



# Fair Field Junior School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117228  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290763  
**Inspection dates** 24–25 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Michael Best

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior	<b>School address</b>	Watford Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Radlett
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11		Hertfordshire WD7 8LU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01923856341
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	236	<b>Fax number</b>	01923338872
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pauline Walton
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Caroline Cuerden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 November 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 7–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 24–25 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 290763
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. When they enter the school in Year 3, many pupils' standards in English and mathematics are well above the national averages.

The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than in most other schools. The proportion with statements of special educational needs is similar to the national average. The proportions of pupils whose home language is not English or who are from minority ethnic groups are below national averages.

There has been a high staff turnover and significant absence in the last two years, affecting teaching staff and senior leaders. The headteacher took over in September 2005 and the deputy headteacher joined in January 2006. The headteacher has recently returned after an extended absence. The deputy headteacher was acting headteacher for most of the autumn term 2006. Current long-term staff absences are being covered by contracted teachers.

## 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 school's view that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The school is emerging rapidly from a turbulent period of staff changes and absences during which standards and achievement dipped. It is clearly on a journey of recovery. The deputy headteacher, in his capacity as acting headteacher, implemented good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress. The local authority (LA) and the school's governing body have been actively involved. These procedures have been instrumental in bringing about improvement. The deputy headteacher has successfully gained the confidence of pupils and parents, and developed an enthusiastic and cohesive staff team. Regular arrangements to monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning on pupils' achievement are now established and actively guiding improvement. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall; although there is a clear view about what needs to be done and staff are actively improving the work of the school, much is newly in place and has yet to be reflected in statutory test results. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Overall, it provides adequate value for money.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The implementation of rigorous procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress towards challenging but achievable targets has raised teachers' understanding and expectations of what pupils know and can do. This, together with better planning and the greater involvement of pupils in lessons, is enabling them to make more consistent progress. Pupils in Year 6 have made significant gains since the start of the school year. There is, however, scope for more able pupils to be challenged further, and for homework to be used more effectively to support pupils' learning.

Achievement is satisfactory. Overall, standards in Year 6 are above average. Pupils have good literacy skills and their speaking and listening skills are exceptionally high. In both mathematics and science, pupils have a good grasp of skills and facts, but some lack confidence in using and applying these in solving problems. As a result, pupils' development of key skills to promote their future learning and preparation for work is satisfactory overall. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those speaking English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides a good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education. The school has recently revised its curriculum for English, mathematics and science to provide a greater focus on pupils' use and application of skills and knowledge. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The standard of pastoral care and support is good but academic guidance, with so much recently in place, is only satisfactory. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their enjoyment of school is good and most attend regularly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They make a good contribution to the community through the school council. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and take part enthusiastically in a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils behave well and have a good knowledge of how to protect themselves from dangers.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement by providing them with increased opportunities to use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by using recently introduced systems to measure and track progress to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, are fully challenged by the work they are set in lessons and to do at home.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

From 2002 to 2005, overall test results at the end of Year 6 improved and were significantly above average. Over time, pupils' achievement from the start of Year 3 has been satisfactory. Results at the end of Year 6 in 2006 were above average in English but average in mathematics and science. In English, girls performed better than boys in writing. In mathematics and science, boys performed slightly better than girls. Although the school's targets were met overall, pupils, particularly the more able, lost marks on questions that required them to use and apply their skills and knowledge in problem-solving and different contexts. This reduced the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels.

