

Farnborough Road Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104862
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	307262
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Margot D'Arcy

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	580
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Iain Brodie Browne
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Antell
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2003
School address	Farnborough Road Birkdale Southport Merseyside PR8 3DF
Telephone number	01704 577625
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils in this large school are from White British backgrounds and no pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school have generally been average, but the attainment profile has changed and is now above average. Within the last 14 months a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.

The school has been successful in gaining the National Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Underpinning the school's improvement is good quality leadership and management. In a relatively short time, the new headteacher, supported by his senior leadership team, has implemented many positive changes and provided the school with the clear direction it needs to move forward.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, standards are generally above average, but there is significant variation between subjects. In English, pupils make good progress and leave school with above average standards. In mathematics and science, however, standards are rarely better than average and pupils do not progress as well as they should. The implementation, last year, of a new system to track pupils' achievement showed that there were pupils in all year groups who were not on course to make the expected progress given their attainment on leaving the infant school. Some swift action was taken to tackle the situation, the success of which is evident in the good progress made in the last year by the current Year 6 group. Intervention programmes have also been implemented for pupils in other year groups and there has been some necessary reorganisation of classes to increase opportunities for pupils to learn more effectively. It is too early, however, to evaluate the full impact of these strategies.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Whilst improvements are occurring and there are examples of good and outstanding teaching in all year groups, the quality is not consistent across the school. The curriculum is good and continuing improvements in this area of provision are doing much to increase pupils' enjoyment of school. Effective links are being made between subjects and there are particularly good opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) and develop their creative talents. This was seen in pupils' work and skills in ICT, their musical performances and their work in art, and design and technology.

Pupils develop well personally in response to the school's good care, guidance and support systems. In particular, pupils are very well informed about how to live healthily and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They especially value the way the school provides listeners so that they can share any worries and are aware of what to do should they come across bullying. Pupils say that incidences of this nature are rare and that they have confidence in the school to sort out any such issues. The majority of pupils enjoy school. They speak openly and frankly about the things they like and appreciate, and of those they feel could be better. They say that they thoroughly enjoy challenging lessons that allow them to be creative or to plan their own investigations, but become bored when lessons 'drag on' or cover things they already know. Year 6 pupils reminisce fondly about their time at the school with one explaining, 'we're feeling kind of sad but excited', and another commenting, 'the school has got us ready for the work and discipline at high school and we are looking forward to new friends and challenges.'

The three-strong senior leadership team of headteacher, deputy and assistant headteacher work together very well. They are providing a very strong lead in driving forward improvements to standards and provision. Other leaders, such as those for year groups, curriculum areas and subjects are effective managers but are at varying stages of developing their leadership role. As such, their impact on improving standards and provision is not as good as it should be and limits opportunities for sharing management responsibilities within this large school.

Whilst some aspects of the school's performance are not as positive as at the time of its last inspection, improvement since the appointment of the new headteacher has been good. That

so many positive changes have been implemented in such a short time has led the school to be slightly over optimistic about its current effectiveness. However, there is no doubt that the school has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and this has led to accurate identification of the most important priorities for improvement. As such, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science so that they reflect good progress in relation to pupils' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Develop the leadership skills of middle managers so that they make an effective contribution to raising standards and improving the quality of provision in the areas for which they are responsible.

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

From a broadly average starting point on entry to Year 3, pupils' overall achievement during their time in the school is satisfactory. Achievement in English is mostly good, however, and standards in this subject are above average by the end of Year 6. The picture is not as positive in mathematics and science. Pupils are only progressing satisfactorily in these subjects and attaining broadly average standards by Year 6. Pupils are clearly capable of making better progress than this given their standards at the end of Key Stage 1. It is only relatively recently that the school has discovered that too many pupils are not building well enough on their earlier attainment. Whilst the targets set for pupils currently in Year 5 take account of the pockets of underachievement that still exist in this year group, they are insufficiently challenging given these pupils' high attainment on leaving the infant school. It is clear that standards will be higher next year, but the school is aware that particularly effective and challenging teaching is needed to ensure these pupils achieve as well as they should by the time they leave. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls. However, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well in response to the good provision that is made for them and the very effective way that this is managed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are articulate and socially adept, able to chat amicably and maturely with adults on a wide range of topics. They have clear opinions and ideas and are not afraid to express these. Pupils take good advantage of the many opportunities they have to contribute to their school. They take their responsibilities as school councillors, peer mediators, reading buddies, and play leaders very seriously and carry these out well. Pupils also contribute to the wider community, for example, through musical and dramatic performance, writing and publishing their own newspaper and fund-raising for good causes. The school's extremely good provision for teaching pupils about cultures different to their own broadens their understanding of the range of beliefs and traditions that exist in the world. Pupils attend well and are punctual. Most behave well showing good manners and respect for others. Pupils are very aware of the importance of eating healthily, getting enough

