

Farnham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107294
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	309368
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Jane Hughes

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	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Paul Bilton
Headteacher	Mr Richard Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2006
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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

This large school draws pupils from an area of significant economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is double the national average. Nine pupils out of ten are of Asian British heritage. All pupils speak languages other than English at home: mainly Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic. Half of the pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Increasingly, pupils from Eastern Europe arrive in school at different times of the year. A higher than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools standard, NAACE Mark and also the Drugswatch Charter. The school shares a site with another large primary school, a family learning centre and a community centre and sports hall. The building of a children's centre is also underway.

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 school. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Although the school has moved a long way in 12 months, staff know that there is still work to be done, particularly the need to improve further pupils' achievement and the standards they reach. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards, although rising, are very low by the end of Years 2 and 6 in English, mathematics and science. These reflect the weak skills children bring into school as well as the legacy of previous pockets of underachievement present until recently.

Astute appointments by governors have strengthened the senior leadership team. In turn, this has secured improvements in lesson quality and in the level of resources across the school. Satisfactory leadership from the headteacher and other senior leaders, coupled with good governance, provide firm direction for the school and highlight its satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The school has an accurate view of itself. The focus of the enlarged senior leadership team is to build on the successes of last year, particularly with regard to pupils' achievement and the standards they reach. At times, senior and middle managers are distracted from the central push for improvement.

Specialist programmes consolidate pupils' language and mathematical skills from an early age. Outside support agencies confirm that the school builds good relationships with them. They share their professional expertise regularly with staff. This enables teachers to develop the skills they need in order to make certain that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make consistent gains in their learning and achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils relish their time in school. Their attitudes to learning are good and their behaviour is exemplary because they know teachers demand their close attention and perseverance during lessons. Consistent behaviour management by all adults, coupled with an underlying emphasis on nurture for the whole child, guarantees good care, guidance and support for all. Pupils develop into self-confident individuals because of the constancy of personal support and precise academic guidance. Accurate tracking of pupils' progress allows staff to set pupils clear targets for sustainable academic achievement. Any slowdown in the rate of progress is quickly identified by teachers and rectified. This more rigorous use of assessment information is central to the school's success in driving up standards and improving pupils' achievement.

Consistently satisfactory teaching provides a firm foundation for pupils' learning. Increasingly, lessons are good and some are outstanding because teachers are getting better at meeting pupils' needs. Even so, some of the more ordinary lessons do not yet provide enough challenge to pupils, especially higher attaining pupils, who repeat mundane tasks when they are capable of more. Plentiful opportunities exist for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world beyond their immediate neighbourhood through a stimulating curriculum ripe with new experiences and supported by expert tuition. Parents value the school's work and agree that their children are doing better. Typical comments from parents include, 'My child's come a long way here, especially with communication skills.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with very low level skills, particularly their communication, language, literacy and social skills. They achieve well so that, by Year 1, most are working within the expected levels for their age. This is because the Foundation Stage staff make accurate observations of what children can do and know what each child needs to tackle next in order to improve. Children make most progress with aspects of their mathematical and physical development and their attitudes to school. Teachers and nursery nurses create an enticing learning environment for children. Speech and language take high priority. Adults model the appropriate speaking and listening skills and many practical activities reinforce elements of initial reading and writing skills. Children have a good example of how to behave and this is helping them to succeed in school. Parents agree that their children settle well into Nursery routines and are eager to come to school. Such positive attitudes to learning set children firmly on a path that helps them to value the experiences school provides and to make the most of their time here.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement and the standards they reach so more pupils attain or exceed the nationally expected levels.
- Ensure that teachers set challenging activities in lessons for all pupils in order to raise the proportion of good and better teaching.
- Sharpen the focus of leadership at all levels and so accelerate the rate of improvement in key areas for development.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout Years 1 to 6. This is because teachers now use clear and accurate data to inform their planning and help pupils to learn at a faster rate in lessons as they move through school. Although standards at Years 2 and 6 are very low, when compared to national expectations, pupils make the expected rates of progress in each year group and their achievement is satisfactory. Indeed, the oldest pupils made almost double the rate of expected progress in 2007, a reflection of the impact of stronger teaching and successful booster work in Year 6. As a result, overall standards rose in English, mathematics and science. Current data and pupils' work indicate that this improvement is sustained and that pupils' achievement is accelerating by Years 2 and 6. Even so, too few pupils reach high standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. This is because their individual needs are promptly assessed and the right level of support is provided in lessons to ensure they make measurable, if sometimes small, advances in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their time in school and are quick to agree that there are many exciting opportunities for them. One pupil summed up the views of many with the observation, 'The only bad thing about school is going home!' Breakfast club encourages more pupils to arrive early. Others take advantage of the pre-school badminton sessions run by the specialist sports coordinator. Thus, the day begins on a positive note, with pupils on time and eager to learn. Pupils' positive attitudes to school are reflected in their improved attendance and punctuality, two key indicators of future reliability. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven into every aspect of school life. Exemplary behaviour and strong respect for the needs and opinions of others are at the heart of the school. Links with a local faith school enable pupils to understand more about faiths and customs other than their own. Pupils are proud to take on roles and responsibilities in school and are successful at raising funds to benefit others. They have an increasing understanding of the importance of healthy living and know what they need to do to stay safe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers create classrooms full of stimulating displays that encourage pupils to absorb good examples of the English language. At the same time, teachers celebrate pupils' achievements in terms of their strong personal development. Supportive relationships establish an atmosphere of trust in lessons, where pupils feel safe to ask questions or for help if unsure. Teachers plan well and make good use of questioning in the most successful lessons. Even so, some more ordinary lessons do not provide sufficient challenge to move pupils' learning on fast enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils. There are daily opportunities for pupils to think, talk and share ideas in lessons with their talking partners because, as pupils say, 'Two brains are better than one!' The high expectations of all adults with regard to pupils' attitudes in lessons and their behaviour ensure that little time is wasted in school. However, teachers do not always give clear feedback to pupils about how to improve. Senior leaders monitor the quality of lessons regularly, although there is too great an emphasis on the mechanics of the lesson and insufficient focus on pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. An increasing focus on extending pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects is effective, although it is too soon to see the impact of this new approach. A mathematics initiative helps parents to support their children's learning of number facts at home. A key focus on 'talk' and 'thinking time' acts as a stimulus for writing. Innovative use of information and communication technology is improving pupils' interest in their learning. Older boys revel in using the hand held 'pocket' computers. They say, 'Every day is interesting. They go really quickly because lessons are fun!' Pupils with particular gifts and talents improve their mathematical understanding by designing, modifying and 'racing' Formula 1 cars. Well-attended booster sessions for mathematics and English promote pupils' confidence so they perform better. Tasks in English, mathematics and science cater well for the needs of all pupils, but these differing levels of challenge are not always evident in other curriculum areas.

