



Fordham CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110788
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288774
Inspection date 28 November 2006
Reporting inspector Joanne Harvey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Isleham Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Fordham, Ely
Age range of pupils	4-11		Cambridgeshire CB7 5NL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01638720296
Number on roll (school)	214	Fax number	01638723112
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Stewart Moffat
		Headteacher	Mr Kevin Bullock
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving the village of Fordham and other villages nearby. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than in most schools. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also slightly lower than that found nationally and very few speak languages other than English in the home. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below average for a school of this size and there are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has a Basic Skills Award and an Investor in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which provides very good value for money. Standards are high, often exceptionally so, and pupils make excellent progress during their time there.

The school's success arises from the remarkably open, caring and respectful ethos that the head, staff and governors have established. They value all pupils and create a nurturing but challenging environment in which all thrive and become very well rounded young people. All adults provide excellent role models for pupils, which result in exceptionally good relationships and outstanding personal development in pupils. Parents are highly appreciative of the school. The comment of one reflects the views of many, 'It has served as a wonderful foundation to all my children's early years of education, not just in teaching but all aspects of development.' Pupils echo this view when they say: 'The school is a friendly place to be where learning is fun' .

This is a very happy and harmonious school. Behaviour is exemplary and not a moment is lost maintaining discipline in lessons or around the school. Because pupils are encouraged to express their opinions and to accept increasing responsibilities, they grow in confidence and develop maturity beyond their years. They have an extremely good knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy. They make appropriate choices and encourage others to do the same. They are proud of the part they play in school improvement. For example, the school council helps to ensure health and safety and 'Good Buddies' make playtimes happy times. The combination of excellent literacy, numeracy and personal skills equips pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of education and adult life. Pupils benefit from an excellent range of activities during lunch time and in after-school clubs that extend the basic curriculum and allow them to develop high levels of skill, for example sport and music. Pupils enjoy great success when they compete with other schools, not only in sport but also in events such as the 'World Class Mathematicians' competition.

Teaching is excellent because lessons are planned very carefully to take pupils' learning forward from whatever level they have reached previously. Teachers provide high quality guidance so that pupils are extremely clear about what they have to do to improve. Those who find learning more difficult get excellent support from able teaching assistants and make very good progress. Pupils say that they learn best when practical activities and topic work reinforce basic skills through games or through projects with an end result which actually helps others. However, there are not yet enough of these high quality opportunities, because curriculum planning does not yet make enough creative links between subjects or provide regular opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning.

The school benefits from exceptional leadership at all levels. The headteacher, staff and governors have a very clear picture of how well the school is doing and use this information very well to ensure everyone is fully involved in bringing about further improvement. There is no room for complacency; the bar is just set higher. Given the way the school has successfully addressed issues from the previous inspection,

maintained high standards and made significant improvements there is little doubt that it has what it takes to get better still.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve links between subjects so that pupils practice what they have learned in a range of contexts and have more opportunities to use ICT to support their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Though there is variation between and within cohorts, most children enter the school with broadly average levels of knowledge and skills, although their English and social skills are often less strong. Children make very good progress in the Reception class. Here they are prepared exceptionally well for the next stage of their learning. By the time they enter Year 1, most pupils have achieved the goals set for them and many have surpassed them. In national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6, the school's recent results in English, mathematics and science have been significantly above average and often exceptionally high. Inspection evidence indicates that standards continue to be very high and that pupils are making excellent progress throughout the school. Pupils also attain high standards in other subjects such as art and music. All groups of pupils, including those who have learning difficulties do equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and attendance rates are better than those in many schools nationally. A notable strength is the impressive array of opportunities that pupils have to contribute to the school and wider community through a range of roles rarely seen elsewhere. These include the school council, 'Eco Warriors', 'Good Buddies', library and reading monitors, office receptionists, play leaders and even assembly assessors who ensure quality by feeding back points for improvement. Pupils take the lead in an exceptional range of fundraising activities because they really understand that their actions can make a difference to those who are less fortunate than themselves. As a result, they have bought eight pairs of Oxen and funded vets fees for their partner school in Chad and have sent powder paints to a school in Sri Lanka. Because pupils have very high expectations of themselves and others in the way that they initiate and carry through such projects, they are well-prepared to play a constructive role in adult society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers in the Foundation Stage provide a delightful and stimulating environment with an excellent balance of adult-led and structured play activities. Throughout school, exemplary relationships promote a supportive yet challenging learning environment. Adults have extremely high expectations of pupils and ensure they are attentive, actively involved and respond quickly to instructions. Pupils benefit from lessons in which they have partners to exchange ideas with and where sharp, incisive questioning challenges them to think carefully and work hard. Teachers use assessment information extremely effectively to plan work that challenges pupils of all abilities. They share learning targets regularly with pupils in order to provide a very clear focus for lessons and to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of stimulating learning experiences, which build effectively on pupils' prior skills. Pupils who need extra help are very well provided for and fully included in all activities. The strong focus on personal, social, and health education promotes excellent personal development. There are many enrichment activities, such as educational visits, visitors and activities outside lessons, which add enjoyment and keep pupils exceptionally well-motivated. There are some creative cross-curricular opportunities for pupils to practice their high levels of literacy and numeracy skills in different ways, for example, the 'Charlie for Chad' project. However, not enough curriculum planning is done in this way or enough use made of ICT to support pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All the required procedures to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are in place. They are well understood by staff and assiduously followed. Arrangements to support pupils joining or leaving the school are very good. Pupils' progress is monitored very carefully so that pupils and teachers know precisely what the next stages of learning are. Targets are well known and very well used to provide extremely well focussed individual guidance and small group support for pupils of all abilities from teaching assistants or a specialist teacher. The open, caring, encouraging atmosphere, which is central to the school's ethos, is a great strength. It promotes high quality pastoral care which results in pupils achieving extremely well, both academically and personally.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

At the forefront of the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher whose vision and commitment has enabled it to go from strength to strength. The teamwork he encourages is paramount. Consequently, all adults in school are united behind their stated aim 'to ensure the provision of education to each child at the school in a happy, healthy and constructive environment, so that each will attain their full potential.' Leadership roles have been devolved effectively to an able and hardworking team who respond very positively to the headteacher's confidence in them and carry school improvement forward successfully. Governors have a clear understanding of the school and its development. They offer a range of expertise and a level of commitment as well as individual personal contributions. The school promotes successful partnerships with others to ensure that high standards of care and education are maintained and improved upon.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	1
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Fordham CofE Primary School, Isleham Road, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5NL

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. This letter is to tell you what I thought about your school and how it could be even better.

I think you are lucky to go to such an outstanding school. You told me how much you like your teachers because they make learning fun and that you really enjoy being at school. This was clear to me when looking around the school. You also told me that behaviour is excellent and that everyone gets on together very well. This was certainly the impression I got as I saw you working hard in classes, having lunch together quietly and sensibly and playing outside. Because the staff look after you so well you make excellent progress in your learning and achieve results which are much better than most children. You also have adults or older children to go to if you ever get worried and upset. I was very impressed with how well you carry out important jobs in school and look after each other, look after your environment and enjoy doing things to help others less fortunate than yourselves.

To make the school even better I have asked those who lead the school to make sure that you get lots more opportunities to practice your very good skills in English and mathematics in other subjects and to make sure you are able to use information and communication technology much more to help your learning in other subjects.

I am sure Mr Bullock and the other staff will continue to work hard to make the school an exciting and interesting place for you and you can do your bit by continuing with your excellent behaviour and hard work.

Best wishes

Ms J Harvey Lead Inspector