

Inspection of The Ferns Primary Academy

Field Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 9FX

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to explain that 'ready, respectful and safe' are the three most important values in school. However, these values are not yet realised. Although pupils know there are adults in school they can turn to if there is a problem, some do not always feel safe due to poor behaviour around the school. Pupils experience frequent disruptions to learning, and too many do not achieve well. Pupils with complex needs do not always get the support that they need. The new leadership and staff team is working with dedication to provide an encouraging and nurturing environment for all pupils.

Inspectors saw examples of positive, trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders have placed 'building success' for pupils, both in and out of school, at the heart of decision-making. Leaders work with other agencies well to support pupils' mental health. The early years team has built effective partnerships with parents to make sure children are happy and settle into school life.

Many pupils understand the importance of accepting and celebrating difference. Bullying is rare, and dealt with quickly by leaders, but some pupils worry that anyone who is different will get bullied. Year 6 pupils are looking forward to their first residential experience, and leaders have made sure this is accessible to all.

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

The new school leadership team, trustees and governors show commitment to their vision of a school that helps pupils to learn effectively. They are ambitious for all pupils to experience success and to enjoy a rich and wide range of opportunities. Disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing changes have hampered this ambition. Sometimes, behaviour in and out of the classroom is disorderly. It stops pupils learning and makes some pupils feel unsafe. Staff are not consistent in their expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. A small but significant group of pupils are not settled. They do not have the support they need and can sometimes act dangerously. School and trust leaders are implementing a plan to strengthen the school's behaviour policy, improve staff's skills and develop a consistent approach to improve behaviour in the school.

The trust-wide approach to teaching early reading is in its infancy and not fully adopted. Some staff lack the confidence to follow the programme and to provide the expert support needed to help pupils who are struggling to catch up quickly with their reading. Pupils' reading books are not always well matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils do not get the opportunity to read often enough. This means that too many younger pupils are not yet reading fluently. Teachers are helping children to develop a love of stories and storytelling through the books they read to pupils daily.

Subject leaders are working with school and trust leaders to put in place robust curriculum plans. The mathematics curriculum is well considered and builds pupils' knowledge from year to year. In mathematics lessons, behaviour is more settled, and most pupils are learning and remembering more. Pupils' learning across the foundation subjects is inconsistent. They struggle to recall the important subject knowledge that will prepare them for the next stage of their education. Leaders are aware of this. They are helping teachers to check what pupils know before moving on to new learning. Leaders understand the need for pupils to revisit knowledge to help them remember what they have learned.

School leaders have a good understanding of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They identify barriers to learning. Leaders support staff to make appropriate adaptations to help pupils with SEND to access learning. They are recruiting more staff skilled in supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders have commissioned additional external expertise, which is helping staff to have a positive impact on the most vulnerable pupils.

In the early years, some children respond well to the rules and routines teachers are establishing. When they can, staff develop children's communication and language skills and enhance their learning in other areas. A small group of children struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Staff spend a lot of time helping these pupils to settle. The welfare of children in early years is a priority for leaders, and they act quickly to ensure the learning environment is kept safe and secure.

Leaders help staff to develop professionally, especially those at the beginning of their career. Most staff are happy to work at the school and are positive about the new leadership team. Trustees and those responsible for governance understand their roles. They recognise the need for a high level of support to maintain staff's well-being and to secure sustained school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders give safeguarding an appropriately high priority. Staff receive regular training and updates. They know what to look out for and how to respond to safeguarding concerns. Staff pass on information promptly, following the school's reporting and recording procedures. Leaders work with external agencies, drawing on further support and expertise where required. They are not afraid to escalate concerns to ensure that pupils get the help that they need. Trust leaders responded quickly to address health and safety concerns raised during the inspection. They carry out appropriate pre-employment checks to ensure only suitable adults work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils experience substantial disruption to learning because the behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of pupils are poor. Leaders should continue to implement plans to improve behaviour as quickly as possible.
- The school's chosen approach to teaching phonics is not yet fully implemented. This means that younger pupils are not learning to read quickly enough. Staff need training to become confident and expert in the delivery of the phonics programme. Pupils' reading books should match the sounds that they know. Pupils struggling to learn to read should receive additional support.
- Too many pupils leave school without the essential knowledge they need to be well prepared for secondary school. Leaders' work to construct a well-sequenced curriculum that sets out the important knowledge pupils should know needs completing. Trust and school leaders should support teachers to deliver the curriculum so that all pupils, including those with SEND, know more and remember more over time.
- Planning for pupils' personal development has not been fully implemented. Leaders know that pupils' behaviour is impacting on the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education provided. Leaders must act quickly to implement the PSHE curriculum in all classes and realise their ambition of all pupils experiencing the 'Ferns Fundamentals' of wider learning opportunities.
- Some children in the early years are not receiving the support they need to help regulate their emotions and develop as learners. Too often, the behaviour of these children impacts on the learning of others. Leaders should provide these children with the support they need. Leaders and teachers should raise their ambitions for what children in the early years will achieve by the end of their time in the foundation stage.
- The new leadership team is regularly having to respond to pupils' poor behaviour around the school. This takes leaders away from implementing the well-considered plans they have for school improvement. Trustees must continue to act to address this fundamental issue which risks undermining all aspects of leaders' work.

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.

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

Unique reference number	147128
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10249907
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Debbie Andrews
Headteacher	Amy Batalli
Website	www.ferns.kite.academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher started in September 2022.
- The majority of teaching staff started in September 2022.
- The Ferns Primary Academy converted to become an academy school and joined The Kite Academy Trust in June 2019. When its predecessor school, Fernhill Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, and representatives from the school's local governing body and the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science 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 a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written comments. An inspector also spoke to parents on the morning of the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the day, including during lesson visits and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alan Derry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deirdre Crutchley

Ofsted Inspector

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