Because staffing is now stable, pupils are making at least satisfactory progress through the school and standards are rising. Consequently, pupils in Year 6 are making good progress and are presently working at a level above that expected. They know their targets and are aware of how to improve their work. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys compared to girls.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils speak highly of their school and thoroughly enjoy the time they spend there. They are particularly enthusiastic about the many extra-curricular sporting and other activities on offer. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on such issues as the importance of having high aspirations and the impact of bullying behaviour. Relationships between members of the school community are warm and supportive. Pupils develop into articulate and socially confident young people who use their initiative and want to 'make a difference' by their actions. They behave well and work hard during lessons. Although the majority of pupils attend well, attendance was satisfactory in the last reporting period due to the more frequent absences of a small minority of pupils. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the customs and values of other cultures through talks and visits to different places of worship. Older pupils serve as house captains, act as 'buddies' to incoming Year 3 pupils, and help to interview new staff.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and the proportion of good teaching has improved during the last term. The new procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are providing teachers with a more accurate understanding of what their pupils know and can do. They are making more effective use of this information in planning and organising learning. Some good use of questioning is developing as teachers tease out pupils' ideas and understanding. Staff make good use of interactive white boards and the computer suite to enhance pupils' learning.

Pupils say that they find lessons more interesting because they feel increasingly involved. They are taking improved responsibility for their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, and support staff play an important role in supporting groups of learners. Lessons are managed well, although the pace sometimes slows because teachers' explanations and instructions are not precise enough. The work provided for pupils with learning difficulties is generally well matched to their needs but more able pupils' analytical and thinking skills are not always challenged. There are inconsistencies between classes in the frequency and demands of homework.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The provision for English, mathematics and science is being overhauled to raise pupils' achievement. The good range of extra-curricular activities in sport and the arts is well supported. The school has an effective personal, social and health education programme. Together, these are having a good influence on pupils' personal development.

The school has reviewed the range of additional activities provided for pupils falling behind in their work and systems are now in place to monitor the effectiveness of these initiatives. Pupils who have particular gifts or talents have relatively few additional opportunities within the day-to-day curriculum.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The school's supportive and caring ethos helps to put pupils in a calm and settled frame of mind. This helps them to learn effectively and promotes their well-being and personal development well. Parents value this provision and most say that their children are happy at school. However, a significant minority of parents who contacted inspectors do not feel adequately informed about what is going on in the school. Health and safety, and child protection procedures are effective. Partnerships with other schools and agencies are satisfactory overall. Outside experts help the school

to support vulnerable pupils effectively, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but links with other schools are yet to be fully developed.

Class targets guide pupils' improvement. Pupils are increasingly reviewing their own progress and that of others. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work, although regular, is not consistent. Not all teachers habitually refer to the aims of the lesson or give the individual pupil specific points for development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school is an orderly community where day-to-day routines are established and managed effectively. The focus of the school's plans for improvement is clear and shared by all staff. The school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its work, and the quality of its self-evaluation, are satisfactory. The involvement of the LA's consultants has been pivotal in helping senior managers to identify and tackle priorities during a difficult period. The deputy headteacher has provided good leadership in putting new systems in place, supporting staff and monitoring their impact on pupils' achievement. Some subject leaders have recently assumed their responsibilities but they all have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are working well together to manage the transition of leadership after her return to work. Their judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, and their analyses of pupils' performance, are accurate.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is led well. Governors now have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weakness, and are starting to develop their ability to hold the school to account. The school has suitable plans for its budget surplus.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Fair Field Junior School, Watford Road, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 8LU

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school last week. We enjoyed listening to what you had to say about the school and your work. We are very impressed by your confidence and knowledge about a wide range of topics. We are pleased that you enjoy school, work hard and want to do well. We agree that the staff take good care of you and that the school provides you with plenty of opportunities to take part in sporting and other activities.

As many of you know, there have been a lot of changes in the teaching staff recently, and some of your teachers have been away, occasionally for long periods. The standard of your work and the progress you made both dipped. Outside experts have been helping the school to find ways of improving and Mr Johnson has done a good job in helping the staff put these new arrangements in place. As a result, teaching is improving and you are learning more. We can see this in the improvements in your work and we congratulate you on your efforts to improve.

We have given the school two important targets to help the staff and governors to continue to improve the school:

- Firstly, we think you can make more use of what you know and can do in solving problems, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Secondly, we want the teachers to improve the way they use information about how well you are doing to really challenge you with the work they give you in lessons and for homework.

There's a lot of work for the school to do and the staff and governors need your help to reach these targets. Keep working hard and enjoying school.

Yours truly

Mike Best

Lead inspector