

Faringdon Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123060
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314472
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	John Collins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Cox
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Hambidge
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Lechlade Road Faringdon SN7 8AH
Telephone number	01367 240655
Fax number	01367 240655

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils at this average sized school are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties and disabilities has risen significantly over the past three years and is now slightly above average. This is also the case for those eligible for free school meals. An outside agency provides breakfast and after-school clubs. The school has recently achieved the Healthy School and Activemark Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The parent who wrote, 'Faringdon is very lucky to have such a school', summed up the high regard of the overwhelming majority of parents for this good, improving school. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, ably supported by the governors, has successfully dealt with issues of behaviour, improved the quality of teaching, and introduced the rigorous tracking of progress. These improvements are resulting in rising standards and good achievement. Standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, which represents good achievement for pupils from their generally below average starting points. However, more needs to be done to improve the performance of more able pupils through challenging them to achieve as well as they can. The school has successfully addressed issues from the last inspection which indicates that it has a good capacity to improve even further.

Parents and pupils see the school as a safe place in which to learn and flourish. One parent described the school as having, 'a great atmosphere for learning that is also a fun and happy place for pupils'. The school helps pupils thrive because all are valued and supported to achieve their best. Academic guidance is good. However, whilst the new marking system is beginning to be established, it is not yet consistent in giving guidance to pupils in what they need to do next in order to improve.

Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well. Stability in the staff and the improved behaviour of pupils has helped to develop a strong learning atmosphere. Pupils work very well together in pairs or small groups and readily celebrate the success of others as well as their own. Teachers have successfully dealt with the needs of pupils with moderate learning difficulties and disabilities. Through targeted support from teaching assistants, these pupils are able to achieve as well as others. The range of clubs and activities is good and considerably enhances the curriculum, giving good support to pupils' personal development and well-being. Sporting activities, music, art and the breakfast and after-school clubs contribute strongly to pupils' well-being. They have a secure understanding of the importance of healthy living and exercise and a well-developed sense of being safe.

Pupils themselves regard learning as fun because of the range of activities planned for them. Behaviour is good and the great majority of pupils respond positively to the challenges of their teachers. This has contributed significantly to the improved learning environment enabling pupils to achieve well. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good and is thoroughly integrated though all aspects of school life. It shows, for example, in 'The Value of the Month' theme, which is jointly planned with the junior school, is a focus for assemblies, displayed around the school and referred to in lessons. This helps pupils of all ages to develop a strong sense of respect for themselves and others.

There is a strong partnership between home and school, which welcomes parents as partners in their child's learning. Every morning parents help the younger children choose their next home reader. After suggestion by a parent, boards outside each classroom are an effective means of communicating and strengthening the links between home and school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children start school with skills well below those expected, with an increasing number of children needing extra support in speech, language, and mathematical development. Both

