



Fernhurst Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116221
Local Authority Portsmouth
Inspection number 290458
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Pye

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Francis Avenue
School category	Community		Southsea
Age range of pupils	7–11		PO4 0AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02392 735 998
Number on roll (school)	309	Fax number	02392 821 207
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Domonic Chapman
		Headteacher	Mrs Roberta Kirby
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils in this larger-than-average junior school are predominantly White British. There are average numbers of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly of Bangladeshi heritage. The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. There are increasing numbers of pupils who join the school other than in Year 3. The headteacher has been appointed recently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the parent who wrote that 'the appointment of the new headteacher has helped give the school a renewed sense of purpose and direction'. The school currently provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils and is improving in many areas of its work. The care, guidance and support it provides for pupils is good and contributes well to pupils' personal development in both an academic and pastoral sense. Pupils also benefit from the productive links that the school has with external bodies. It has been particularly effective in obtaining the support of the locality and businesses for its proposed 'Community Lodge' project.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily by Year 6, although there are dips in performance during Year 3 and in mathematics, particularly for higher attainers. Standards are in line with the national average. Both overall standards and achievement are adversely affected by able and more able pupils moving out of the school, and the numbers who join the school other than in Year 3, some of whom find learning difficult.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are motivated well by consistently high levels of support and praise from their teachers. On occasions, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils, particularly higher attainers. Teaching assistants support pupils well in small group work, but they are not always available or sufficiently well focussed to support pupils effectively. Pupils behave well in lessons. Their personal development and well-being is satisfactory overall. They enjoy the good use of interactive white boards and some challenging, open-ended questioning. The pupils respond particularly well to the more investigative approach in mathematics, which is a developing part of the satisfactory curriculum. Pupils know about how to stay safe and make healthy life choices and they contribute well to the school and local community.

Actions introduced by the new senior management team include a renewed focus on tracking progress which now enables the school to more quickly identify those pupils who need additional support. The role of middle managers is changing and they are increasingly responsible for tracking achievement and standards. Their self-evaluation and action-planning skills are insufficiently developed, and this reflects the need for further training. Leadership and management of the school have brought about successful changes in several areas, not least in rectifying the deficit budget. The school has given governors valuable guidance and consequently their role has been well developed since the last inspection. They now give good support to the school. Given the improvements already made, there is a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in mathematics, particularly for the more able.
- Ensure that all teachers use assessment information to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils.
- Develop the role of middle managers and teaching assistants so that pupils make more progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. The pupils enter Year 3 with standards that meet the national average and make satisfactory progress. Standards and achievement are adversely affected by the numbers of able and more able pupils who leave the school, and the numbers who join the school other than in Year 3. Many of these have a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities.

In the 2005 national tests at the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science met the national average. In 2006 standards dipped but remain broadly average overall. Mathematics was below average, particularly for higher attainers. Pupils progress satisfactorily and by the end of Year 6 are on course to attain average standards. The evidence shows that achievement had dipped in mathematics and in Year 3. The school has recently introduced closer liaison with the infant schools. Pupils now bring some of their infant school work with them, and this has enabled expectations of pupils' work to be maintained. Setting in mathematics helps focus teachers' planning for the high attainers, and in lessons observed these pupils are now being challenged appropriately. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress, as do those whose first language is other than English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well being are satisfactory. Pupils are well behaved when they are in lessons and supervised by adults, but in less structured situations they run from classes with insufficient care in their eagerness to play and chat at the end of assemblies. They enjoy school and most are keen to learn. More able pupils tell of their enthusiasm for the recently introduced investigations in mathematics. Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are tolerant and supportive of peers.

