

East Farleigh Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118289
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312870
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Perry O'Callaghan
Headteacher	Valerie Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Vicarage Lane East Farleigh Maidstone ME15 0LY
Telephone number	01622 726364
Fax number	01622 729850

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues: whether the school is sustaining high standards and good achievement throughout Years 3 to 6; the impact of recent initiatives to ensure consistently high quality teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 and to provide a more creative curriculum for all pupils; and how effectively leaders and managers evaluate the impact of their work and use the information gained to drive further improvement. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, samples of pupils' work, parent questionnaires, observations of pupils at lunchtime and a review of the school's own assessment and monitoring evidence. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail but there was no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school draws almost all of its pupils from East Farleigh and nearby villages. Attainment on entry to the school is similar to that expected for age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) has steadily increased in the last few years from below average to just above average levels. There is a higher-than-average rate of mobility as pupils leave and join the school part-way through their primary education. The vast majority of pupils are White British and all speak English as their first language. The school has achieved 'Healthy School' status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. It excels in nurturing pupils' personal development and helping them to grow into confident, well-rounded young people with very positive attitudes to learning. As one parent wrote, 'The ethos at East Farleigh is about much more than academic learning. Children are nurtured and encouraged to develop emotionally and socially.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and speak with great enthusiasm about lessons and the outstanding range of additional activities is available to them.

Large numbers take part in the excellent variety of sporting activities on offer. Pupils are increasingly making healthy choices at lunchtime. The 'head gardeners' are bursting with enthusiasm for their vegetable garden, chinchillas and chickens, and gladly give guided tours of the nature trail. School councillors have helped to improve facilities in the playground, where lunchtime is action packed as pupils enjoy racing on pedalos and exploring the hill fort. Enterprising youngsters sell garden produce and vegetables to raise funds. In pursuit of a national Eco award, pupils are eagerly involved in energy-saving initiatives, recycling and composting.

The school achieves a successful balance between promoting pupils' personal development and their academic achievement because leaders and managers have high expectations in all aspects of pupils' learning. Pupils' achievement is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Children get off to a good start in Reception, quickly gaining new skills and becoming confident and independent. In Years 1 and 2, teachers build on these good foundations, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Here, pupils make excellent progress to reach exceptionally high standards in the Year 2 national assessments.

Results in the Year 6 national tests have been more erratic in the past few years, ranging from below average to exceptionally high. Improvements in teaching and the curriculum have brought more consistency, so that standards throughout Years 3 to 6 are now above those expected and the very large majority of pupils are making good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress, often reaching national expectations in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. A few average and higher-attaining pupils do not always make enough progress during the course of a year.

Although the school has good systems for assessing pupils' progress, these are more effective in Reception and Years 1 and 2 than higher up the school. This is because individual pupils' progress is not checked frequently enough in Years 3 to 6 to make sure they are on track to reach their annual targets. Consequently, signs of underachievement are occasionally not detected early enough to ensure pupils are given additional support to boost their progress and get them back on track. Older pupils are beginning to be involved in checking their own progress towards their targets, but this is an area that the school is still developing.

The vast majority of pupils and parents have very positive views of the school, especially the quality of teaching. One parent described the teachers as 'caring and considerate', while others praised the way each child is treated as an individual. A few parents expressed concerns about communication between school and home but most say they feel included and part of the school community. One pupil said, and others agreed, that 'teachers have made lessons more fun than they used to be' and that this makes learning more exciting. This clearly reflects recent initiatives to promote excellence and enjoyment in learning. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables them to be increasingly creative in the way they link up different subjects.

Imaginative use of computer technology enlivens learning and holds pupils' interest. This was particularly effective in a Year 5 lesson about synonyms.

The good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching is consistent in all areas of the curriculum. Specialist teachers give a high profile to science, music and French. The school offers a rich curriculum in physical and outdoor education and pupils have valuable opportunities to take part in inter-school sports competitions. Special days or weeks allow for in-depth study, for example, of environmental issues. Pupils clearly enjoyed the eco-friendly bridge-building exercise and designing eco-friendly lighting for Peru, learning which encompassed several subjects in a way that appealed to the pupils' imagination.

One of the key ingredients in the school's success is effective teamwork. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to ensure that pupils' individual needs are planned for and met. Senior managers provide a strong leadership team, abreast of the latest developments and rigorous in evaluating their impact. Careful analysis of annual test results leads to a clear focus on those aspects where pupils' knowledge and skills are relatively weaker.

Well-targeted training for all staff enables them to sharpen their own practice and to share their expertise with colleagues. This has helped to develop the role of the subject leaders over the past four years. They now play an important part in evaluating the effectiveness of their subjects through sampling pupils' work and discussing it with them. Until now, the evaluation of teaching and learning through observation has been carried out by the headteacher and deputy head. Subject leaders are about to be trained to evaluate lessons as part of their development.

Accurate self-evaluation informs strategic planning and places the school in a strong position to pursue its goal of overall excellence. Governors are involved well in evaluating the school's performance and determining its future direction. The training of several new members is a current priority and good arrangements are in hand for governors to evaluate their own effectiveness. The governing body is not currently meeting in full one of its statutory responsibilities, to carry out and record all of the necessary checks on staff. It is aware of this and is taking effective steps to rectify the situation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Evidence supports the school's view that provision in the Reception class is good, with outstanding features. Children make good progress in acquiring a wide range of knowledge and skills and reach above-expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. They do particularly well in reading and writing, while progress is less marked in their creative development. Excellent teamwork between the teacher and assistant enables children to enjoy learning both in the classroom and outside. The full potential of the outdoor area to promote children's progress across all six areas of learning is not yet fully developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the necessary checks on all staff are quickly completed and that up-to-date records are maintained.
- Sharpen the procedures for tracking pupils' progress towards their academic targets during the course of each year in the junior classes.

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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?	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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	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?	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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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**

- I enjoyed visiting your school and would like to thank you for your warm welcome. Many of you told me how much you enjoy school and I can see why. East Farleigh is a good school and there are some things that are outstanding. I was particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour and your enthusiasm in lessons and when carrying out your responsibilities, such as head gardeners and peer mediators. Here are some of the other things I found out about your school:
- You make good progress and achieve high standards in your work. Those of you who are in Years 1 and 2 make excellent progress.
- In the juniors, almost all of you make good progress, but there are one or two who slow down a bit during the year. I have asked the school to check your progress more often so that the teachers can spot if any of you need extra help.
- You listen very carefully in lessons and work hard because the teachers make learning fun and interesting for you. This helps you to make good progress.
- Teachers have been working hard to plan work for you that links up different subjects and makes your lessons more enjoyable. I could see from the photographs that you had a great time designing and making 'eco-friendly' bridges.
- There is an excellent range of clubs, visits and other activities for you to take part in outside of lessons. All of these help to develop your confidence, keep you fit and healthy and prepare you well for moving on to your next school.
- The people who run the school are a good team who are constantly trying to make improvements so that you can do even better.
- The governors help by checking that the school is doing as well as it should be and working with the teachers to decide what needs to be improved. There are quite a few rules and regulations that the government expects the governors to follow. One of these is still being completed so I have asked governors to make sure that it is done as quickly as possible.

All of the staff and governors are working hard to make your school the best it can possibly be. You can help them by continuing to work hard and keeping an eye on your own progress towards your targets – I know some of you have started to do this. Above all, carry on enjoying your time at East Farleigh and make the most of all the opportunities it offers you.

19 September 2007



Dear Pupils,

Inspection of East Farleigh Primary School, Maidstone, Kent ME15 0LY

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With best wishes,

Carole Skinner
Lead inspector