

Farmor's School

The Park, Fairford, Gloucestershire GL7 4JQ

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, a decline in the performance of the school occurred. Since that time, leaders' determined efforts have improved many aspects of the school's work. However, pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching lag behind other areas of the school's performance.
- Progress in Year 7 to Year 10 is not yet high enough across all subjects, but particularly in science, because of inconsistencies in teaching.
- Pupils' progress by the end of their GCSE courses is in line with national averages. Interventions in Year 11 are effective but progress is not consistent across different year groups and subjects.
- Teaching is not of a consistently high quality across all subject areas. The progress of pupils is variable because too often teachers do not accurately match work to the needs of their pupils.
- Pupils do not receive consistently high-quality feedback across the curriculum. Therefore, in some key subjects, they are unclear how to improve their work.
- The least able pupils are not making the progress they are capable of because expectations of what they can achieve have not been high enough.
- Until recently, leaders' monitoring has not placed a close enough focus on the progress pupils make.

The school has the following strengths

- The determined leadership of the headteacher and his senior team is changing the culture of the school and making it far more inclusive. Following a period of uncertainty in staffing and dealing with budgetary constraints, a cohesive team approach is now driving improvements.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully tackled weaknesses in attendance and improved relationships with parents and the community.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school and is led well. Teachers plan lessons well and students receive good support to improve their work. Progress is strong across a wide range of subjects.
- The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. They are polite and courteous to one another and to adults, and they respect one another. The school successfully fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make good or better progress across all year groups and in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to match work to the needs of their pupils
 - ensuring that teachers consistently provide high-quality feedback to their pupils across all subject areas
 - raising expectations of what pupils, particularly the least able pupils, can achieve.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that monitoring, especially that conducted by middle leaders, focuses sharply on pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following the previous inspection, turbulence in staffing and leadership had a negative effect on the quality of education being provided at the school. Constraints in the school budget resulted in a number of staff redundancies. The school has struggled to recruit in some areas and, consequently, pupils' standards and the quality of teaching suffered.
- Since that time, the headteacher has worked hard to bring about improvements to the school. Previously weak performance in teaching has been robustly tackled. Expectations have been raised and more challenging targets set for pupils' outcomes. Significant changes which have strengthened the senior leadership team have been effected. As a result of the headteacher's efforts, a cultural change has occurred at the school.
- The senior and middle leadership team is now having an impact on pupils' outcomes and improving the quality of teaching. The school is also more inclusive, providing for pupils who have a wide range of abilities and backgrounds. However, work to secure improvements to the quality of teaching, and consequently pupils' outcomes, has taken longer to tackle than expected and lags behind other areas of the school's work.
- Leaders' work to improve the reputation of the school in the community, the relationship with parents and staff morale is proving successful. As a result, the vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the quality of education at the school. The care provided for pupils is regarded as a strength of the school.
- Leaders' and governors' clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is being used well to inform future planning. The senior leadership now provides leaders and governors with accurate information, particularly about pupils' progress towards their targets. This allows leaders to put in place appropriate and timely interventions to raise standards further.
- Senior leaders and governors manage teacher performance effectively. Targets for improvement are aligned closely to a coherent training plan for teachers and link closely to the school improvement priorities. This ensures that pupils' progress is at least in line with national averages by the end of key stage 4 or in the sixth form.
- Historically, leaders' monitoring focused on the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in key stage 4 examination subjects. Changes to this system of tracking and monitoring ensure that leaders are now placing a sharper focus on the progress different groups of pupils are making from their starting points. This approach is helping more pupils to make better progress in their learning. Leaders know those pupils who are at risk of falling behind and plan the appropriate interventions. Some monitoring by middle leaders still places too much emphasis on pupils' attainment rather than their academic progress.
- Overall, middle leaders are playing a stronger part in driving improvement at the school. They are increasingly held to account for the performance of pupils and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility by senior leaders and governors. In addition, middle leaders are using their good knowledge of the school's priorities to

hold their teams to account and secure the improvements required. However, this same level of rigour is not yet evident in science.

- Leaders use additional funding effectively to support the pupils for whom it is provided. As a result, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has improved significantly. Pupils who enter the school with standards in English and mathematics below those typically found are now supported well and are catching up with their peers.
- Pupils are now supported well to follow appropriate courses at GCSE and A level. The curriculum enables pupils to follow a broad range of subjects at key stage 3, GCSE and A level. Effective advice and guidance supports pupils to make good choices, appropriate to their future careers and aspirations. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities available to cater for artistic, sporting, academic and cultural interests. A variety of well-planned trips and visits are used to enhance and extend the curriculum well.
- Pupils develop a sound understanding of democracy and tolerance of the views of others. A wide range of activities help pupils to develop their wide understanding of life in modern Britain. Roles of responsibility on the student council or as prefects enable pupils to put these principles into practice.
- Leaders successfully promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils have opportunities to understand and appreciate other cultures and points of view and are well prepared to consider how these reflect their own beliefs. For example, in science, pupils debate the moral and ethical issues of stem cell research and cloning from a religious and medical perspective.

Governance of the school

- Governors support and challenge the school effectively. As a result, there have been significant changes of culture and in the structures of leadership and governance. These are now starting to have an impact on improving outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching.
- Governors are provided with appropriate and timely information to fulfil their statutory functions. They use first-hand information to check and monitor the information provided by the headteacher and school leaders. Links with other schools, school improvement partner reports and conversations with middle leaders ensure that they have a range of perspectives on school performance. They are well equipped to support the school in developing its strategic priorities and direction and challenge any underperformance should it arise.
- Governors have ensured that additional funding provided through pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up funding and for supporting children who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively.
- Governor training is appropriate and enables them to effectively oversee the performance of the school in terms of academic outcomes and safeguarding. Governors are able to interpret the information provided from the school and have targeted resources to overcome areas of concern.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A culture of safeguarding is evident in all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are confident that staff will react swiftly to any concerns raised and that there are adults in the school who they could talk to. Accurate records and good systems of communication ensure that staff have appropriate information to support vulnerable pupils and that any issues raised are followed up effectively.
- Staff and governors are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding and vigilant in looking for any signs of concern. Leaders have ensured that they know how to report and act on any concerns. Governors oversee safeguarding effectively. They work with school staff to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place and up to date.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. The school ensures that they are aware of dangers from exploitation, abuse or radicalisation. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when on the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has been too inconsistent over time so that too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly during Years 7 to 10. The school compensates by putting in place interventions which help pupils to improve their progress by the end of key stage 4.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been too variable. A legacy of low expectations for those pupils who enter the school with lower prior attainment has existed in the past. Leaders are tackling this culture and raising teachers' expectations of these pupils. However, where some teachers' expectations remain too low, pupils do not engage fully in learning and show little pride in the presentation or in the quality of their written work.
- Teachers do not routinely check the understanding and progress of pupils closely enough. They fail to correct misconceptions and therefore some pupils do not make sustained progress. Training to raise teachers' expectations is resulting in some more challenging and engaging activities that are promoting pupils' enthusiasm for learning well. In these instances their behaviour improves and they make rapid progress. For example, in language lessons pupils are keen to take on the feedback they receive to improve their pronunciation and vocabulary.
- Pupils raised concerns about the consistency of teaching within and between departments, and particularly about science. This was borne out by the evidence seen on inspection. Most parents believe that their children are taught well and making good progress. While leaders' actions are developing some strong practice, this is not consistent, and the experience of pupils is far too variable.
- The quality and effectiveness of feedback are not consistently good enough between and within subjects. This means that too many pupils make slower progress than they should. Leaders have encouraged departments to develop their own protocols for feedback to pupils. At its best, for example in languages, this is highly effective in supporting pupils to develop their learning and improve their work.

- Leaders and teachers have ensured that homework is used effectively to support learning. Parents and pupils are aware of the school's expectations and demonstrate an appreciation and commitment to home learning. This is a strength of the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders' actions are ensuring that there are positive relationships across the school. Pupils treat each other well. They are tolerant towards each other and are welcoming and inclusive. They enjoy good relationships with staff. The atmosphere across the school is friendly, respectful and supportive.
- School leaders have successfully improved the culture of the school so that it promotes pupils' welfare well. Pupils are safe and feel safe as a result of good pastoral systems and staff who are approachable.
- Vulnerable pupils are well cared for. Leaders ensure that their needs are addressed so that they can play a full part in the life of the school. The importance of democracy and the rule of law is well promoted in the school, and pupils respond well to these messages.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare and that any incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils and their parents are confident that any concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly and appropriately.
- Pupils are proud of their school and wear their uniform with pride. A high proportion take advantage of extra-curricular activities and represent their school in sporting and other events.
- Pupils receive detailed information, advice and guidance about the work and study choices they have after their education at Farmor's School. The school ensures that pupils understand their options at age 16 and at age 18 for those who stay in the sixth form.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well when moving around the school building and inside at social times. They show courtesy, consideration and respect for one another and visitors. The atmosphere around the school is calm and orderly.
- Pupils are well behaved, and the majority are attentive in lessons. Relationships between pupils and staff and generally positive, and when provided with appropriate and challenging tasks, pupils engage effectively in their learning. Even where teaching is less effective and not good enough, pupils do not disrupt the learning of others, but they do passively disengage from their own learning.
- Pupils' attendance is above average, and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving. School leaders have taken