Effective personal, social and health education programmes help pupils to explore their feelings as well as improving their knowledge of how to live safe and healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents' views confirm the good pastoral care and academic guidance the school provides for pupils. Parents say that, 'children are looked after well', in school and that they appreciate the many opportunities on offer. There is effective support for pupils when they first arrive, so that they settle with little fuss. Close regard for pupils' emotional well-being creates a supportive yet purposeful learning environment. Pupils say of teachers and adults, 'They're here for us. They really care about us and they're always there when you need them.' The school works hard to maintain effective links with up to 12 receiving secondary schools and this supports pupils' smooth transfer at the end of Year 6. There are secure procedures in place to safeguard pupils' well-being and to promote their health and safety. Greater clarity from the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress means that teachers are sure about what pupils know and can do. As a result pupils now make at least the expected rate of progress during the year: for some it is faster. Pupils can explain their targets clearly and know what these mean in terms of what to concentrate on next. However, teachers do not always provide consistent guidance to pupils on how to improve their work either through their marking or orally in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership team works well together and steers the school carefully along identified pathways for improvement. Senior leaders evaluate accurately the school's progress and recognise the need to build on existing strengths. This includes maintaining challenging targets for pupils in order to raise standards and also to evaluate the impact of recent initiatives. Nevertheless, leaders sometimes lose focus from the key school improvement agenda. For example, local issues linked to the busy school site are a distraction. Similarly, the monitoring of the quality of lessons does not always set effective learning as the first priority. Leaders are passionate about providing a high-quality learning environment for pupils and parents to enjoy. Resources are well deployed. In particular, the creative use of an additional teacher in each year group to provide daily literacy and numeracy support for small groups of pupils, works well. Well-informed and self-motivating governors are good custodians of the school's aims. They are closely involved in monitoring the school's performance and in offering challenge to the school about why things are as they are.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the whole inspection team, I would like to thank you for being so helpful and welcoming during our recent visit. We enjoyed spending time in lessons, looking at your work and listening to what you had to say. Many of you will remember the letter the inspectors sent to you after last year's inspection. In particular, you were asked to continue to work hard and to behave well and to use your targets - particularly the boys. I am pleased to report that we judge that yours is now a satisfactory school and that you are playing a strong part in its success. We were very impressed with your first-class behaviour - well done everyone!

You all know exactly what your targets are and how they are helping you to improve your learning. Children in Nursery and Reception do well and enjoy all the exciting activities the adults plan for them. Higher up the school, you are willing to work hard and to do your best. You know a lot about healthy and safe lifestyles and make the most of all the sport, art and music activities after school. You are becoming mature and respectful young people and this will help you in future life.

Your parents make sure you come to school regularly and on time. This, together with improving teaching and stronger leadership in school, is helping you to do better and reach higher standards, although there is still a long way to go, so don't relax just yet!

One of the reasons for our visit was to see what else your school can do to improve. We have asked your teachers to help you do better in English, mathematics and science. We also asked them to make lessons even better. At the same time, we would like your headteacher and all the adults with special responsibilities to keep on working to change even more for the better in your school. All of this means lots of work for your headteacher, all the staff and also for you and your parents. Make sure you keep coming to school regularly and remind your parents how important this is.