

Fernhill Primary School

Field Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 9FX

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	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 quality of teaching varies in different classes and age groups. Not all pupils make the progress expected from their different starting points.
- Teachers' use of assessment is not yet embedded. Assessment information is not always accurate.
- The quality of pupils' learning in lessons and the progress they make are not given sufficient attention by some school leaders when judging the quality of teaching.
- School improvement planning is not focused sharply enough on specific actions to accelerate improvement.
- Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils are not diminishing quickly enough in some year groups.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable. Their progress from their starting points is not strong enough to enable them to catch up.
- Not enough children in the early years are prepared well for learning in Year 1.
- Governors are supportive of the school and ask a wide range of questions. However, the information they are provided with is not always accurate. Their evaluation of the impact of specific actions to improve the school is not sufficiently rigorous.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Outcomes in writing have improved. By the end of Year 6 in 2016, attainment in writing was above the national average.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- Attendance is above average overall.
- Relationships are positive between pupils and adults. Pupils respond well to adult instructions and take pride in their work and their appearance.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in school and in the community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers become confident in using assessment information accurately in order to support pupils' learning and progress more effectively.
- Ensure that monitoring activities, including observations of teaching and learning, focus on the learning and progress of all groups of pupils.
- Sharpen the school's improvement plan by:
 - setting out clear and specific actions so that all those expected to carry out actions understand what they need to do
 - ensuring that responsibilities for evaluating the impact of the plan are well defined.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School leaders have not ensured that assessment information is accurate. The current assessment system is not sufficiently well embedded. Leaders have not ensured that all teachers have a secure understanding of end-of-year expectations.
- Not all senior leaders focus enough on the quality of pupils' learning in lessons and over time. This, at times, leads to some overly generous judgements about the quality of teaching.
- School improvement planning does not specify what is to be done to further accelerate improvement. As a result, those expected to carry out actions are not always clear about what they need to do to achieve the school priorities successfully.
- Nevertheless, leaders and managers are helping teachers to improve their practice. This is particularly noticeable in the progress pupils make in writing.
- The effective work of senior leaders with parents, pupils and staff has led to a reduction in absence. Consequently, attendance is better than for most other schools nationally.
- School leaders use additional pupil premium funding to increase rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils. This has successfully diminished the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils by the end of Year 6. However, in some year groups, the gaps are not diminishing quickly enough.
- The school has set out the allocation of physical education and sport premium funding, but the impact of this additional funding is unclear. The impact of the funding on improving pupils' participation in sport and increasing their attainment has not been posted on the school website.
- The school uses additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to support their learning and progress. Currently, the progress of these pupils is variable. The special educational needs coordinator works effectively with pupils to improve their communication and language skills.
- Leaders and managers model good behaviour and respect for all. They ensure that the curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils with a range of opportunities to learn and make progress. Additional activities, such as cooking, choir and tag rugby and excursions to places of interest, for example, to the Science Museum, Stonehenge and to a local farm, enrich pupils' learning.

- School leaders have successfully established a supportive and ambitious ethos. As one parent commented, 'The headteacher fosters an environment of diligence and respect where the staff and pupils have an exact understanding of the high values required for the betterment of themselves and the school as a whole.' This is evident in the improved outcomes in writing. School leaders' concerted and effective action to improve pupils' writing skills has been successful. Their actions have also resulted in above-average outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Pupils are now better prepared for the next stage of their education.
- School leaders successfully motivate and support teaching staff. Almost all of those who completed the online questionnaire say that leaders do all they can to create motivated, respected and effective teaching staff.
- The local authority has provided a range of support to improve outcomes for pupils in English and mathematics. The impact of this support has been variable. There have been successes in improving outcomes in writing, and in mathematics for pupils with middle- and high prior attainment. However, the most recent visit from a local authority officer acknowledged that the school has not focused sufficiently on the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly in identifying barriers for pupils to overcome to accelerate their progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very supportive and knowledgeable. They visit the school regularly to check on the school's progress. However, the assessment information they have received has not always been accurate. This has limited their ability to hold school leaders to account. Furthermore, this has led to them not always being able to evaluate the impact of specific actions rigorously enough.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties, apart from those relating to the required content of the school website. They ensure that performance management arrangements are effectively in place. They check on the performance of staff when making decisions about pay progression.
- Governors were disappointed in the outcomes for Year 1 pupils in the phonics screening check in 2016. As a result, they have ensured that further training and support have been provided for staff. They are actively checking that current pupils' progress in phonics is on track for a higher proportion of pupils to achieve the expected standard in 2017 successfully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils, staff and parents are in agreement that pupils are safe at school. School leaders ensure that all the required checks on staff suitability to work with pupils are carried out prior to appointment. The single central register contains all the required information.

- Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe in the community. They know that they should not talk to strangers. They understand about how to keep safe when using the internet and know they should not post information about their age or address online.
- There is a strong culture of safety at Fernhill Primary School. Staff receive regular updates and training to enable them to understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Staff and governors have received training to help them to know how to prevent pupils from exposure to extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Not all teaching enables all groups of pupils to make expected progress. In some classes, some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of making. As a result, pupils, particularly those with low prior attainment, are not making enough progress to reach the standards they are expected to achieve.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable in different classes. In some classes, the difference between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils is diminishing, but this is not the case in all classes. Some teaching is not effective enough to enable pupils to catch up.
- Teachers' use of assessment during lessons is mainly effective. Where teaching is particularly successful in helping pupils to make good progress, teachers check on pupils' learning and adjust tasks accordingly. This is typically done particularly well in writing. However, some teachers do not check on pupils' learning well enough. As a result, not all lessons are planned to meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils.
- Not all teachers are fully confident about the judgements they make about pupils' learning over time. Checks on pupils' learning at the end of December 2016 showed that lower than expected proportions of pupils were on track to achieve the expected standard by the end of the year. School leaders are implementing further training to ensure that teachers have a good understanding of end-of-year expectations.
- Effective training for staff and a reorganisation of the teaching of phonics are having a positive impact on pupils' progress this year.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils know what they need to do to be successful learners. They listen carefully to instructions and respond quickly. They know the school's routines and expectations well. Disadvantaged pupils and those requiring additional support receive timely extra help.

