

Fairview Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134904
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	294214
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	577
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tricia Butt
Headteacher	Deborah Willis
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Drewery Drive Wigmore Gillingham ME8 0NU
Telephone number	01634 338710
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Fairview is a larger-than-average school created as the result of an amalgamation of previously separate infant and junior schools. Since opening in September 2005, the school has experienced significant staff turnover and long-term illness, including at senior management level. Some of this is ongoing, resulting in several key posts being unfilled. Pupils come from favourable social and economic backgrounds. Most are from White British families, although other ethnic groups are also represented. Several of these are at early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and in some classes it is very high. Delays in the extensive building programme have caused a lot of disruption, particularly in the Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Fairview is a satisfactory and improving school. Following the amalgamation, the school's strengths and weaknesses were quickly and accurately identified by the headteacher. She is the driving force behind many significant improvements in important areas. Now, with secure systems in place, the school is moving forward at a faster pace. Despite some significant challenges, such as high staff turnover, inadequacies in teaching and learning and severe building delays, the headteacher has remained focused on raising standards. Standards are average and improving, significantly so in English, where there has been a determined focus on improving pupils' writing skills.

Achievement is satisfactory but varies within and across year groups and this directly mirrors the quality of teaching. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery because teaching makes learning fun. In Reception, children make steady progress to meet national expectations at the start of Year 1. This is because the quality of teaching is more variable. Teaching and learning across the school are satisfactory overall, but weaknesses have been clearly identified through robust monitoring. These are being tackled determinedly, against a background of high teacher turnover. For instance, good assessment practices are beginning to embed, for example where assessment information is used well by senior leaders to identify underachievement and target additional support to boost learning. When assessment is used well, the level of challenge and work is suitably matched to pupils' learning needs. Pupils are motivated to learn, evaluate their own progress and understand how to improve their work. In a minority of classes assessment is not used well, especially in Year 6 where teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are too low and work is insufficiently challenging.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils really enjoy school, as demonstrated in their above-average attendance and good behaviour. Satisfactory care, guidance and support successfully nurture pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, academic guidance does not always help pupils well enough to achieve their best in every class. Pupils know how to lead safe, healthy lives and readily contribute to school development and the wider community. The satisfactory curriculum is increasingly more interesting and relevant. Pupils say it has improved and say there are lots of popular additional activities too. The school is aware that insufficient emphasis is given to developing pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) and research skills. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide strong leadership. Leaders of learning are developing their understanding of their responsibilities and are increasingly involved in securing school improvement. The school rightly identifies strengthening the work of leaders of learning as a priority. Parents are largely supportive of the school's work but have concerns about the high turnover of teachers. The very good links with external agencies are strong features in supporting pupils' learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of good teaching and make more consistent use of assessment information to ensure a greater level of challenge to meet the needs of all pupils in all classes.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT and research skills.
- Fully develop the role of leaders of learning in monitoring and promoting improvement of achievement in their areas.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and rising. The challenging targets set by the school have been exceeded. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, including for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language. School leaders recognise that pupils do not make consistent progress across year groups and this is being tackled rigorously.

Most children join the Nursery with skills expected for their age and get off to a good start. In Reception, teaching is more variable and children make steady progress to meet national expectations by the start of Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, they build on this to achieve average standards overall, and above-average standards in mathematics.

Test results in 2006 for Year 6 were average. The recent provisional results show significant improvement, especially in English. Here the impact of drama and high quality texts has improved pupils' writing skills, particularly that of boys. Direct action by senior leaders in the form of substantial intervention and support to address shortfalls in pupils' underachievement, especially in Year 6, has resulted in improvement. Standards and achievement have been affected by the high turnover of staff. Pupils' ICT and research skills are underdeveloped, largely because of missed learning opportunities. The school is working hard to resolve these challenges.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy lessons, especially those related to themes such as 'Pirates' and 'Out of Africa'. They keenly participate in numerous extra-curricular activities and are very proud of their sporting achievements. Attendance, punctuality and behaviour are significantly improved and are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The youngest children are well supported and gain in confidence. Pupils say they now feel safe and have few concerns over bullying. They expressed their views in a recent survey, which they feel the school has acted on well. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'Bullying has stopped since anti-bullying week'. Pupils demonstrate safe practices and a good awareness of healthy lifestyles, both in their eating habits and enjoyment of exercise, especially skipping at playtimes. Pupils welcome responsible jobs as members of the lunchtime squad where, as they say, 'We help people who feel left out'. They improve their citizenship skills through the school council. Their input into increasing play activities is having a marked impact on improving behaviour and enjoyment. Pupils leave the school with appropriate numeracy and literacy skills, and good levels of confidence and self-esteem, leaving them adequately prepared for their future lives. Nonetheless, they have insufficient experience in developing their independent learning skills, especially research skills using ICT and books.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, but the quality is inconsistent. Teaching is good in the Nursery, where stimulating learning opportunities motivate children. In the Reception Year, it is more variable. Throughout the school, training to help teachers use assessment and involve pupils in their own learning has led to improvements. In the most effective lessons, planning and activities are tailored to learners' needs and contribute to their good progress. Praise is used well and effective questioning challenges and extends high attainers. A minority of teachers especially in Year 6 do not demonstrate sufficiently high expectations of what their pupils can do or link planning to assessment, with the result that some lessons lack pace and challenge. In most lessons, teaching assistants are well deployed and provide effective support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. On occasions, however, they are limited to ensuring pupils remain on task.