Despite positive school actions attendance remains below the national average. This is largely due to some extended illness and holidays being taken during term time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although there are some missed opportunities for pupils to reflect on their achievement in lessons and in assemblies.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles through eating a balanced diet and exercising. The introduction of the marked zones for different types of play has enabled pupils to enjoy vigorous play in a safe environment. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community through the school council, raising money for charity and singing carols to senior citizens. Sound progress in learning, good relationships and developing teamwork prepare them satisfactorily for their economic well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

School monitoring identified that some pupils required a higher level of motivation. Consequently, different approaches to teaching have been successfully introduced, such as the promotion of more independent learning opportunities. One of the strengths of teaching and learning now lies in pupil's positive attitudes and behaviour, and good quality relationships in classes. Where pupils make good progress, they are successfully motivated through teacher's praise and encouragement, are involved through good use of interactive white boards and encouraged to think because of some effective open-ended questioning.

Progress slows when tasks are less well matched to individual learning needs. Consequently more able pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged, and pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities struggle to complete some tasks especially if they involve writing. Teaching assistant's support for these pupils is better when pupils are taken out of lessons to work in small groups. On occasions, teachers do not make clear enough to pupils their expectations regarding the amount and quality of the work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has identified that the curriculum has not always met the needs of all pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing. Consequently, the already satisfactory curriculum is being improved further. More creative approaches, using art and drama, for example, have been introduced and pupils are further motivated by independent learning opportunities. Developing links between subjects are helping to make learning more relevant for pupils. For example, as part of their project work about electricity the pupils have to develop a dance reflecting that theme. The pupils enjoy the challenge of the new problem solving and investigative approach in mathematics. However, there is insufficient use of investigative work in other subjects.

The pupils also benefit from the attention paid to pupil's emotional needs. There are good opportunities to talk about issues concerning them through the effective personal, social and health education programme. Pupils also learn about the wider world through a good range of visits and visitors. Close links with the local secondary sport's college has enabled the school to provide clubs, and opportunities for pupils to be taught by specialist external coaches.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care guidance and support of pupils is good. Child protection procedures, risk assessments and health and safety policies are clear, and pupils feel safe and secure

within the school. Any incidents are quickly dealt with. 'There is much less bullying since we had the traffic lights system', said a Year 6 pupil. The good quality partnerships established with various outside agencies enable the school to give good support to families and to a wide range of pupils including those whose first language is not English, vulnerable children, and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Targets are set in mathematics and English which help pupils understand how to improve their work. Most pupils know their targets, 'I know I need to use more adjectives to make my writing even better' said one Year 3 pupil. On occasions the language used is not fully understood by pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some significant strengths. The headteacher understands the school well and has a clear vision for its future. One parent wrote, 'The school's ethos and atmosphere is one of striving to obtain excellence and with the change in management recently this has seen to be increasing with momentum and strength'. The headteacher and her deputy have used monitoring and self-evaluation effectively and changes have been introduced aimed at improving standards and raising achievement. Effective systems to monitor teaching and track progress are now in place, and are slowly having an impact, for example, on pupil's motivation and progress, especially in writing and reading. Links with parents, other professionals, other schools and the community are good and are used well to improve provision and care in the school.

Changes have also taken place in management although the current roles and understanding of some new middle managers in monitoring and evaluating provision and setting targets is underdeveloped. The headteacher has successfully helped governors to recognise the importance of challenging the school, particularly holding it to account for the progress all pupils make. They are now doing this well.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

You may remember our recent visit to your school. Thank you for making us welcome. We listened carefully to what you had to say. We think that your school is satisfactory with some good features which include:

- your understanding of how to stay healthy and safe
- the things you do in your community such as carol singing and raising money for charity
- how well you get on together and your good behaviour in lessons
- how well you know your targets. As one of you said 'they help us to really work on what we need to know', and someone else said 'when I've finished my work I go back to my target and check if I've done it'
- the work you all did to help win a large amount of funding for your Community Lodge - congratulations on this.

We have asked your school to improve how well you do in mathematics, and that in lessons you all have work that is not too easy and not too hard. We have also asked that some staff are given further training so that they can carry out their duties even better. You can help by continuing to work hard and by telling your teachers when you do not understand something or when you find the work too easy.

Thank you once again. We wish you all well.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Pye.

Lead Inspector.