

Inspection of Fairfield Park Lower School

Dickens Boulevard, Fairfield Park, Hertfordshire SG5 4FD

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 twelve years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils embark on a rich, personal development journey in their time at this school. They access an extensive range of wider opportunities that prepare them well for the modern world. At the heart of this, pupils gain a deep understanding of culture and heritage beyond that of their own lived experiences. This celebration of diversity runs through all aspects of school life. This fosters high levels of mutual respect. The pupils have a strong sense of belonging to 'two sites but one school'.

Through careful planning, pupils take on anti-bullying roles and represent the school council. They are inspired to learn about engineering, the environment, the arts and being entrepreneurs. All pupils take part in sports competitions and benefit from sports coaching. They access many clubs such as gardening, art and drama. Pupils enjoy volunteering and fundraising in school and for the community.

Pupils are proud of their school and want to do well. They consistently follow the school's rules and routines. Behaviour is exemplary, including at play times. Pupils, including the very youngest, show self-control and are unwaveringly polite.

Pupils also enjoy their learning. They like the range of topics they study and the books that they read. The trips and visits they go on broaden their knowledge of the subjects they study.

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

The school has ensured that the curriculum is ambitious and tailored to the changing needs and interests of its pupils. Leaders have made it clear to staff what they need to teach and when. Subject leaders are knowledgeable. They provide staff with effective guidance to teach the curriculum as intended. This has been particularly successful in reading, phonics and times tables, for example. The school also check that knowledge for pupils builds logically over time, starting in Nursery.

Staff regularly provide pupils with the opportunity to revisit key knowledge. In most instances, pupils can recall their learning. However, there are a few instances where this is less secure. The school also checks on how well pupils have gained the knowledge they need. Teachers give regular feedback on learning to help pupils identify how they can improve their work. However, in some areas, the clarity of this feedback is inconsistent. This means that some pupils are not always sure about what they need to do to improve or deepen their understanding, including in writing.

Reading is a strength in the school and pupils achieve well. This is because pupils from Nursery upwards gain a strong understanding of letter sounds. By the end of Year 2, most pupils, and including many of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are reading fluently. Pupils who find reading tricky are well supported to catch up. Books are closely matched to pupils' reading ability. Older pupils talk confidently about books they have read and understood.

The school has seen a recent increase in the number of pupils with SEND. It has been quick to respond to this to accurately identify needs and seek external advice. Pupils with SEND receive the support they need to meet their specific needs. This is because staff ensure these pupils have very precise targets and well-matched interventions. Leaders continue to support teachers to develop effective ways to adapt learning for pupils with SEND within lessons.

Nursery children make a good start to school life. Staff ensure they are ready for Reception. Throughout early years, children engage in learning to develop their communication, language and mathematical skills. Leaders are enhancing their ambitious curriculum even further and are continuing to identify ways to ensure children develop a wide and rich vocabulary. Children who need additional support are identified and supported. However, on some occasions, children who could do more, would benefit from further opportunities to extend their learning. Most children at the end of Reception are ready for Year 1.

Pupils have a very positive attitude to school. Lessons are calm and orderly. The very youngest pupils sustain concentration well and take turns. Older pupils are courteous and kind to each other. Pupils do not worry about bullying. Pupils attend school regularly. The school is caring but tenacious in following up any absences.

The school places a strong emphasis on personal and character development. Opportunities to develop resilience and teamwork thread through all subjects, for example in physical education and art. Pupils cope well with setbacks and are resourceful. They learn about how to stay safe, be healthy, understand finance and respect different relationships.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They have the expertise to hold leaders to account and manage resources. Leaders have successfully steered the school through its expansion. Staff appreciate that all leaders are mindful of their well-being and workload. Parents are also very supportive of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some instances, pupils do not receive sufficient or clear feedback on how to improve or deepen their understanding, including in writing. Therefore, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. The school needs to check that this feedback happens more consistently and effectively, so pupils fully achieve the ambitious aims leaders intend.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	135021
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10323696
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	505
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Sue Howley
Headteacher	Jennifer Stone
Website	www.fairfield.beds.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has expanded and now operates over two sites. Currently it operates as a three-form entry school.
- Each site has pupils from Nursery to Year 4.
- The school currently takes pupils up to Year 4 within the current local authority three-tiered school structure.
- The school has two Nursery classes for children aged three and four.
- There is a school run before- and after-school provision.
- The school uses one alternative education provider for a bespoke remote education package.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinators, subject leaders and teaching staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, art and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of curriculum documents and pupils' work from other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, school improvement plan, governing body minutes and school improvement advisor visit notes.
- The lead inspector spoke with the school's improvement advisor from the local authority and the school's external school improvement consultant.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, which included 141 free-text comments. There were 49 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors spoke to pupils from different year groups during the inspection, along with a range of staff.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucille Pollard

Ofsted Inspector

Karen Stanton

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024