

Farnham Common Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110344
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	288640
Inspection date	11 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs R Slais
Headteacher	Mrs J R Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Beaconsfield Road Farnham Common Slough SL2 3HS
Telephone number	01753 645899
Fax number	01753 642153

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Introduction

An Additional Inspector carried out the inspection. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage. He also focused on how well pupils make progress, with a particular emphasis on writing, and checked on the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The inspector gathered evidence from an analysis of information and data about pupils' achievements provided by the school, observations of parts of lessons, and analysed parents' questionnaires. He held discussions with the headteacher, the Foundation Stage coordinator, subject coordinators for the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), the chair and vice-chair of governors, and pupils. The inspector did not investigate other aspects of the school's work in detail, but found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These judgements have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Farnham Common Infant School is smaller than the average size for a primary school. It has six classes, two for each year group from Reception to Year 2, plus a Nursery, which takes children for the morning session each day. Most pupils are of White British heritage, and are generally from advantaged home circumstances. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is below average. Many of these pupils require specific help with one or more facets of their learning, such as being able to pay greater attention, and need extra help to prevent them from falling behind. A few have more severe difficulties, but there are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Farnham Common is a good school with some outstanding features. 'There is a lovely environment and the teachers provide a safe and comfortable place for the children to learn,' typifies the overwhelmingly positive comments received from parents. They are right. Securely underpinning all of the school's work is the high quality care, guidance and support for pupils and a strong commitment to the development of the 'whole child'.

It is a good school because it is effective in ensuring that pupils achieve well. It moves children from above average starting points when they join the Nursery to attain standards that are, overall, significantly above the national average by the end of Year 2. Standards in reading are very high. Pupils' excellent reading skills help them to do well in a range of other subjects. In mathematics, for example, the school focuses strongly on developing pupils' skills in solving problems and, through their confident, competent reading, they quickly work out what is required of them. Standards in mathematics are, consequently, well above the national average. Standards in writing are not as high, but are above average. The school is working hard to improve matters and has put in place a wide range of strategies designed to develop pupils' writing skills. These include clear individual targets for pupils to achieve, which are designed to address identified weaknesses and move pupils to the next level of attainment. This excellent academic guidance gives the pupils a clear understanding of what they have to do to write better, such as correctly using question and exclamation marks. However, one pupil summed up the feelings of her friends when saying, 'I like writing, but don't always enjoy what the teachers want us to write about. I wish I had more chances to write my own stories'.

Pupils' eagerness to learn and their love of being at school are key factors in the good progress they make in all subjects. They enjoy challenge, and the good teaching that they receive generally ensures that they are not disappointed. As one pupil put it, 'I like my work, it's hard and I like hard things!' However, when teachers focus more on the activities provided than on the intended learning, pupils make less progress. For example, the use of a series of photocopied worksheets provides good opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, but does not always challenge the more able enough. Skilled teaching assistants provide good quality help for the pupils in need of an extra boost or support in helping them understand or concentrate, and this enables them to keep up with their classmates. The generally good levels of challenge provided for pupils are not confined to the core subjects and are evident, for example, in the high standards of artwork displayed around the school.

Pupils benefit from many interesting and exciting activities, enriched through a wide range of visits to places of interest. The school also makes good use of the expertise of visitors to support regular themed weeks. Music Week, for example, always includes a live performance for the pupils to enjoy. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping safe and living healthy lives. During the inspection, the theme of 'healthy living' permeated the curriculum, and pupils benefited from specialist tuition in physical education. The interactive whiteboards in all classes provide many opportunities for teachers and pupils to use ICT as a tool for learning. However, the ratio of computers to pupils falls well short of the national norm. This limits the frequency with which pupils can practise the skills learned, and is one of the reasons why the curriculum is good rather than outstanding.

An excellent feature of the school, and one that contributes strongly to the outstanding climate for learning evident in all classes, is the high quality of pupils' personal development. One of its many outstanding facets is the pupils' contribution to the school community. They are happy to help others, for example, when acting as playground leaders. Pupils also show a keen awareness of the wider community. This is promoted effectively in a variety of ways, including regular fundraising for charities. The empathy shown by pupils for those less fortunate than themselves contributes strongly to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is also excellent. The pupils acknowledge that there are sometimes occasions when a few pupils misbehave, but they are mature enough to appreciate that this is part of learning to get on with others. In lessons, and when moving around the school, pupils behave impeccably, even when not closely supervised.

The driving force in ensuring that pupils reach their potential is the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher. She knows her pupils' learning needs well because the systems for checking on their progress are thorough. She enjoys the enthusiastic support of the good staff team. Governors provide strong support and challenge through their interest and involvement. At all levels, there is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and robust systems to help ensure that this happens. The school is, therefore, well placed to make further progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Effective leadership, together with the good teamwork between adults, helps ensure that the children make a good start to their education. Teaching reflects a secure understanding of how very young children learn. Teachers plan the activities well, and children have many opportunities to make choices and develop their social skills and confidence. The highly practical approach to learning effectively promotes all aspects of children's development. However, the children are unable to make a seamless transition between indoor and outdoor activities in the Reception classes because the outdoor area is still being developed. Planning does not yet place enough focus on the integration of indoor and outdoor learning. In both Nursery and Reception, the children enjoy a great deal of individual attention, and staff are adept at looking at what needs to be done to help each individual to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the work already in progress to improve pupils' skills as writers and give the pupils more choice in the content of their writing.
- Ensure the seamless integration of children's indoor and outdoor learning throughout the Foundation Stage.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Farnham Common Infant School, Slough, SL2 3HS

Thank you for being so helpful when I came to your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed looking at your work and talking to some of you.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school.

There is so much I like about your school that I can not mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- You make good progress. By the time you leave at the end of Year 2, your reading is excellent. You do your work in maths much better than most children in other schools, and your writing is good. You should be very proud of all of this.
- Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming, and your behaviour is usually excellent.
- You know a lot about how to be healthy and safe.
- You learn well in lessons because the teaching you are given is good.
- Your teachers are good at planning lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are very well looked after.
- All the people who help run your school do a good job in making sure that you get a good education, especially your headteacher.

I would also like to let you know that I really enjoyed looking at some of your lovely pictures that are on display.

Even in a good school like yours there is always something that could be improved. So, I think that what the teachers need to do next is to make your writing even better. It is already good, but not as good as your reading or maths. To do this, you will have to put in an extra special effort. I am sure that you are ready for the challenge! I would also like the children in the Reception classes to have an outdoor classroom as well as an indoor one. It will not look the same, but it will be just as exciting!

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector