

# Inspection of Fernhill School

Neville Duke Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 9BY

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Too many pupils say they do not feel safe here. Pupils told inspectors bullying is common. Homophobic bullying occurs frequently. Pupils often do not report bullying as they think it will not be addressed by staff. Parents and pupils have not had confidence in the systems and processes designed to address bullying until very recently.

Leaders have not made sustained improvements to this school over a long period of time. However, some staff have high expectations for pupils to do well in lessons. Leaders have attempted to improve attendance, but too many pupils remain persistently absent. Pupils and staff told inspectors truancy is common. Some pupils regularly miss lessons, and staff are not meticulous in completing registers. This potentially puts pupils at risk of harm, as they are unaccounted for while not at school or not in lessons.

There are some features of the school that are welcomed by pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to take part in clubs and trips. Some have already restarted since the pandemic, and these are relished by pupils. Pupils are eagerly anticipating a trip organised by the languages department.

The recently appointed headteacher has a clear plan for making rapid improvement. However, this is not yet embedded and does not yet address some areas of concern.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Very recent changes are gradually improving things. Subject leaders have planned a thorough curriculum that gives pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding to progress well. Pupils achieve well in some lessons. However, there is still inconsistency that leaders have not yet addressed. The curriculum is not yet taught well enough across all subjects. Pupils told inspectors their lessons are often disrupted by the behaviour of some pupils. Not all staff apply the schools' behaviour management system consistently well.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not achieving as well as they could. Leaders know the needs of the pupils with SEND well, but they have not yet equipped staff well enough to adapt learning to their needs.

Assessment is used effectively in some subjects, for example in modern foreign languages. Here, staff use retrieval tasks to check that key knowledge and skills are learned and understood by pupils. Staff in other subjects do not always check for understanding before they move on.

Leaders ensure that pupils who have fallen behind with their reading are identified promptly. A small number of staff are trained in delivering a reading catch-up programme. Some pupils who take part in the programme make progress and learn to read fluently. However, the programme is not yet making sufficient impact for the

majority of pupils who are behind in their reading. Many pupils still need significant support. The organisation of the programme prevents some of the pupils from catching up quickly. The learning is not always matched to the pupils' needs. For example, some pupils spend too long drawing characters from books rather than focusing on reading skills.

In some lessons, inspectors noted respectful relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils behave better in some lessons, for example in English, history and modern foreign languages, than in others. However, in some subjects, especially where non-specialist teachers deliver the curriculum, pupils are often not challenged and some quietly disengage. Not all staff consistently apply the whole-school behaviour management system. Some subjects have their own system to manage behaviour which leaders are not aware of. Some staff feel that leaders do not support them consistently with behaviour management issues.

The provision for the wider personal development of pupils is improving. Recent curriculum developments in personal, social and health education (PSHE) enable a dedicated team of staff to deliver an improved curriculum. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, different types of families and life in modern Britain. They study different faiths in religious education and learn about respect and different cultures in PSHE. The new curriculum is planned to promote character development, resilience and independence, but this is not yet embedded. Careers guidance for pupils is strong. Pupils receive support to help them plan future study and possible career options. They really value their work experience opportunities.

Leaders have had insufficient oversight of the important priorities needed to improve the school. The monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices are not embedded, so leaders are often unaware of where weaknesses are. For example, attendance procedures are not a high enough priority for leaders and staff. Governors have not consistently held leaders to account or provided enough challenge to drive improvement. The recently appointed headteacher has made significant impact in the short amount of time she has been in post. Staff feel refreshed and invigorated by the new leadership. Leaders and staff recognise that there is a lot of work to do to improve the school but are positive about the future. They feel their workload is considered when work is scheduled for them.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not possess an accurate enough understanding of how to deal with reports of concerns. They do follow their own school policy or statutory guidance in ensuring that pupils are protected from risk of harm. Record-keeping is not accurate or detailed enough. Records lack precision, omit detail about leaders' actions and are incomplete in some cases examined by inspectors. As a result, pupils could be at risk of harm.

There are opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn how to stay safe. For

example, in the PSHE curriculum, pupils learn about online safety and cyber-bullying.

Regular training by external agencies ensures staff are aware of how to identify and react to signs of abuse. Staff know whom to report their concerns to. Most staff are trained in the new online system for reporting concerns, but not all.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Too many pupils do not feel safe at school. Leaders have not done enough to tackle abusive language and homophobic bullying. Pupils lack confidence in leaders' ability to deal consistently with bullying. Furthermore, pupils often do not report bullying for fear of making it worse. Leaders must ensure that staff are equipped to deal effectively with bullying and that a consistent approach is understood by pupils.
- Leaders have not followed statutory guidance when they receive safeguarding concerns reported to them by members of staff. Record-keeping is not thorough or detailed enough to enable leaders to ensure that pupils are protected from harm. Leaders must take action to ensure that record-keeping is comprehensive and follows statutory guidance.
- Leaders do not yet have sufficiently robust systems and processes in place to manage attendance at school or combat lesson truancy. This potentially puts pupils at risk of harm. Leaders must ensure that all pupils are accounted for every lesson and every day. Leaders must ensure that staff are diligent in completing lesson registers, amending them if pupils arrive late and alerting the appropriate personnel if a pupil is missing from their lesson.
- Pupils are not yet benefiting from recent curriculum thinking and developments. In some subjects, especially where staff are non-specialists or temporary, staff are not yet sufficiently well trained to deliver challenging enough material to support and engage pupils. Leaders must ensure that all staff, including those who teach out of specialism or are covering for absent colleagues, are equipped with effective strategies to teach an engaging and stimulating curriculum.
- Leaders, including governors, have not provided rigorous or systematic oversight of systems and processes designed to improve the school. For example, some subjects do not use the whole-school behaviour management system. This results in inconsistencies of practice across subjects and undermines the whole-school systems. Leaders, including governors, must ensure a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process is embedded to support and challenge policies and practices at all levels.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted

Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116447
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227463
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	622
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Anna Dawson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Palmer
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.fernhill.hants.sch.uk">www.fernhill.hants.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- A new headteacher has recently joined the school in January 2022.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders

and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff and pupils. Inspector also spoke to parents during the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector also met with members of the local governing body.
- An inspector telephoned the alternative provision used by the school.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records. Inspectors reviewed the school's record of recruitment checks. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with staff, pupils and parents to gather their views. They considered 76 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 52 free-text comments. Inspectors also took into account 48 responses to the staff survey and 74 responses to the pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

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