

Fernhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116240
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312228
Inspection dates	25–26 September 2007
Reporting inspector	George Rayner

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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Pretty
Headteacher	Ms Caroline Welch
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2006
School address	Neville Duke Road Fox Lane Farnborough GU14 9BY
Telephone number	01276 31554
Fax number	01276 31554

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is located in a housing estate on the outskirts of Farnborough. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are average overall. Nevertheless, there is considerable variation in their individual home situations and an above average proportion qualify for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The school was given a notice to improve when it was last inspected. At that time, it was experiencing considerable turnover of staff and governors, but the situation is now more stable. The headteacher, who had recently been appointed in an acting capacity at the time of the last inspection, is now permanent.

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. Staff demonstrate their commitment to pupils' welfare through its good care, guidance and support. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, are happy there and grow in confidence. Pupils know about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and develop sensible attitudes to safety. They are aware of the needs and feelings of others and carry out a wide range of responsibilities with pride.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory, with good features. Lessons are often good and the curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers have worked effectively to improve their understanding of how pupils make progress in English and mathematics. As a result, they now plan pupils' next steps well and use assessment to provide for the needs of all pupils in these subjects. However, this is not yet fully consistent throughout the school. The use of such information does not always effectively promote the progress of the higher ability pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the headteacher is setting a clear direction for the school. Since its previous inspection, the school, with effective guidance from local authority advisers, has significantly improved its self-evaluation. This is now rigorous, provides an accurate picture of quality and performance and has helped the school to develop suitably challenging targets. It has developed appropriate strategies to secure these, which are beginning to impact upon pupils' achievement. Consequently, although Year 6 standards are below average, pupils' progress is now satisfactory. The school has focused first on English and mathematics, so that this is where progress is most clear. It is aware that, because science has not been such a major focus, improvement has been slower here, so that standards are not yet as high as they should be. Plans are well in hand to begin a major drive to raise science standards. The school is beginning to share accountability between staff, but subject leaders are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring and developing their areas.

The improvements made since the previous inspection show that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage has improved during the past year and while provision remains satisfactory, it is developing an increasing number of good features. Children are beginning to make good progress in some areas, particularly in their personal and emotional development. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to give children a good structured class sessions and opportunities to choose activities for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science by improving the use of assessment.
- Improve the consistency with which teachers plan the next steps in pupils' learning to ensure effective progress and full challenge for all.
- Increase the role of subject leaders in monitoring and developing 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

Pupils' standards on entering the school are generally below expectations for their age and in some years they are very low. Although pupils' standards are below average at the end of Year 6, they are now making satisfactory progress. The standards of many pupils are affected by previous weaknesses in teaching and learning, but improvements during the last year have accelerated progress in most classes. In 2007, pupils met their realistically challenging targets. The Year 6 national tests showed that in English, pupils made good progress to almost reach average standards. They made particularly good progress in reading, because they responded well to the school's encouragement to see this as an enjoyable activity. While pupils improved their mathematical skills satisfactorily, these remained below average. However, recent work shows that improvements in teaching are beginning to help pupils to make faster progress in using their skills to solve problems. Standards are well below average in science and, although improvements in pupils' language skills are beginning speed up their progress, they are not yet high enough. Because their needs are carefully identified and efficiently provided for, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make as good progress as their classmates. In most lessons, the more able pupils achieve as well as the others, although they do not always do so in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' only have limited understanding of life and attitudes in other cultures. Their social and moral development is particularly strong, so that they have a good understanding of right and wrong. The prefects are enthusiastic about their roles and their mature attitudes are evident in the way they help out around the school. The school council is greatly respected and fully involved in school improvement projects. Members are proud of their recent initiative for 'playground players'. This has not only improved the quality of play at break times but has helped to improve behaviour in the playground. One pupil said, 'It used to be mayhem, but it is now much better'. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good and they report that it is has improved this term, encouraged by a new system for rewarding positive attitudes. Most work well, even when not being closely supervised, but a few find this more difficult, so that their concentration sometimes flags and they interrupt other pupils. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the wider community through various charitable activities. The range of responsibilities undertaken by pupils and their improving basic skills in English and mathematics provide sound preparation for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In most lessons, teachers plan carefully to ensure that time is used well and learning moves forward methodically. Teachers usually set out their expectations for effort and behaviour

clearly. As a result they enjoy good relationships and most pupils work willingly. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to ensure that pupils who need extra help quickly receive this, so that they are able to keep up with the pace of learning. Teachers are improving the way in which they use assessment to provide work to match the needs of all pupils. However, this use is not yet consistent. For example in a few lessons, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and when this happens their progress slows. Teachers have worked together well to improve their understanding of how pupils make the best progress in English and mathematics. The improvement that this is bringing to their planning of pupils' next steps is beginning to have a real impact on progress in these subjects. This planning is weaker in science. Pupils' progress in that subject is reduced as they are not consistently learning how to find things out by carrying out their own investigations and recording their findings. Teachers use marking well to encourage pupils. They often give guidance on how pupils can improve their work, but this is better in some years than others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum systematically develops pupils' skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). It is enhanced by the opportunity for older pupils to learn French. The school has recognised that there are not enough links between subjects for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a cross-curricular way. Plans to improve this are still at a very early stage. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and wide ranging, so that they have an effective balance of teaching in small groups, individually and in the main classes. Pupils' enjoyment in learning is enhanced through a wide range of clubs and visitors. Activities provide good opportunities for exercise and are enriched by links with a sports college and local football clubs. Pupils are particularly pleased that the school has its own swimming pool and use it often.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for child protection are clear, well known and rigorously applied. The school site is well managed and is a safe environment for pupils to learn and play. Thorough induction systems are in place to ensure smooth transition for new pupils. They therefore settle in quickly and feel happy and confident. Teachers and teaching assistants effectively support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school works well with a range of agencies to meet their needs. Procedures for academic guidance have significantly improved during the last year. In English and mathematics, each pupil's progress is carefully tracked, allowing teachers to identify where extra support or further challenge is needed. This has contributed well to the recent improvement in progress in these subjects. The school understands that procedures are weaker in science and other subjects and improvement plans are in hand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has developed a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. Her success in securing the support of the staff is shown by the very low number leaving during what has been a difficult period for the school. Improvements to procedures for self-evaluation and assessment are beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. The

school has been aware that responsibility and accountability are not sufficiently shared, but its efforts to improve this have been hampered by events beyond its control such as the long-term illness of key staff. This situation has now improved and the school is moving towards a clear structure for allocating senior and middle leadership responsibilities. Subject leaders are being increasingly involved in improving their areas and leading their colleagues, but their skills for this are not fully developed. The governors have worked effectively to improve their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are now appropriately holding it to account.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 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	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?	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	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

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fernhill Primary School, Farnborough, GU14 9BY

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and we are grateful for the help you gave by talking to us and showing us your work. We were able to see that yours is a satisfactory school. This means that your school has improved, because it was not satisfactory the last time it was inspected. Your school was told then that it needed to make some important improvements. We were pleased to see that the headteacher and staff have worked hard to do this.

The main problem then was that you were not given enough help to learn well, so you did not make enough progress. The staff have been very sensible and concentrated on the most important areas first - English and mathematics. Because of this, you are now beginning to make good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics. We have now asked the adults to start helping you as much in science. They have told us that they are going to start doing this very soon.

Most lessons are satisfactory and quite a lot are good. We have asked the school to make sure that more lessons are as good as the best ones. We have also asked it to share out the jobs more, so that more staff are involved in coming up with good ideas and checking to see how well they work.

The adults say that you have helped them a lot in bringing about the improvements. This is because you behave well and are willing to work hard. We could see that this is true and that you also help in other ways, such as being prefects, 'playground players' and school councillors. This help is very important and we know that you will continue to give it. This will help the school to become even better. Well done and very best wishes for the future.

George Rayner

Lead inspector