

Fowlmere Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110607
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	310358
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rick Hollway
Headteacher	Mr Richard Elcock
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	The Butts Fowlmere Royston Hertfordshire SG8 7SL
Telephone number	01763208203
Fax number	01763208119

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Inspection number	310358

© Crown copyright 2008

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.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Fowlmere and the surrounding district. Almost all pupils come from White British. Levels of entitlement to free school meals are low. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally below the national average, but higher than average in some year groups. When they join the school in Reception, children's attainment covers a very wide range but is broadly in line with the levels expected for four-year-olds nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This effective school has a good reputation with parents and its pupils' views are equally positive. Parents' opinions are summed up by one who wrote, 'Fowlmere is a lovely, friendly school and we feel privileged that our children have all attended it.' The strong partnership with parents extends to the local community too, providing a nurturing and supportive backdrop to pupils' learning.

Pupils achieve well because they are taught well and the broad curriculum engages their interest. They get an excellent start in their Reception year and continue to make good progress. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are mostly above average, confirmed by the school's good performance in reading and science tests in recent years. Last year's results in the mathematics tests were disappointing for the school, especially in the relatively low proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 6 who reached the higher levels. Indications are that the prompt action on this is already leading to improved standards across the school, although it is an area that the school is rightly continuing to monitor. Another appropriate focus is the development of pupils' writing. While pupils reach at least average standards, they do not do as well in writing as in reading. Staff are working well as a team to ensure that achievement is equally good in both key skills and are planning interesting writing tasks across a wide range of subjects. Plans for further improvement in pupils' basic skills are supported very well by the systems for regular assessment and tracking of each individual's progress. These are used by all the staff and coordinated very well by the headteacher.

Pupils also make good progress in their personal development and well-being. Their above average attendance rates and interest in every aspect of school reflect their enormous enjoyment of their education. Behaviour and the quality of relationships are good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, typified by their participation in sport and exercise and their knowledge of the components of a balanced diet. In pupil surveys, they say they feel safe and secure in school because of the high quality of care and good support they receive from adults. They take responsibilities willingly and are being well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school is developing the ways it shares with pupils how well they are doing academically and what they should concentrate on next, for example, through setting targets. A good start has been made, but pupils have too few opportunities to respond directly to the detailed marking that is now a feature in many of their books.

