



Fairfields Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117334
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280046
Inspection dates 22 June 2006 to 23 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Sandra Tweddell AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rosedale Way
School category	Community		EN7 6JG
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01992 633195
Number on roll	469	Fax number	01992 643701
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Jim Richings
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Martin Tuck

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Fairfields is larger than most primary schools. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and fewer are entitled to free school meals than in most schools. The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage with a small number from other backgrounds, some at early stages of learning English. There are fewer pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than in most schools. Attainment on entry to the school is average. The intake of the school is changing. This year, 22 pupils were admitted during the year, half of whom have learning difficulties and disabilities. Almost a quarter of the teachers were newly appointed in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents and pupils rightly believe this to be an outstanding school that gives excellent value for money. The main reason is the excellent leadership of the headteacher who is not complacent about the school's success and who has fostered a strong team approach to leadership and management. The excellent leadership team puts high standards at the heart of all its work. Self-evaluation is accurate, although unduly modest about the school's overall effectiveness. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils make very good progress from an average starting point so when they leave standards are well above average. All groups of pupils achieve equally well. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent and standards are above average. Teaching is outstanding which, given the large number of newly appointed teachers, is a tribute, in part, to the leadership. Pupils' personal development is excellent. Academic guidance is good. A new system of setting targets for pupils is being piloted ready to be used in September and this needs to be implemented. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and make good use of the many opportunities to monitor the quality of work in their subjects. Governance is good; governors are supportive and pro-active although they tend to rely unduly on the leadership team. The challenge for the school will be to maintain its high standards and given the very strong team work, the enthusiasm of all the staff and the excellent leadership, the school is extremely well placed to make yet further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Inspectors agree with the school that the main priority is to review the system of setting learning objectives for each pupil.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils enter school with average attainment and make very good progress in all areas of learning at the Foundation Stage so they leave with standards that are above average. They continue to make very good progress so by the end of Year 6, standards are well above average. In 2003 and 2004, pupils' performance in English and mathematics was in the top five per cent of schools in England. In 2005 standards dipped somewhat due to higher numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in the year group. However, progress was good overall for the year group concerned and very good for a significant number of pupils. Currently standards have risen to those of 2003 and 2004 and the school is likely to meet its challenging targets. Leaders have identified that more able pupils could do better in mental mathematics and writing and staff have successfully adapted their teaching to reflect this. All groups of pupils achieve very well and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Standards in many subjects other than English, mathematics and science are equally as high.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils behave very well in lessons, where any who are known to have problems receive excellent support. They take a pride in the school and play harmoniously together, with older pupils taking responsibility for younger ones through a well-developed 'buddy' system. The student council gives pupils a voice in the running of the school and has been effective in bringing about improvements, for instance in playground equipment. Attendance at school is satisfactory and the school is taking positive steps to improve this. Pupils greatly enjoy lessons and the wide range of other activities they can take part in; they speak with much enthusiasm about their residential trips. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils' contributions in lessons are valued highly, and they appreciate well the wide range of cultures in the society in which they live. They work exceptionally well together, and they say one of the things they like most about the school is the kindness of others. They make a good contribution to the community around them by raising money for local and international causes. They are prepared very well for future life by the development of their basic skills, and they have a good understanding of the requirements of a healthy and safe lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent. Lessons start briskly and purposefully and no time is wasted as the lesson develops. Pupils are told straight away the purpose of each lesson and regular reminders help maintain focus. Questioning is used very skilfully to encourage pupils to think more, to check their understanding, and to involve them in organising their own learning. Pupils respond confidently because they know what they say is valued. Pair and group work are used very effectively to develop skills and actively involve pupils. Resources are chosen carefully to meet the purpose of the lesson. Information and communication technology is integral to lessons and used very effectively by staff and pupils to enhance learning. Pupils are given a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and, particularly during the lesson summing up, are involved in making their own judgements of how they are doing. Support staff make a significant contribution. A clear homework policy emphasises key skills initially and builds through the school so that the eldest pupils have formal diaries and are prepared well for the next stage of their learning. Assessment is used well to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and enable tasks to be closely matched to the needs of each pupil.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. Beginning in the Foundation Stage, the school provides a wide range of highly relevant and very exciting learning opportunities for all pupils that stimulate their interest and imagination. The curriculum is modified effectively to take account of the differing needs of year groups and individuals. Tasks encourage healthy lifestyles and parent surveys show how much pupils enjoy the many opportunities they are given. Themed weeks, such as for design and technology, further stimulate interest and enthusiasm. Provision for personal, social and health education has a significant impact on pupils' personal development. The accommodation is very well cared for as are the spacious grounds and the high quality display of pupils' work greatly enhances the school. Interesting outdoor areas are very popular with pupils and enhance both learning and enjoyment. A very wide range of extremely popular clubs enrich learning. Visits and visitors extend and enliven the curriculum. Three year groups benefit from residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares very well for its pupils. It carries out very thorough checks on adults who work with them, and procedures for child protection are all up-to-date. Risk assessments are in place for all activities. Pupils who are vulnerable receive excellent support. Pupils feel safe in school and also know that there is someone they can talk to if they are in difficulty. The school is effectively tracking the progress of individual pupils to enable teachers to match work more closely to their needs. They are piloting a system by which targets for aspects of mathematics and English are set for the different groups within a class. This is an area for further development. Marking of pupils' work is supportive. Pupils feel that they are given good help when they join the school and that they are prepared well for their next school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The leadership team is highly experienced and very effective and has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school. The self-evaluation is perceptive and accurate, although modest in judging the school's overall effectiveness. The views of parents are sought regularly and taken account of in evaluating the school's performance and planning for the future. The headteacher is a perceptive and thoughtful leader who values all staff and trusts their expertise so they have confidence to be creative in their roles. One example is the successful bid for funding from the lottery for sports equipment. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and lead effectively. They are enabled to monitor the quality of provision in their subjects through regular meetings where they are expected to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved, look at pupils' work and then present a report to all staff. They use this opportunity well. Governance is

good. Governors are pro-active in supporting the school and are aware that they need to do more to challenge the leadership team. The issues from the last inspection have been dealt with most successfully. The school is very well placed to maintain its high standards because of the enthusiasm of the staff, support of the governors and above all, the lack of any sense of complacency.

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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	1	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	3	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?	2	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	2	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

You will probably remember that we inspected your school just over two weeks ago. I am writing to let you know the outcome of the inspection. Thank you for all the help you gave to us, especially the Student Council for giving up your lunchtime to tell us about your school. You go to an outstanding school. Mr Tuck and the senior leaders lead excellently and all your teachers and other adults are skilled in helping you to do the best you possibly can. Teaching is also excellent so you make very good progress and standards of your work in all subjects are high. You told us that you enjoy school and this was evident to us when we watched you at work and at play. Most of your parents are pleased with the school and told us that you are cared for very well. You also feel that your care is very good and we agree with you. Mr Tuck and the staff are already planning ways to improve your school further. We thought that the main one is to review the way you are set targets for your work. Your job will be to use the goals to improve your work still further. Thank you once again for making us so welcome and good wishes for the future.