



Farnham Common Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110265
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278396
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006
Reporting inspector Charalambos Loizou AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior	School address	Sherbourne Walk
School category	Community		Farnham Common
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Slough SL2 3TZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01753 642923
Number on roll	234	Fax number	01753 646419
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr Brian Letchford
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr Malcolm Paice

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size junior school situated in a generally advantaged area. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and other pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds. At present there is only one pupil who is in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average, although an average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school runs an extensive range of lunchtime and after school clubs.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve very well at this outstanding school. The school provides very good value for money. Pupils attain high standards and many said, 'We like the way we are taught'. They mature into confident, polite and very well behaved young people and show caring attitudes to each other. Pupils make excellent progress because of high quality care and teaching. They receive very good guidance about how to achieve their best. There is an excellent range of activities, including sport, music and the performing arts, so pupils enjoy learning and school life and this is reflected in good attendance rates. High standards have been maintained in English, mathematics, science and music since the last inspection. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly. The school has maintained above average standards in other subjects but recognises that further refinements to assessment are needed to maintain high standards in all subjects.

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school has an accurate understanding of its own strengths and what needs to be improved further. Its capacity to keep on improving is very good. Governors are highly effective and a real asset to the school. Although the school evaluated its effectiveness as good, this was a modest judgement based on its high expectations and the belief that there is still more to be done. Inspectors agree that some aspects of assessment need refining but there are enough very positive features in this school that account for the inspectors' judgement that it is indeed an outstanding school. The school works in excellent partnership with parents who think very highly of the school. Many have commented, 'We are extremely fortunate to have brought our children to this school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen and fine-tune assessment in all subjects to raise standards further to the same high levels seen in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The pupils achieve very well throughout the school. They start in Year 3 with above average standards. By the end of Year 6, standards are high in English, mathematics and science. The results from national tests in 2005 showed that an above average proportion of pupils achieved the higher levels and that all pupils did very well, including those with learning difficulties. The school rightly identified areas for further improvement, for example, in writing and science, and the measures adopted, together with consistently effective teaching, have improved standards markedly in both these areas. This year's targets and evaluations of standards show that the school is using successful strategies to accelerate the progress of pupils of average ability towards higher levels. The school monitors a broad range of test results in English, mathematics and science from optional and statutory tests. From these assessments challenging targets are set. There has been marked improvement to standards in information and

communication technology (ICT) since the school's last inspection and like other subjects, standards are above those expected. Music standards are well above those expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is a harmonious, friendly and hard working community where the pupils feel happy and safe. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils develop very good cultural awareness when studying customs, religions and festivals from around the world. High quality relationships and high standards of behaviour promote the pupils' positive participation in lessons. Their attitudes to learning are very good and they enjoy school. Attendance rates are above the national level and the take-up for extra-curricular activities is very high. Pupils show a very good understanding of the importance of learning basic skills and good work habits to help them in the future. They are rightly proud of their school and are clear that teasing, bullying or racism are very rare and are well dealt with. One pupil remarked, 'There's no downside to the school!' Older pupils talk thoughtfully about how fellow pupils are encouraged to make healthier eating choices and the school council takes its responsibilities conscientiously. Pupils feel that the role of the council in improving the school is important and valued and that their views and ideas are taken seriously.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding and never less than good across the school. The teaching motivates and enthuses pupils, one said, 'I think the teachers give us interesting work and if we are stuck they always help you'. The good teaching seen at the time of the last inspection has been strengthened further, enabling pupils to achieve high academic standards and improve their personal development. Lessons are fast paced, stimulating and enjoyable for the pupils. Year 4 pupils enjoyed investigating poems to identify patterns and rhythms and Year 5 grappled with a series of challenging puzzles by applying their ICT and mathematics skills. In very effective mathematics lessons, challenging problem solving enabled the pupils to rapidly improve their knowledge of multiples, data handling and graphs. Teachers plan work that meets the pupils' individual needs. They set realistic yet challenging targets which are clear to the pupils. Teaching assistants provide very effective support, especially for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Very effective assessments are made to track pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. Assessment is being refined in other subjects to enable pupils to work towards higher standards. These assessments are in different stages of development for each subject and the school recognises that more improvements are needed to make them as sharp as those in English, mathematics and science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum is outstanding. Work is very well planned especially in developing basic literacy, numeracy, science and ICT skills to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. There has been a very good improvement in the provision for ICT and consequent rise in standards across the school. Recently the school identified ways to improve the way science is planned and subsequently incorporated better opportunities for pupils to carry out experiments independently. These changes have led to standards rising and have been appreciated by pupils, as one remarked, 'It's really good investigating and fun as well'.

An excellent range of visits, visitors and out-of-lesson activities enhance and enrich the curriculum. There is a high take-up of these and pupils appreciate that teachers and other adults give generously of their time to provide them. Amongst these numerous activities sporting, performance arts and mini-enterprise opportunities help the pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle and an involvement in the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for all pupils have many outstanding features. The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure a harmonious community is sustained where all are fully included and valued and in which learners are secure and cared for. A parent commented, 'I feel very fortunate that both my children have been offered such a great start in life whilst at the school. In particular I would like to comment on the pastoral care which is second to none'. Health and safety procedures are regularly reviewed and firm arrangements for child protection and risk assessments are in place. Pupils are taught how to take care of themselves and to make healthy and safe choices. They clearly have confidence in the adults in school and greatly enjoy all aspects of school life. The school makes highly effective use of data from tests to provide challenging targets especially in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have a clear knowledge and understanding of what they need to do next to improve. In some other areas, for example, in history and geography, the tracking of pupils is not so refined and although most pupils are reaching standards above those expected for their age some could reach higher levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher and management team provide purposeful leadership that focuses strongly on raising standards and nurturing the pupils' personal development. The staff make very good use of information about teachers' and pupils' performance to guide the school towards continuing improvement and development.

There is an excellent staff team and they are deployed very effectively. There is a clear sense of shared responsibility to ensure that all pupils do well. The school has made very good use of its strong links with teacher training institutions to continually develop the teaching since the school's last inspection. There are good opportunities for training, closely linked to staff responsibilities and the school's priorities. Resources for ICT have improved very well and training has been very effective in helping the school to improve the effectiveness of its ICT curriculum and teaching.

The governing body is highly effective in both supporting and challenging the school. Governors are a real asset to the school and exercise their statutory responsibilities fully. Together with the staff and leadership team, governors monitor the effectiveness of the school very well. Consequently, the accuracy of the school's evaluations of its performance and track record of raising standards demonstrate that it has very good capacity to sustain high standards in all aspects of the school's work. The school regularly surveys parents' and pupils' views and these are incorporated into the school's very effective self-evaluation. Relationships between staff, parents and governors are excellent and the vast majority of parents hold the school in high regard.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

I was pleased to visit your school together with another inspector. I write to thank you for your help. You made us feel really welcome and a special thank you to pupils in the school council who spoke to us. We believe that yours is an outstanding school.

We think these are the best things about your school: * it helps you to grow up into courteous and considerate young people, keen to work and learn * you do very well and reach high standards, especially in English, mathematics and science * it provides you with an excellent range of interesting activities in lessons and also in the many clubs, trips and visits * teaching is very good and your teachers and other helpers take extremely good care of you so that you make very good progress and stay safe * the way that the school is led is outstanding with staff and governors always exploring new ways of making the school even better.

We have asked your teachers to do the following to improve your school even further: * your teachers are finding new ways to check how well you are doing. We would like them to carry on doing this so the checking systems in all subjects are as good as they are for English, mathematics and science. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector