



Fernhill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116240
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290467
Inspection dates 18–19 September 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Olive HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Neville Duke Road
School category	Community		Fox Lane
Age range of pupils	4–11		Farnborough GU14 9BY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0127631554
Number on roll (school)	204	Fax number	0127633154
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Barbara Pretty
		Headteacher	(Acting) Ms Caroline Welch
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 18–19 September 2006	Inspection number 290467
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and one of Her Majesty's inspectors.

Description of the school

Fernhill Primary School is an average sized primary school. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. One third of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is also above that found in other schools and two pupils have a statement of educational need.

The acting headteacher took up her post at the start of the academic year having previously been seconded from a local school as acting deputy headteacher. In recent years there has been a very high level of turnover amongst teachers and governors.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The inspection team and the school agree that, despite showing some recent improvement and providing a satisfactory standard of education, standards and pupils' achievement at Fernhill Primary are too low. Following a period of turbulence shortly after the last inspection, the school focused successfully on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. However, until very recently there has been insufficient emphasis on ensuring pupils make enough progress and as a result too many pupils underachieve. The school provides inadequate value for money.

Children in the Reception class are well cared for and they make satisfactory progress. However, progress made across the school in reading, writing and mathematics is inadequate, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Standards at the end of Year 6 are significantly below the national average. The lack of progress has been exacerbated by the large turnover of teachers, as important school-wide systems have not consistently been applied. However, there are signs of improvement and pupils' attainment in 2006 improved notably. The quality of teaching and learning has improved recently and is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good practice. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as they should in lessons. Teachers' expectations of what the pupils should achieve are rising as they are beginning to use newly available assessment information to match their teaching to the needs of the pupils. However, this is not consistent across the school.

The acting headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school accurately. She has a clear focus on raising standards, whilst maintaining the school's positive ethos, which she has communicated effectively to staff. Self-evaluation systems are beginning to make a difference; for example, subject managers understand priorities for development more clearly. However, these systems need fully embedding. Although some subject managers have started to take greater responsibility in influencing teaching and learning across the school, this is not consistent. Their skills in monitoring and evaluation need to be further developed so they can determine whether their work is making a difference to the standards pupils achieve. Capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

The pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, a view strongly supported by parents. The school is a caring, harmonious community, which all staff work very hard to sustain. Relationships are warm; the pupils feel safe, are supportive of each other and keen to take on responsibility. However, academic guidance is not as strong and specific targets for improvement in English and mathematics have only recently been shared with pupils, enabling them to start taking greater responsibility for their own improvement.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

Raise standards and achievement by:

- Developing more rigorous self-evaluation procedures that will enable the school to monitor and evaluate targets for improvement.
- Extending subject managers' skills in improving provision in their areas of responsibility.
- Improving the use of assessment information to ensure all pupils are suitably challenged in lessons and the pupils are aware of their next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children join the Reception year with attainment below the level normally found for children of this age, particularly in their literacy skills. The secure environment and good relationships enable the children to settle into school life quickly and they make satisfactory progress during their first year at school. However, progress during Key Stage 1 has been unsatisfactory; standards at the end of Year 2 in 2005 were significantly below the national average and had been for the previous two years. Although there was an improvement in reading and mathematics in 2006, too many pupils did not achieve as well as they should.

This inadequate progress continues in the older classes. The standards pupils attain in Year 6 have declined in recent years and are significantly below national expectations. There were, however, signs of improvement in 2006; the results of the national tests improved sharply in English and mathematics.

Even though teaching has improved across the school and pupils are making better progress in lessons, underachievement remains, particularly among higher attaining pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties make reasonable progress against their targets as their needs are accurately identified and they receive appropriate support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils' moral and social development is very good; they behave well throughout the school, have an enthusiastic attitude to learning and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have many opportunities for collaborative working, playing and developing successfully these important life skills. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities; roles such as prefects, school buddies and looking after the environment are highly valued. One Year 6 boy said of the prefects, 'I do what they say because they respect you.'

The pupils' spiritual development is good, promoted well through assemblies and other opportunities, when they discuss personal and moral issues. The school council enables pupils to express their views and participate in decision making with the confidence

that their views contribute to their community. Pupils' understanding of different cultures has improved since the last inspection; it is developed through visitors, assemblies and information and communication (ICT) links with schools abroad. Pupils have a good grasp of healthy lifestyles and know why they should eat well and the importance of exercise. A healthy life style is encouraged through the curriculum and the close monitoring of lunches and lunch boxes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some elements that are good. The monitoring of teaching and learning has enabled teachers to evaluate their lessons accurately and demonstrate an awareness of the areas they need to improve. The improving use of assessment information is enabling teachers to match the activities to the needs of the pupils more precisely. More work is needed, however, to ensure all pupils are challenged appropriately in every lesson and that they are all able to catch up on previous underachievement.

Lessons are usually well planned, ensuring the pupils know what they are going to do and learn, keeping a clear focus to the lesson. They make their expectations of behaviour clear leading to well-ordered classrooms and a good working atmosphere; pupils develop skills of working independently as well as demonstrating the ability to cooperate successfully with each other to solve problems. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Teaching assistants enable all pupils to play a full part in lessons.

Pupils make the best progress in lessons where teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve and they are fully involved throughout. In these lessons, teachers carefully question and assess the pupils' understanding throughout the lesson, adapting the lesson and tasks to take learning forward; however, opportunities to stretch the more able pupils are too often missed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides a suitably wide and balanced experience for pupils. The focus has been on developing mathematics and there is evidence of improved planning in this subject with a better progression of skills development. Cross curricular links are not well established so pupils do not have planned opportunities to consolidate important literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects. The personal social and health programme and the enrichment of the curriculum contribute positively to the pupils' personal and social development including through a range of visitors and visits, including residential visits for older pupils, and a good number of after-school clubs, including ICT, sports and arts clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes good care of pupils. Relationships throughout the school are good and staff are evidently very committed to the welfare of the pupils. Those pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or emotional needs are treated sensitively by the staff and the other pupils so that they are involved in what the school offers. The school works effectively with outside partners for the benefit of the more vulnerable pupils; for example the Education Welfare Officer, pre-schools and the local secondary school. There are good procedures for dealing with child protection and health and safety issues and these are understood by staff.

The school assesses the progress made by pupils annually in reading, writing and mathematics. However, teacher turnover caused the system to lapse and only recently has the analysis of the data been utilised by staff to target their teaching more effectively. Plans to assess pupils' progress against specific targets in reading, writing and mathematics each term are timely, with some pupils already aware of their targets and enjoying having the responsibility of working towards them. However, school leaders have yet to ensure the system is consistently implemented and contributing to improving pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The acting headteacher provides good leadership and good leadership clear direction. Since her arrival at the school in April as acting deputy headteacher, she has worked closely with the local authority to implement strategies to tackle underachievement. She has an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has correctly prioritised the areas for improvement. Her commitment about where the school is heading has been conveyed to the staff effectively, ensuring a school-wide focus on improving pupils' achievement.

The acting headteacher is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and senior staff, although the quality of leadership and management is not equally strong at all levels. Most managers are aware of the improvements needed in their subjects and have developed their understanding of improving and influencing provision across the school through working alongside local authority advisers. Some subject managers, however, have not had this opportunity and there is still much to be done to ensure they have the necessary skills to lead improvement and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the work they have carried out. The self-evaluation systems are beginning to make a difference; for example, the tracking system enables class teachers to be held to account for the progress pupils make while in their class. These systems are not yet sufficiently embedded for leaders at all levels, including governors, to be clear about their individual contribution.

The school has made satisfactory improvement in meeting its targets from the last inspection. Standards in ICT have risen and the school recently received a national award for its ICT provision. The management of special educational needs is good. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) provides effective training and support for class teachers and support assistants and has useful links with outside agencies. The pupils' targets are shared with parents and progress is monitored. Some programmes have resulted in sharp improvements in pupils' literacy skills.

The inexperienced governing body is well led by an effective chair. She is well aware that the school needs to raise standards and has established useful procedures to ensure the governors are involved in school life and more able to hold the school to account for improvements. The induction and support for the new governors are good. The determination and commitment of the acting headteacher, senior team and governing body place the school in a sound position to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	3

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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for helping us to feel welcome in your school and for answering our questions and sharing your work with us. There are many good things about your school. However, your acting headteacher and the inspectors agree, some things need to improve so you can learn more successfully.

Here are some of the good things we found:

- You enjoy school and are keen to learn and do well.
- Your behaviour is good and you support each other very well in the classroom and around the school. We like your buddy system and the school council and we found that this helps you to enjoy school and feel safe. You celebrate your achievements and respect each other.
- Your school is very welcoming and your teachers and other adults look after you carefully. They make sure you get help if you need it.
- Your acting headteacher and the staff are working very hard to make sure you are able to improve the rate at which you learn.

The school has been asked to improve these things:

- The people who lead your school and the governors need to make sure you are all learning as well as possible and change things that need to be improved.
- Teachers need to share ideas on how you can learn better and then check up on the changes to see if it is really making a difference to the way you learn.
- It is very important that you understand your learning targets so that you know and can practice the things you need to get better at.
- Teachers will make sure that they give you tasks to make you think and improve your skills so that you can achieve your targets.

Thank you for being polite and very helpful to us during our visit. We hope you will all continue to enjoy your learning and do your best.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Olive

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools