

INSPECTION REPORT

FERNHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Fernhurst, Haslemere

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 125877

Headteacher: Mrs Lynn Rackham

Reporting inspector: Mr Terry Browne
1503

Dates of inspection: 3 and 5 July 2000

Inspection number: 187578

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 10
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Haslemere Road Fernhurst Haslemere Surrey
Postcode:	GU27 3EA
Telephone number:	01428 653144
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Margaret Jenkins
Date of previous inspection:	11 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Mr Terry Browne	Registered inspector
Mrs Libby Dickson	Lay inspector
Mrs Jo Harris	Team inspector

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fernhurst Primary is smaller than other schools with 110 pupils aged 4 to 10 on roll. There are slightly more girls than boys overall. The school serves the village of Fernhurst, with a small proportion of children coming from the surrounding area. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds or have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is above the national average, and two pupils have statements of special educational need. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry fluctuates considerably from year to year, and it was above average for pupils currently in Year 2.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Pupils achieve standards that are well above average at the age of seven, and they make good progress up to the age of ten in their last year in the school. The overall quality of teaching is good, with particular strengths in the teaching of the juniors. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by the very committed staff and governors. The school spends an above-average amount per pupil, but provides good value for money in terms of the standards achieved and quality of education.

What the school does well

- Children achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science, and in other work such as art and design technology.
- Older children behave very well and have positive attitudes to learning, as a result of the very good teaching and the effective provision for their personal development.
- The school works very well in partnership with parents and the local community, and this enhances pupils' learning.
- The school continues to improve because of the strong leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of governors and of staff, both teaching and non-teaching.

What could be improved

- Information technology standards are not yet high enough, although improvements have been made since the last inspection.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching need to be more rigorous to make teaching and learning even better.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in March 1996, the results achieved by 7-year-olds in the national tests have risen. Standards and teaching in Key Stage 2 have significantly improved in relation to the judgements reported at the time of the last inspection. Standards have improved across all years and this has been supported by the school's developments in literacy and numeracy. The school tackled all the action points from the last inspection very well. These included the need to improve information technology, although this remains an area for further improvement, as recognised by the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows standards achieved by seven year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Reading	A	B	A*	A
Writing	A	A	A*	A
Mathematics	A	B	A*	A*

Key

in highest 5% A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The school's 1999 national test results for seven year-olds were very high compared with the national averages, having improved over the previous four years at a rate above that seen nationally. Compared with similar schools, the 1999 results were very good. Although there are no national tests for Year 5 pupils for comparison, inspectors judged the standards being achieved by the oldest pupils also to be very good. These pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy were well above those expected for their ages, and pupils' investigative skills in mathematics and science were good, having been weak at the time of last inspection. Throughout the school, pupils' creative work, especially art and design technology, is of good quality. Most pupils have sound skills for basic computer work and older pupils have a wide range of experiences, but standards in information technology are not yet high enough, and the school has this as a priority for improvement. Overall, pupils make good progress through the school and achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn. The older pupils concentrate and persevere very well in lessons
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are polite to adults and to each other. Almost all behave well in lessons and around the school. The school has permanently excluded one pupil recently. Older pupils display excellent behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils learn to work together co-operatively and take on responsibilities in class and around the school. Relationships between all those in the school community are very good.
Attendance	Broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 7 years	aged 7-10 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The overall quality of teaching was good, with particular strengths in the junior classes. In the twenty lessons seen, 95 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better and 25 per cent was very good or better; just 5 per cent was less than satisfactory. The teaching of English and mathematics is good overall, although lessons seen varied in quality, mostly between satisfactory and very good. Teachers' planning is generally good and includes detailed preparation for teaching literacy and numeracy skills, which are taught well. Most teaching effectively meets the needs of all pupils through well-chosen tasks and the help given by teaching assistants. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and their progress is monitored effectively. Most teaching includes the sharing of each lesson's learning objectives with pupils and focusing on key words that are incorporated in stimulating classroom displays. The best lessons involve a variety of well-paced activities and good use of humour and enjoyment in learning, with skilful questioning to help pupils improve their understanding. In some lessons that were generally satisfactory but not as strong as the best, pupils made insufficient progress because of weaknesses in the use of time and the choice of tasks. The good features to pupils' learning included their concentration and independent work, and their productive collaboration in group activities. Older children especially are encouraged to evaluate their own work and identify how they can improve, thus contributing to their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Broad, balanced and interesting, with suitable attention to literacy and numeracy. Good provision for personal, social and health education. Curricular planning is strong. The curriculum is much enhanced by visits and visitors, and by the sound range of extra-curricular activity. Homework is well-planned to support pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Procedures for identification, support and monitoring of these pupils are thorough. Teaching assistants provide high quality support to groups of pupils in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Social and moral development are particularly strong with staff as good role models. Spiritual development is very good, and this is reflected in the topic work on the Creation and JC 2000. Provision for cultural development is good across the curriculum, for example in the exploration of books from other cultures during a literacy week.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good welfare arrangements. The school has appropriate policies and procedures, such as health and safety.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership, with a clear vision for further school improvement. The strong teamwork involves all staff and governors. Subject co-ordination has very good features, such as preparing an annual review and action plan.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Strong support. Governors are well informed about the school through visits and meetings. They are enthusiastic in supporting school development and they fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. This is a developing area with procedures in place. There is a need for greater rigour in this process to further improve teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are used effectively, and have been developed through sound strategic planning. There is good development of the school grounds, which also enhances pupils' learning. The recent difficult decisions about whether to have four or five classes have been made with care to provide the best opportunities for pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and make good progress;• Behaviour in the school is good;• The teaching is good;• The children are expected to work hard and achieve their best;• The staff are approachable;• Their children are helped to become mature and responsible;• The school is well led and managed.	<p>A small number of parents felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home;• They are not well enough informed about their children's progress;• There is not an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