The use of targets for learning in English and mathematics is inconsistent. Where they are used well, pupils know their targets and evaluate their own progress. In other cases, they are not regularly reviewed and teachers' feedback is not routinely linked to targets. Pupil learning logs are currently being developed so that parents can be more closely involved in their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Nursery and Reception children experience a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. In the rest of the school, the curriculum is more exciting now because explicit links are made between subjects, which helps make learning more interesting and relevant. Drama is used well to improve the attitudes and motivation of reluctant writers, especially boys. Consequently, the gap between reading and writing attainment has closed. The extensive extra-curricular and enrichment activities range from cooking to archaeology and are very popular. Visits, visitors and parental support further enhance pupils' learning. The personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' personal development well. Targeted intervention and support, such as extension groups for higher attainers and the 'Oasis' club for vulnerable pupils, support learners appropriately. The school is aware of the need to improve pupils' ICT and research skills, which have, in part, been hampered by substantial delays in the building programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Thorough procedures to monitor and promote good attendance have successfully raised attendance rates. Safeguarding procedures and child protection arrangements are robust. First aid arrangements are good. An effective behaviour management system is seen as fair by the pupils and is applied consistently by staff. Pupils generally feel valued and cared for but pupils in Year 6 complain about the poor state of the toilets, feeling they have been overlooked. Vulnerable pupils are well supported. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with gifts and talents are identified well and they receive adequate support. The strong links with external agencies are beneficial to pupils' development. Most pupils know

what their targets are in English and mathematics but, in a few classes, they are not always given the individual advice and support to enable them to improve their work to meet these targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders provide very strong leadership in the drive to raise standards. Robust systems for monitoring provision across the school have been effectively introduced and the school has a very clear understanding of where improvement is needed. Given the improvements seen across the school, particularly in standards, teaching, the curriculum and attendance, the school has a good capacity to improve. Good approaches to improving teaching have included the use of external specialist subject teachers and exploiting the subject expertise of internal staff to develop others. This has been achieved in the face of significant challenges arising from the amalgamation of two schools, delays in a major building programme and very high staff turnover. Improved tracking systems have been established, enabling the school to monitor pupils' individual performance against challenging targets. Some pupils are involved in tracking their own progress and know what they need to do to improve. This is not consistent in all classes or subjects.

School self-evaluation is accurate and increasingly involves leaders of learning, who are developing skills to translate their findings into focused action plans. Vacancies at this level have meant that the senior leaders have carried a disproportionate amount of responsibility for subject development. Governors are dedicated and increasingly knowledgeable about the effectiveness of the school and check its performance. They have taken prudent steps to ensure necessary expenditure on building refurbishment and improved resources, especially ICT.

Annex A

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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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.

Annex A**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	2
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

11 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairview Primary School, Wigmore, Gillingham, Kent ME8 ONU

Thank you for being so helpful to us, particularly those of you who talked to us during lessons and lunchtime. Your headteacher is working with the staff and governors to make sure your school continues to improve and is listening to your views. You told us about the positive changes you had noticed. We think Fairview Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school, and teaching is satisfactory.

Here are some important things about you and your school

- You are working really well in English.
- We were very impressed with your behaviour and how well you get on with one another.
- There are lots of exciting clubs and extra activities which you told us you really enjoyed.
- You told us that you know how to lead safe, healthy lives and that you are proud to be school councillors and members of the lunchtime squad.
- Children in the Nursery get off to a really good start.
- You contribute well to school life and the community.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- To make teaching consistently good, especially by expecting more from you, and for teachers to check how well you are doing and make sure that the work you do is at the right level to challenge you.
- To make sure you have good opportunities to help you improve your ICT and research skills.
- To help those teachers with management responsibilities to make sure that the school continues to improve.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Browning Lead inspector