Nursery and Reception classes provide a welcoming and well-planned environment, which stimulates children to learn. Staff make good use of both the indoor and outdoor environments. The outdoor areas in Nursery are a particularly strength where well thought out independent activities develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They are able to exercise safely and learn to take turns and be independent. Their social development is particularly good, evident in the ways in which children share toys and games and patiently take turns. Teaching is good and staff use assessments carefully to plan next steps in learning so that most children make good progress to achieve the learning goals expected of them in personal, creative and physical development. Nevertheless, at the end of the Foundation Stage language skills are still below average.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for more able pupils, by increasing the level of challenge in lessons.
- Improve the consistency of teacher's marking so that pupils have a clearer picture of what they need to do in order to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although test and teacher assessments in 2007 show that the previous decline in standards has been arrested, standards in reading and writing remained below average and broadly average in mathematics. Few pupils were working at the higher levels, particularly in writing and mathematics. This was due to the 2007 group of pupils having a higher than average number of pupils with learning difficulties in reading and writing. Current tracking data shows that standards are now average and more pupils are attaining the higher levels in mathematics and science. Achievement is now good and pupils are making better than expected progress from their lower starting points. These improvements have been brought about by consistently good teaching, the effective use of assessment and tracking data to target any under-achievement, and the increasingly effective leadership and management in these subject areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Behaviour in class and on the playground is good and has a positive effect on pupils' willingness to learn together. Pupils have a good understanding of what is bullying but say that 'it does not happen in our school'. Relationships are very good. Pupils feel safe and are confident in approaching adults if they have concerns. The school council gives pupils responsibilities and encourages them to contribute to the life of the school. The outdoor environment is used very effectively and contributes well to pupils being healthy and taking exercise. Pupils have a good awareness of the importance of taking exercise and enjoy the aerobic 'Wake Up and Shake Up' session at lunchtime with the staff. The development of social skills through paired and group work is good but more remains to be done to develop basic skills in literacy, numeracy and communication technology.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality of teaching and learning is now enabling all groups of pupils to make good progress. Rigorous and effective monitoring by the headteacher has enabled the school to identify where improvements were needed. More than one parent wrote in to comment on how well their children were doing because, 'they are nurtured and valued for who they are'. Lessons are well planned and managed so that effective learning takes place. Whilst tasks are usually well matched to the needs of pupils, teachers do not always challenge the more able pupils to achieve as well as they can. Behaviour is managed successfully so that pupils settle quickly to their tasks keeping the pace of learning high. Good use of assessment is now enabling groups of pupils with moderate learning difficulties to be supported effectively by well-qualified teaching assistants who make a positive contribution to their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has recently re-planned its curriculum, which contributes well to pupils' personal and academic progress. However, the school recognises the need for the new curriculum to have a stronger focus on developing basic skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Visitors to the school and educational visits such as the short residential trip in Year 2 enhance the educational experiences of pupils. An Indian dancer, an artist with African artefacts and links with a school in Gambia provide good opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of other cultures and their beliefs. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that contribute strongly to pupils' enjoyment and being healthy. Pupils particularly enjoy practical opportunities such as experiments in science lessons, which give them opportunities to investigate and work in small or large groups. As one pupil said, 'I like everything about school because it helps me learn more'. The use of Year 5 pupils from the junior school to run a reading club every week helps pupils develop links with their next stage of education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school fully meets requirements to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Pupils themselves say they are happy and settled, and get on well together. They feel confident in approaching adults if they have any concerns. The progress of pupils is monitored thoroughly, needs are quickly identified and well-targeted support is provided particularly for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or disabilities. All classrooms display targets to improve learning but the use of individual pupil targets in some classes is less well established. Pupils' work is regularly marked and positive comments given. The adoption of 'The tickled pink' marking policy will, once it is embedded, involve pupils in making choices to move their learning on. However, at present, teachers' comments do not always give pupils guidance on what they need to do next in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is the driving force behind the school's improvement. Her outstanding leadership has given a strong sense of direction and purpose to the work of the school. She has been well supported by her deputy, other senior staff and the governing body. Their effectiveness in turning around the decline in standards and achievement and in moving the school forward is recognised by parents, one of whom wrote, 'I would have no hesitation in recommending this school to other parents.' Subject leaders are increasingly effective in building up a clear picture of standards and achievement in their areas and identifying the next stage of development. Their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing, mathematics and science has played a major part in the successful drive to raise standards. The school has been ably supported by the governing body who are both supportive of the school whilst challenging it and holding it to account for its decisions.

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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	3
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	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?	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	1
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	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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Faringdon Infant School, Faringdon, SN7 8AH

Thank you for being so helpful and making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. You told us you enjoy coming to school and we agree with you that it is a good school.

Here are some of the things we think the school does well.

- Many of you are now reaching higher standards and making good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- We think the headteacher is doing an excellent job.
- The other teachers and governors are a great help to her in running the school.
- We think you get on very well with each other and your behaviour is good.

There are two things we have asked the school to do to make things even better.

- We have asked them to raise standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science even more, particularly for the more able children.
- We have asked the teachers to give you help when they mark your work so that you know what to do next in order to improve.

You can help by trying hard to do your best and continue to enjoy your time at school. Remember to ask your teachers if you need help.

Good luck to you all in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Collins

Lead Inspector