The inspectors agree with the parents positive views about the school. The inspectors found little evidence to support the concerns of the small number of parents. Homework is generally well-planned and supports pupils' learning, although there are some communication difficulties of which the school is aware. Parents have opportunities to be well informed of their children's progress through access to teachers, and the meetings and reports. The range of activities outside lessons is satisfactory, given the nature of a small school, and moreover the school says it asks the children what they would like in attempting to provide for their interests.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The children achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science, and in other work such as art and design technology

1. The school's 1999 national test results in English and mathematics for seven year-olds were very high compared with the national averages. The standards being achieved by the oldest Year 5 pupils in the school were judged during the inspection also to be very good.
2. Pupils' skills in literacy develop well with its good use across the curriculum, a strong focus on technical vocabulary and effective subject co-ordination. Higher-attaining Year 2 pupils engage in a wide range of writing and present their work well. The reading standards of seven-year-olds are above average, and pupils benefit from support both at home and at school. These good standards are maintained to the end of Year 5 where the higher-attaining pupils enjoy reading and are expressive and fluent. The older pupils' presentation of work is very good and includes factual and diary writing, poetry and empathetic writing, as well as practice of grammar and comprehension skills. The focus on literacy in the school has contributed to the good standards, for example through the involvement of parents and the attention to literacy skills in other topics.
3. Standards in mathematics are good throughout the school, with improvements since the last inspection as a result of introducing the National Numeracy Strategy. Regular oral and mental practice is giving pupils confidence in using a range of calculation methods, although recorded work reveals a tendency for too much repetitive practice of standard written methods. The breadth of mathematics is good. For example the older pupils explored the geometry of regular polygons, and learnt how to calculate the mean and mode. Substantial improvement has been made in experimental science since the last inspection. Older pupils are now familiar with fair tests and designing experiments. They are keen to explore scientific ideas, for example in experiments to help understand solids, liquids and gases. However, rigorous monitoring of both mathematics and science teaching throughout the school is needed to improve teaching further. For example, in one science lesson, younger pupils did not understand sufficiently the properties they were exploring; in another mathematics lesson older pupils learnt statistical calculation methods but were less clear about their uses, which had not been taught.
4. Throughout the school, pupils' creative work, especially in art and design technology, is of good quality. For example, teachers and expert visitors teach the skills of drawing and painting. Water-colour pictures are of high quality and based on observation of local buildings and landscapes. Design technology projects are carefully planned and taught. Older pupils designed and produced original pop-up books on their ideas about the Creation. These incorporated a variety of clever mechanisms for products based on a valuable theme. A class assembly, well attended by parents, provided an overview of the good range of pupils' learning. For example, groups played music that they had composed, individuals explained what they had learned about maps of the local area and the whole class entertained everyone with lively country dancing.

Older children behave very well and have positive attitudes to learning, as a result of the very good teaching and the effective provision for their personal development.

5. In all of the junior lessons seen, the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils were very good. In a literacy lesson for example, pupils listened attentively and offered ideas sensibly to group and class discussion about different points of view. These pupils enjoy discussing issues and are very mature in settling quickly to group work or independent tasks. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were highly motivated and concentrated very well, helping each other sensibly when it was appropriate. These features result from the enthusiasm of the teachers and their excellent relations with the pupils. Good

humour and enjoyment in learning are central to junior lessons. The positive response of these pupils is impressive and contributes to the quality of their learning. The youngest pupils were sometimes noisy and bubbly, and a few younger pupils had difficulty behaving as well as others. Overall though, the behaviour and attitudes of the younger pupils were satisfactory.

6. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute significantly to the calm and pleasant atmosphere that characterises the school. Pupils learn to work together co-operatively and take on responsibilities in class and around the school. They gain confidence as they progress through the school so that they are able to discuss and evaluate their work constructively. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully provided older pupils with more opportunities to take responsibility. Also the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now very good. The close links with the church, the good role models provided by adults and the opportunities to explore and appreciate other cultures are some of the contributory factors. The specific planning for personal, social and health education lessons and the skilful use of "circle time" are particular strengths.

The school works very well in partnership with parents and the local community, and this enhances pupils' learning.

7. The school places great importance on its links with parents, and continues to develop these successfully to support the raising of standards. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire and comments at the parents' meeting reflect their positive views about the school. Parents feel strongly that their children are happy and make good progress, and they feel very comfortable in approaching the school with questions or concerns. Workshops for parents on literacy and numeracy were well attended and contributed to pupils' learning in these areas. Other examples have been the collaborative development of the home-school reading record and the introduction of the homework policy. The school used a questionnaire to help identify areas of concern, and continues to be aware of aspects for further improvement. The school feels that the support of parents has contributed to the measurable improvements in reading. Also, for example, the school is about to modify the junior homework record sheets that parents find are difficult to use. During the inspection, the partnership between each class teacher and parents was evident in the open and constructive interactions at the start and end of each day. Overall communication and consultation with parents are very good.

8. Evidence around the school shows how much the links with the local community contribute to the quality of education. The close links with the church are valued and valuable, and enhance the spiritual and moral development of the children. The village and surrounding area provide a valuable resource for geographical and historical enquiry work, through which pupils also extend their artistic skills in careful sketches and paintings of local buildings and scenes. In addition to governors visiting classes to inform themselves about the quality of education, other volunteers such as parents and friends regularly contribute for example through listening to children read or teaching painting. The school curriculum is enriched through activities such as a drama workshop, the choir visit to a luncheon club, a talk on Hinduism, a sculptor in residence, a visit from a string ensemble and from the police liaison officer, and holding the harvest festival in the church. The Friends Association plays a significant role in fund-raising, with events and practical help contributing, for example, to the major outdoor classroom development in the school grounds. Cuttings from local newspapers show how very much the school is part of the village life, and this contributes to pupils' self-esteem and to their personal development.

The school continues to improve because of the strong leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of governors and of staff, both teaching and non-teaching.

9. There has been good improvement since last inspection, both in terms of results and in response to the key issues that were identified. School improvement has been taken very seriously. Whilst there have been changes in teaching staff, effective developments included the introduction of the literacy hour, the school's participation in a local numeracy pilot and continual improvements to teachers' planning. The

school has increased the amount of investigational work in mathematics and science, but intends that this continues to be a focus for next year. Similarly by grouping the school's computers in one area and beginning to teach pupils the necessary skills, standards in information technology have improved, but the school recognises this needs to continue with information technology as a key priority next year.

10. The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear educational direction for the school. Her vision for the school is appropriately focused on children achieving the highest possible standards, both academically and personally. The staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are a hard-working team with a shared commitment to continue to improve. Governors support the school very well, they are increasingly involved and take their role seriously. For example, governors and staff worked together on a development-planning day and identified priorities for improvement. The school development plan is a full, informative document, with appropriate key targets, each of which is usefully linked to a named governors. Reference in documentation to strategies for monitoring and evaluation might be enhanced.

11. The involvement of senior staff in a course on school self-evaluation, the careful analysis of test performance data and the collaboration of staff and governors on school development are some of the indicators that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Information technology standards are not yet high enough, although improvements have been made since the last inspection

12. Since the last inspection, the school has upgraded some computers and grouped the computers together in an area next to the library. A national scheme of work has been adopted and staff confidence and expertise have improved. There will be further developments when more funding and training become available in the next school year. The standards of pupils' work, especially in the juniors, have improved since the last inspection, partly as a result of the recent regular timetabling of classes to the computer area.

