are deployed in the classroom but their assistance is inconsistent in supporting pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, the teaching assistants ensured that pupils remained on task and supported their learning, whereas in a Year 8 geography lesson the teaching assistant circulated the room but did not specifically facilitate learning.
- Feedback to pupils is inconsistent with school policy and is too variable across the school. There are examples of strong practice in written and verbal feedback which supports pupils to consolidate and deepen their learning, such as the quality written dialogue between the teacher and pupils seen in a Year 8 art lesson. However, in other lessons, pupils do not receive the feedback about how to improve that the school would expect.
- The strong and supportive relationships that exist between staff and pupils clearly make a positive contribution to learning in most lessons. However, in a small number of lessons, where these relationships are not so strong, teaching fails to engage pupils and low-level disruption hinders learning and progress.
- Consistently strong teaching was seen in mathematics, but teaching across other subjects was more varied. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and teachers have a good awareness of the requirements of examination courses. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher actively highlighted the new examination requirements, and books confirmed that pupils were working on examples of new topic areas.
- The school's programme of training for teachers is successfully contributing to the improvement of teaching and allowing teachers to develop their expertise and understanding of different groups. However, the teaching of different groups remains variable as some teachers do not plan work which is accurately matched to individual pupils' learning needs.
- Teaching for pupils who speak English as an additional language is effective as support for literacy and numeracy is particularly strong across the school. Good development of literacy was seen in art, drama and a Year 7 history lesson where the teacher actively encouraged pupils to offer definitions of new words. Good development of numeracy was seen in science, technology and a Year 10 computer science lesson where pupils were challenged to think about the properties of mathematical shapes.
- Equality of opportunity and the recognition of diversity are actively supported through teaching as well as through assemblies, active citizenship lessons and tutorial programmes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have a secure and comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities in terms of welfare and well-being. The single central record is methodically and accurately kept.
- Pupil absence is meticulously pursued and the school is quick to identify any pupils presumed to be at risk. In particular, there are effective approaches to identify and support pupils in danger of radicalisation or extremism.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in the school. They are aware of different forms of bullying and cooperate actively to prevent it occurring. Bullying in all its forms is actively challenged and dealt with effectively. Incidents of racist and homophobic bullying are rare.

- The very large majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children were safe and well looked after by the school. Pupils say that they understand how to keep themselves safe and understand the risks of the use of social media.
- The personal, social, health and economic education programme covers a range of topics, including critical thinking, enquiry, advocacy, representation and enabling pupils to take informed and responsible action on issues that affect them. The programme actively explores beliefs and experience, investigates moral and ethical issues, celebrates diversity and promotes understanding, acceptance and respect.
- Careers information, advice and guidance provided at the school are helpful and valuable. Year 9 pupils are well supported to choose career paths and option choices. Pupils in key stage 4 are encouraged through careers days, business visits and opportunities to undertake work experience. Almost all pupils move on to further education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. Relationships with post-16 providers, in particular the sixth form college, are well developed.
- The welfare and safety of pupils educated elsewhere is good and these pupils are regularly visited and carefully supported. As a result, their progress is improving and many are successfully reintegrated into the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In most lessons, teaching is successful in creating a positive atmosphere for learning but, in a small number of lessons, behaviour and engagement is less evident. In these lessons, a lack of engagement and low-level disruption prevents pupils from making sufficient progress.
- Behaviour outside of lessons and around the school is orderly. In lessons, behaviour and attitudes are directly linked to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is less effective, low-level disruption occurs and pupils' attitudes to learning are diminished. Pupils confirm that there is some disruption of lessons where teaching does not engage pupils.
- Attendance has continued to improve, although there is still a gap between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Persistent absences are decreasing for all groups of pupils as a result of the support from the family support worker. Punctuality has improved significantly because of leaders' determination and commitment. Lesson truancy is extremely rare.
- Exclusions are reducing as a result of initiatives such as the 'reflection room' and the 'Phoenix Centre' where pupils have their own personalised timetables and receive one-to-one targeted support. The success of the centre is evident through the reducing numbers of fixed and permanent exclusions. The behaviour of pupils who are educated elsewhere is similar to their peers who are educated in school.

Outcomes for pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, attainment at the end of Year 11 has remained significantly below national averages, and performance has not increased in line with national trends. Similarly, progress has continued to be significantly below national averages.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics was also below their peers and significantly below other pupils nationally.
- The 2016 predictions are much more positive and leaders have worked hard to ensure the credibility of expected results through regular assessment and rigorous moderation. Information seen confirms that Year 11 pupils are confidently on track to meet their targets.
- In 2016, the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are expected to narrow rapidly as a result of the greater focus given to disadvantaged pupils, including more robust monitoring, teacher training and focused intervention. Similar support and encouragement for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is also expected to have a similar impact.
- Lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutinies also suggest that the results in 2016 will show marked improvements on the 2015 outcomes. Progress measures for English and mathematics are much stronger and expected to improve significantly. There is a greater focus on the most able, and pupils who speak English as an additional language are expected to continue to perform well.
- The attainment and progress of Year 10 pupils confirmed improvements across all subjects in relation to attainment and progress. Groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special

educational needs or disability, are doing as well as their peers and gaps are narrowing. This progress was confirmed by lesson observations and pupils' work.

- Information about attainment and progress in key stage 3 is less encouraging and pupils are not making the progress that they should. This was particularly evident for pupils who have special educational needs or disability as well as progress in Year 9 for mathematics and science.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education through effective transition programmes which have ensured that the number of pupils not in education, employment or training is low in comparison with national averages.
- The Year 7 catch-up programme is having a positive impact on the development of pupils' number, reading and writing skills.
- The small number of pupils who are attending off-site provision make good progress in basic literacy and mathematical skills, as well as in their confidence, independence and work-related skills.

School details

Unique reference number	116447
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10012221

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	633
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Alexander
Headteacher	Peter Collins
Telephone number	01276 702540
Website	www.fernhill.hants.sch.uk
Email address	adminoffice@fernhill.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2014

Information about this school

- Fernhill School is a smaller than average-sized, mixed-sex community school. Approximately three quarters of all pupils are from White British backgrounds, with smaller numbers of Any other Asian backgrounds and Any other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language are above national averages.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is in line with the national average. This funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after. Fifteen pupils were eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding for those who did not attain Level 4 in either English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- Sixteen pupils are educated elsewhere following personalised courses at The Linden Education Centre in Farnborough.
- The school meets the government's 2015 floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress from key stage 2 to key stage 4.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations of pupils' learning in 42 lessons or parts of lessons, including nine joint observations with senior members of staff. They reviewed the work in pupils' books covering English, mathematics and science, to check attainment, progress, feedback and presentation.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. A team inspector had a telephone conversation with the headteacher of The Linden Education Centre.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils from all year groups and spoke informally to pupils in lessons and at breaktimes. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 pupils were on study leave so it was not possible to observe lessons in this year.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and a range of school documentation, including safeguarding records, self-evaluation, development plans and governors' minutes. They also looked at the school's attendance, behaviour and exclusions information.
- Inspectors considered the views of 40 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as further written comments provided by parents. They also considered 56 questionnaires completed by members of staff and eight responses to the pupil questionnaire, alongside surveys conducted by the school at parents evenings.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Lee	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Luke	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Norman	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