effective action to improve the attendance of those pupils whose attendance has previously been poor.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historically, pupils' progress, and particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and those who enter the school with low prior attainment, has been weak. The headteacher and governors have worked hard to change the culture of the school to ensure that all pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 4. In 2016 and 2017, the achievement of pupils was in line with national averages at GCSE across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. However, this progress is not consistently strong through all year groups.
- High-quality teaching and learning are not yet fully embedded across the school. Progress during Years 7 to 10 is not good enough in some core subjects due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have compensated for this by providing interventions for those falling behind in Year 11.
- Where teachers have low expectations of pupils, the standard of work and progress seen in books reflects this. This has been particularly the case for those pupils with low prior attainment on arrival in Year 7. Where training has had a positive impact, teaching and learning is stronger, for example in modern languages. Classwork and homework in pupils' books show that challenging expectations leads to pupils of all abilities rising to the challenge and making good progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making progress from their starting points that is broadly similar to that of pupils in other schools. Pupils who have an education, health and care plan are receiving effective support from leaders and teachers. This enables them to access mainstream lessons where appropriate.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally. Leaders and teachers have effectively reduced differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils benefit from effective careers advice and guidance, including in the sixth form. They are well informed about their options for GCSE, their choices once they have taken their GCSEs and their opportunities for further or higher education. As a result, they make good choices about progression routes and the overwhelming majority move on to sustained further education or training after Year 11.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is a strength of the school. Strong leadership and consistently good teaching ensure that students in the sixth form make good progress across a wide range of A level subjects. Well-focused learning activities and high expectations lead to above-average progress, attendance and retention rates on sixth-form courses.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are consistently of high quality and therefore students make good progress across a wide range of subjects. Teachers and leaders have high expectations and are committed to ensuring that students achieve and attend well. Students respond to this and therefore achieve the outcomes

they need to progress to higher education, appropriate employment or training.

- Teachers provide valuable feedback to students, in line with school policies, about their learning and progress. Students act on the advice they receive, and are clear about their targets and the steps they need to reach them. As a result, they achieve good outcomes and progress to further or higher education or employment.
- Students follow programmes that meet their needs and interests. The independent advice and guidance they receive in Year 11 ensures that they choose suitable combinations of subjects. Further advice and guidance throughout the sixth form ensures that they are well prepared for their futures. The academic courses are well supported by a range of non-qualification opportunities that broaden their interests and develop employability skills. Students benefit from opportunities to undertake relevant work experience related to their career or further education aspirations and needs.
- Work for students who are retaking English or mathematics GCSE is effectively planned to secure improvements in outcomes. These students make good progress and improve their previous grades.
- Sixth-form students speak highly of their experience in the school. They value the leadership opportunities provided and the support their teachers give them. They understand and appreciate people from different cultures.

School details

Unique reference number	137097
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10037865

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	914
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tony Joslyn
Headteacher	Matthew Evans
Telephone number	01285 712302
Website	http://www.farmors.gloucs.sch.uk/
Email address	head@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Farmor's School is an average-size secondary academy.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is below average.

- The proportion of children who are disadvantaged is well below average.
- The number of children leaving or joining the school during their secondary education is well below average.
- Attainment on entry to the school, in all year groups, is significantly above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons across a number of subjects, reviewed pupils' work and talked to pupils about their work. Samples of work across a range of subjects and year groups were analysed.
- Meetings were held with different groups of pupils to discuss their experience of the school and listen to their views.
- Pupils were observed and talked to in lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and governors, and talked to the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the development plan and pupil premium report. They looked at documents related to safeguarding, records of behaviour and attendance and information on pupils' achievement, including the school's current assessment information. Governors' minutes and records of governor training were reviewed. Documents relating to the management of teachers' performance were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the 192 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including the written comments. They also considered 292 responses to the pupil survey and 77 responses to the staff survey. In addition, inspectors reviewed the school's own surveys.

Inspection team

David New, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Terry Fish	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Maidlow	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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