13. In the lessons seen, junior pupils showed confidence in using the mouse and keyboard to load and run programs. Younger pupils were similarly adept with word processing and in printing out their work. Some pupils have confidence from using their computers at home, while others without such an opportunity have reasonable basic computer skills. A portfolio illustrates pupils' work in information technology and suggests that there is sound development of computer experiences through the school. The younger pupils learn to word process and combine text with graphics, they provide instructions to a programmable device, explore the use of a digital camera and scanner, and make use of the internet. junior pupils extend their word-processing skills and are introduced to databases and how to interrogate them. Some were excited by e-mailing messages to their teacher and older pupils have a good opportunity on the trip to the Isle of Wight to extend their skills in a study centre there.

14. Recorded work around the school suggests the computers are currently underused for work in other subjects, for example in the amount of word-processed writing or the use of computers in mathematics. The use of the internet and control work, for example to program a set of traffic lights, are currently under-developed aspects of the subject. In two lessons seen there were difficulties with computers and this hindered the pupils' learning, although the pupils themselves were very sensible and co-operative. Standards being achieved by older pupils are not yet as high as expected for their ages, and staff are aware of this. Further improvements in information technology are planned by the school as a key priority for next year, and this is appropriate.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching need to be more rigorous to make teaching and learning even better.

15. Test results and inspection evidence suggest that pupils make good progress through the school. This matches the overall good quality of the teaching seen. However, the quality of the teaching varied, with very good teaching of the older pupils and satisfactory teaching of the younger pupils.

16. Teachers' planning is generally good. The teaching meets the needs of different pupils, especially those with special educational needs, through the help given by teaching assistants. The sharing of learning objectives with pupils, skilful questioning and focusing on key words were good features of most lessons, while the best lessons involved a variety of well-paced activities and good use of humour and enjoyment in learning. For example, to help older pupils understand the differences between solids, liquids and gases, the teacher got a group either to stand huddled together, to hold hands or walk about freely, thus bringing these ideas to life. In a very good circle-time lesson, which very effectively promoted moral and social development, pupils engaged in various group games to develop their listening skills and their confidence in expressing themselves. Pupils' self-evaluation was a further strength in the best teaching, with good use of plenary sessions at the ends of lessons to help pupils check what they had learnt.

17. In some lessons seen, pupils did not make as much progress as possible because of weaknesses in the use of time and the choice of tasks. For example, in a literacy lesson, a chosen text was too difficult for pupils to understand and group activities were insufficiently matched to pupils' abilities. In a science lesson pupils were seated on the carpet for 35 minutes as individuals talked about properties of objects, inevitably leading to some restlessness. In a lesson in the computer area, pupils' learning of information technology skills was hindered by difficulties with the computers, tasks that focused on pupils' language skills and the distraction caused by some misbehaviour. In some oral number work, most of the young pupils could chant even numbers beyond those to ten that were recorded on the board, and the teaching did not use resources well to support the learning of pupils who were less secure.

18. The process of monitoring and evaluation that incorporates classroom observation is becoming an accepted routine in the school. A very helpful teaching and learning policy is in the form of a structured checklist that could support evaluation. However, the school does not yet have a monitoring and evaluation policy. This needs to be agreed, together with a published schedule through which rigorous monitoring and evaluation could be carried out. The approach should set high expectations for teachers' subject expertise, use of time, choice of tasks and teaching methods. The headteacher firmly intends to develop procedures for monitoring and evaluation that are more rigorous, to raise standards further.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

As already planned, the school should continue to:

Raise standards in information technology through:

- further improvements to the computer equipment, providing upgraded machines in a suitably-developed computer area, and appropriate access to computers for work in class;
- staff development for teaching information technology skills, building on their current enthusiasm;
- plans and assessments to support the learning of skills and use of computers across subjects.

Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation to make teaching and learning even better through:

- a thorough policy and schedule for monitoring and evaluation;
- high expectations about teachers' subject expertise and confidence;
- effective pace and variety in lessons that incorporate good use of time and appropriate tasks.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	25	30	40	5	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Year R to Year 5
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	110
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	6
Special educational needs	
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	31
English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	7	12	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	6	6
	Girls	12	11	12
	Total	18	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95	89	95
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100	100	100
	National	82	86	87

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	90
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Year R - Year 5

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9
Average class size	22

Education support staff: Year R - Year 5

Total number of education support staff	6
Total number of hours	67

Financial information

Financial year 1999 - 2000

	£
Total income	282,879
Total expenditure	285,257
Expenditure per pupil	2,503
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,601
Balance carried forward to next year	4,223

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

110

Number of questionnaires returned

39

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
64	28	8	0	0
64	28	8	0	0
56	41	3	0	0
18	66	16	0	0
59	36	3	0	3
26	55	11	5	3
74	23	3	0	0
59	38	0	0	3
26	64	10	0	0
41	59	0	0	0
49	51	0	0	0
37	37	14	3	9