Leadership and management are good. There is close teamwork between staff and governors. Recent initiatives to enhance the roles of subject and key stage leaders have equipped teachers with the skills of monitoring and evaluation needed to raise standards further. As a result, the school is building up an increasingly clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. Its self-evaluation is accurate and used well to determine the next priorities. Governors are extremely active and involved. They hold the school to account, are very involved in both short-term and longer-term planning and check that any action taken has a beneficial impact on the pupils. The school has built further on the good features identified at its last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Parents are very impressed with how well their children settle into school. From the start of the induction process, close communication is maintained between home and school. All the adults in Reception work efficiently as a team, led very well by the senior teacher. Teaching is of high quality and staff offer a wide range of activities that hold children's interest and cover the required curriculum. Of particular note in the management of this age group are the detailed and regular assessments of achievement that enable staff to tailor activities closely to individual needs. These assessments show that children make exceptional progress in all areas of learning. Children mix well and are confident and independent. They often start Year 1 with standards well above those expected nationally. The good quality accommodation ensures effective links between indoor and outdoor learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the plans to extend pupils' opportunities to write in a wide range of subjects result in pupils doing as well in writing as in reading.
- Ensure that the action to improve standards in mathematics is successful, especially in raising the standards reached by the more capable pupils.
- Involve pupils more in their own learning and how to reach their targets by giving them opportunities to reflect on and respond to teachers' marking.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress across the school, including those who require particular support with learning. Since the last inspection, the performance of the oldest pupils in national tests has been mostly good. In 2005 and 2006, for example, they achieved well compared both with the test levels they had reached in Year 2 and with schools nationally. The school experienced a dip in standards last year but responded well to it. The current group of Year 6 pupils is on track to achieve the school's targets which, if met, will represent standards well above recent national averages. Rigorous tracking of individual progress is in place for all age groups to ensure good achievement. It is linked well to the extra help available for any pupils in danger of falling behind, and to additional challenges for the more able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and the oldest are mature young people who set a good example to the younger ones. They all get on well together and those who join them from other schools speak of the warm welcome they receive. Pupils grow in independence, valuing the 'ticket time' and 'team time' opportunities to choose activities and apply their learning in practical situations. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The older pupils, for instance, show respect for cultures and faiths that are different from their own, although they have a rather limited understanding of the diversity of modern Britain. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and that they trust adults to deal with it. A group of the older pupils commented on the success of initiatives such as anti-bullying week and the school council in ensuring that the school remains an orderly and open community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's view that teaching and learning are good. Lessons take place in a pleasant purposeful atmosphere. Time is mostly used efficiently, although occasionally the pace of learning slows when adults do not maintain pupils' interest and concentration. The systems for assessing, tracking and analysing pupils' progress are developing well and are having a positive impact on the quality of learning, most obviously in mathematics. Based on the information gained, teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to provide individual and group support as necessary. Planning generally takes account of the wide range of age and ability in each class. Improvement to the arrangements for marking and pupil self-assessment is 'work in progress'. The consistency of good teaching is being encouraged by regular monitoring by staff and governors.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A varied curriculum contributes well to the pupils' achievement. There is an appropriate focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. A wide range of intervention programmes to support individuals ensures that all pupils receive the help they need to develop these skills. A programme for pupils with particular gifts or talents is being developed. Staff have started to make sure that effective cross-curricular links are made between subjects, and that pupils have opportunities to consolidate and apply their basic skills in purposeful activities. Pupils comment that this is already aiding their learning and making lessons more interesting. Staff rightly intend to continue to forge such links as part of the drive to improve areas such as pupils' writing skills. A strong programme of personal, social and health education complements the academic curriculum. In addition to the requirements of the National Curriculum, there is a wide range of additional activities, clubs, visits and visitors to the school. These are highly valued by pupils and their parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The arrangements to care for, guide and support pupils contribute well to their development. Pupils value the pastoral care they receive. One group commented positively on the good impact of initiatives such as the confidential 'worry box'. The provision for pupils who need extra help of any kind is managed effectively. Good mechanisms are in place to safeguard pupils and to protect their health and safety. The improved arrangements for tracking academic progress ensure that pupils receive the support they need with their work and get accurate feedback. Target setting for individuals and groups is now being established to set all pupils appropriate challenges. This is an area the school correctly wants to link more closely to the rest of its assessment systems, as part of its quest to ensure that learning is personalised for all individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The spirit of teamwork among staff and the excellent contribution made by governors create a pleasant and positive ethos in the school. The open and friendly atmosphere encourages and makes full use of parents' willingness to contribute. Extensive improvements to the building, grounds and learning resources are notable examples of how the community has pulled together for the benefit of the pupils. Further community links such as those with local churches and nearby schools enhance provision. These links provide, for example, specialist sports advice and regular visits by local clergy. Staff speak enthusiastically of the professional training they receive and the opportunities planned for them to play a fuller role in monitoring standards and provision. The school's main self-evaluation documents demonstrate its commitment to further improvement and its ability to identify the steps it needs to take to achieve this.

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

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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

16 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Fowlmere Primary School, Fowlmere, Royston SG8 7SL

I am writing to thank you all for your friendly welcome and your help during my recent visit to your school. Many of you and many of your parents told me that they think your school is a special place. I can see why. Your school helps you to become sensible young people who really enjoy learning. Your behaviour is good and you get on very well together. It was good to hear that so many of you feel that your friends and the adults in school do all they can to sort out any problems that arise.

You are doing well in your school work. Your teachers have worked hard this year to help you get better at mathematics. Keep up the good work! Many of you are already good readers but some of you find writing a bit harder. This is something your teachers and I would like to see improved. You can help by paying careful attention in lessons and taking time to think about any advice you are given on how to improve your writing. The staff are improving the ways they mark your work and set you challenges, such as through your targets. I think that these arrangements are going well. I have asked your teachers to carry on with these improvements. For example, I feel it would be useful for you to have more time to think about the comments your teachers write in your books. If you can get into the habit of always checking your own work carefully, this will help too.

Your school is obviously helping you to lead extremely healthy lives. You told me about all the activities that help you to do this. I also enjoyed hearing that you feel that adults listen to your views. Mr Elcock and the rest of the staff work very closely with the governors and with your parents to make sure that your school runs smoothly and to plan things to make it even better. I hope that you keep enjoying all the opportunities they offer you. I hope the rest of the SATs went well for Year 6, and I send you my best wishes for the move to your various secondary schools.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Helen Ranger Lead inspector