

# Inspection of a good school: Fernhurst Junior School

Francis Avenue, Southsea, Hampshire PO4 0AG

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Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

## **Outcome**

Fernhurst Junior School continues to be a good school.

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

Pupils feel happy and safe at this nurturing and friendly school. The atmosphere is calm and purposeful and there is a well-established culture of learning. The school's motto, 'Together towards success', can be seen in many areas of school life. School councillors gather pupils' views to help improve the school community and raise money for charities. 'Play Leaders' and 'Teach Peace Mediators' help build a positive and caring culture. Pupils are immensely proud of their school and describe it as 'fun', 'caring' and 'fantastic'.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils work hard in lessons. They are polite and respectful. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and encouraging. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, pupils know they can talk to any adult and the problem will be dealt with immediately. Parents value the way that the school meets each pupil's individual needs. One parent said, 'Fernhurst is a caring, nurturing and happy school.'

There are many opportunities on offer which deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding further. Pupils enjoy swimming, residential trips and activities provided by the 'Fernhurst University'. For example, they can learn how to become architects, scientists and jewellery designers.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, they have thought carefully about the important knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. In many subjects, teachers design activities which enable pupils to apply knowledge and make connections between concepts. This helps to strengthen understanding. In these subjects, pupils remember their learning and achieve well. However, in a few subjects, the exact sequence of learning is at an earlier stage of development. This means pupils cannot always see how their learning connects and builds over time. However, leaders have a clear strategy to develop the curriculum in an organised and manageable way.

Reading is at the heart of this school. Staff and pupils share a love of reading. Leaders have chosen high-quality books that help to develop strong comprehension skills. Regular visits to the well-stocked library enable pupils to choose from a diverse range of books. Teachers love to read to their classes and select books from different cultural viewpoints. Staff are confident to teach reading due to thorough and well-structured training. Staff model, and expect pupils to use, ambitious vocabulary. Leaders have introduced a structured programme to support pupils at the early stages of learning to read. The schools' approach means that all pupils are achieving well in reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and receive effective support. Staff provide high-quality support in lessons so that all pupils can join in. Consequently, pupils with SEND learn successfully alongside their peers.

Leaders' approach to promoting pupils' wider development is a strength. Pupils learn to respect people's differences and diversity well. They know that others may have different faiths, beliefs and cultures and they understand that families are not all the same. One pupil said, 'I love being at school. We welcome all here!'

Leaders bring learning to life through visits to a range of places, such as Butser Farm and Marchants Hill. Pupils also enjoy a range of sports, including football and dodgeball. They are proud to take on positions of responsibility in the school, such as being house captains. These activities help them contribute to their school community.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They teach pupils the habits and attitudes they need to be successful learners. Leaders place a strong emphasis on character development and how pupils can be excellent role models.

Leaders, including governors, have high aspirations for all pupils. Leaders' changes across the school have had a positive impact on the quality of education. Staff are proud to work here. They feel supported, valued and highly respected by school leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about the risks pupils may face. Staff are vigilant to signs of neglect and abuse. Systems for reporting concerns are effective. Governors monitor and challenge the school's safeguarding work. Leaders complete robust checks when recruiting new staff to the school.

Pupils learn about risks and how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. Staff work with a number of external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This extra support helps pupils' well-being.

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

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

- In a very small number of foundation subjects, curriculum leaders have not identified the key content that teachers need to teach. The essential knowledge that pupils need to learn is not clear. This means that sometimes pupils do not make connections to previous learning, build knowledge systematically and remember what they have learned. Leaders need to continue to develop the curriculum so that teachers are clear on what they need to teach to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they could.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116221
<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256478
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	356
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Sally Cooke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Roberta Kirby
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.fernhurst.portsmouth.sch.uk">www.fernhurst.portsmouth.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	15 and 16 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been some changes to the governing body since the last inspection.
- The school offers an after-school provision on site managed by the governing body.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects in the curriculum.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector held a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents, pupils and staff were considered through Ofsted's online surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector looked at the school's training records, spoke with pupils and checked staff's safeguarding knowledge to ensure that pupils are safe.

### **Inspection team**

David Harris, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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