- Pupils' personal development is supported well through assemblies and personal development learning lessons. During an assembly with a theme of 'doing the right thing', pupils were able to identify friendship issues from a range of photographs. They know what they should do to resolve them, if they are faced with such a situation. They showed positive attitudes to one another and responded well when discussing their ideas together. They enjoyed the opportunity to sing together, singing with enthusiasm and gusto.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in school and in the wider community. They understand about different forms of bullying and say that it happens rarely. They know that there is always an adult available to listen to any concerns they have and to try to resolve them.
- School leaders work effectively with a range of outside agencies to support vulnerable families. Children in need of additional help and protection are supported well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, thoughtful and caring. They move around the school in a calm and considered way, taking turns and holding doors open for one another without prompting.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and settle quickly to the tasks and activities planned for them. They enjoy collaborating and work well in pairs and small groups to discuss their learning.
- Pupils' attendance is above average overall. However, there is a small number of pupils who do not attend school often enough. This has a negative impact on their ability to learn and make progress. The headteacher is working alongside other agencies to support families and help them to understand the importance of good attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils are improving, particularly in writing. However, few lower achieving pupils reach the standards expected for their age, particularly in reading and mathematics. Too few pupils who have high prior attainment reach high standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Outcomes for Year 1 pupils in the phonics screening check at the end of the summer term in 2016 were much lower than for the previous two years and well below the national average. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils was much lower than the national average. School leaders have ensured that current pupils are making better progress and a higher proportion are on track to achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check at the end of the year.

- Pupils enjoy reading and are enthusiastic about the texts teachers use to support their reading and writing skills. Year 6 pupils were fascinated with the book 'Wonder' by RJ Palacio and Year 2 pupils were excited about reading 'Man on the Moon' by Simon Bartram. Pupils who did not reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2016 are now using their phonics skills well to tackle unfamiliar words. They read with interest and enthusiasm.
- Outcomes for Year 6 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have improved overall. In 2016, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined was above the national average. However, no disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieved the higher standard in reading.
- There is evidence of the positive impact of pupil premium funding for some disadvantaged pupils. Currently, the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils is diminishing in some classes. However, in some year groups, not enough disadvantaged pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard by the end of the year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make slower progress than other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Currently, in all classes across the school, from the school's own information, the vast majority of these pupils are predicted to be working towards the expected standard by the end of the year. Very few are on track to achieve the expected standard.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children begin in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are below that found typically for their age. They settle well, because adults provide a safe and interesting range of activities children to engage with.
- Outcomes for children at the end of Reception have been below the national average for three years. The gap between the school and the national average has been widening. There were fewer children who were well prepared for learning in Year 1 at the end of 2016 than in 2015.
- The new early years teacher is aware that children need to make faster rates of progress to ensure that a higher proportion of children are ready for learning in Year 1. The early years leader and teacher work well together to support children's learning and development. Currently, children are making better progress from their starting points.
- Many children begin the Reception class with limited language skills. The special educational needs coordinator and additional adults support children's early language skills well. They work successfully with individuals and groups of children to increase their communication and listening skills to help support their learning effectively.
- Children behave well and enjoy learning in the Reception class. They particularly enjoy taking part in whole-class storytelling, using the story map they have created together. This supports their early language, reading and writing skills well.

- The early years teacher gathers a wide range of evidence across all areas of learning to support the assessments of children’s learning and development. Parents are encouraged to contribute to these assessments. This begins with home visits organised at the start of the year to enable parents to share their child’s interests and needs with the class teacher.
- All the welfare and safeguarding requirements for the early years are met.

School details

Unique reference number	116240
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10024514

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katy Harris
Headteacher	Susan Masters
Telephone number	01276 31554
Website	www.fernhillprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@fernhill-pri.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the impact of physical education and sport premium funding and its effect on pupils' participation and attainment and on how the improvements are sustainable.
- Fernhill Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. It is the first inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in December 2014. The school was judged to require improvement in the previous inspection in December 2012.
- Her Majesty's Inspector observed learning in all year groups. All observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Her Majesty's Inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher (who is also the key stage 2 leader and subject leader for English), the key stage 1 leader (who is also the early years leader), and the subject leader for mathematics. Meetings were also held with the special educational needs coordinator, three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, the school administrator, staff and pupils.
- Her Majesty's Inspector listened to pupils talk about their work and listened to pupils read in Year 2.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils during the lunchtime and playtime. The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including pupils' work in books, achievement and progress information, documents relating to safeguarding, and school policies and procedures.
- The inspector scrutinised the school improvement plan and external reports on the school.
- Her Majesty's Inspector also considered 61 responses, including five free-text responses, to the online questionnaire Parent View and 16 responses from staff gathered through the staff survey. There were no responses from the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ann Henderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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