exercise and of the need to care for the environment. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In this school there are no 'typical' features of teaching that define its overall quality. Rather the picture is one of inconsistency across and within year groups. In the most effective lessons, teachers' good knowledge of pupils and the subjects they teach is used well to explain new ideas, question pupils and match the level of work and support to their needs. Pupils are given good opportunities to work cooperatively, explain their understanding and strategies for tackling problems. The pace is brisk and expectations are high in terms of the quality and amount of work to be completed. In these situations, pupils rise to the challenges, enjoy their work and learn very well. In less successful lessons, pupils complete work mechanically with little enjoyment or understanding of its relevance. Examples such as this were seen in some mathematics lessons. The variable quality of pupils' work shows the extent of inconsistency in challenge and expectations, including the way work is presented. Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, although this skill is most evident when teachers provide interesting learning opportunities for pupils. Throughout the school, teachers make good use of ICT to support teaching and learning. Teaching assistants make a good contribution, especially in helping pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides pupils with a very broad range of learning experiences. These are planned and organised so that they add much to pupils' enjoyment of school and all-round development. The number of visits and visitors is extensive and really helps to bring learning alive. Pupils vividly recall visiting an exhibition of air-raid shelters, meeting a real astronaut, learning archery and caving skills and 'coming up close' to exotic animals. Further enhancement comes through an excellent and extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music, drama, art and craft, and modern foreign languages. Provision for ICT and music is very good, as is the focus on immersing pupils in the music, art, geography, beliefs and traditions of a wide range of cultures. Links with outside organisations, such as the children's university, provide an added dimension to the provision and help to prepare pupils for the future. The school has still to make some decisions about how it will organise the teaching of mathematics in the future, following the successful changes made this year to Year 6 ability sets. The individual education programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are detailed and support their good achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care and support by staff, who know them well. Parents are especially appreciative of this and a typical comment is, 'although large, the school has not lost the personal touch which has made my children become confident and happy learners.' Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Pupils are taught how to deal with bullying and racism. Very good provision is made for them to share any concerns with adult 'listeners' or

through 'worry boxes'; older pupils are also trained to help solve playground disputes. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Marking is regular, offers praise and is increasingly informing pupils about how they can improve. The provision of individual targets for pupils is inconsistent, operating in some years but not others. A good range of 'catch up' programmes has been introduced, but the impact of these has yet to be evaluated. The school supports vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. Good links with specialist agencies enhance this provision.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

'The impact of the new headteacher is being felt by everyone and has given the school a clear vision and momentum in reaching its objectives'. This is typical of the many, very positive, comments made by parents, the vast majority of who are welcoming the changes that are being made.

The headteacher has worked tirelessly with the deputy and assistant headteacher to move the school forward, so that improvements are occurring almost daily. Priorities are clear, however, with raising standards at the top of the agenda. A clearer picture of pupils' progress is being provided by the relatively new tracking system and this is guiding action to raise standards. Systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning are in place and developing, but there is still some way to go in terms of extending these beyond the senior leadership team. The school recognises that the leadership role of some year group and subject leaders, including those for mathematics and science, is insufficiently developed. Since the headteacher's appointment, governors have become much more involved in the process of self-evaluation and the school's strategy for improvement. They are well informed and not afraid to challenge the school about its performance.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2
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	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	2

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	1
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	2

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?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
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

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school this week and for being so polite and helpful to us. We enjoyed our visit and would like to share with you what we found.

We judged that your school is satisfactory and improving. However, it has a number of good features. We were very impressed with all the changes that are taking place to improve things for you and help you attain higher standards. This is particularly important in mathematics and science, where you can make better progress. Consequently, we have asked your school to focus on these subjects. You can help by continuing to work hard in lessons, which we know you enjoy, especially when they are challenging and you are learning new things. Your standards in English are good and most of you are making good progress here, writing interesting stories, report and accounts.

We were happy to see that your behaviour is good. You generally all get on very well together and try your best to be kind, friendly and look after each other. Your school takes good care of you too. You are lucky to have adults who will listen to any worries you may have and help you overcome these. We could see that you have learned a great deal about how to keep healthy, which will be a valuable asset for the rest of your life. We agree with your view that your school provides lots of exciting things for you to do in and out of lessons. These clearly help you to enjoy school and develop all sorts of skills and talents as well as gaining a very good appreciation of different cultures, art and music.

Your new headteacher, deputy and assistant headteacher are full of energy, enthusiasm and good ideas for improving the school. Their hard work has meant that a lot has been achieved in quite a short time. We have now asked them to begin to implement their plans to involve more of the teachers in the process of leading the school and helping it to fulfil its aim of raising your standards and achievement.

On behalf of the inspection team I wish you all the best for the future.