

# Farnham Common Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110265
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325121
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sudworth

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	242
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Brenda Cox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	Sherbourne Walk Farnham Common Slough SL2 3TZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 642923
<b>Fax number</b>	01753 646419

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals in this average sized junior school is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is about the same as that in most schools, but fewer pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and the most significant area of need is moderate learning difficulties. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is similar to that in most schools. The headteacher is in her first year in post.

## 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. It has some outstanding features. Pupils achieve well in reaching above-average standards which are close to being exceptionally high. Reading, speaking and listening skills are particular strengths. Parents are very supportive, both of the school and of their children's education, and praise the new headteacher for the way that she has taken over the role. They recognise the developments that are taking place to move the school on further. As one parent writes, 'I believe the school is moving forward in a positive way.' The headteacher is very well supported by an outstanding governing body which is highly committed to the school. It does excellent work.

Pupils not only speak knowledgeably about healthy and safe living but practise what they know. They take regular exercise and are very safety-aware. They get involved in eco matters and contribute to decisions in the school. For example, pupils expressed the view that science teaching was not practical enough. As a result, the staff modified the science curriculum to include more investigation, although this has still to impact on improved standards. Pupils get along extremely well together. Their behaviour is exemplary and they demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. These support their good progress and lively interest in their work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the very wide range of extra activities which widen their horizons and contribute to their excellent personal development. Attendance is excellent. Pupils are very happy at school, as is shown in the ready enthusiasm with which they undertake all their activities. It is also demonstrated in tuneful and joyful singing. Pupils are well prepared for their future education.

A broad curriculum is provided, but curriculum opportunities for design and technology and art are not yet as fully developed as for other curriculum areas. Consequently, the pupils do not develop their skills in these subjects as well as they might. Staff take extremely good care of the pupils and pupils feel very well supported. Very good attention is given to health and safety matters and to ensuring that staff are up to date with safeguarding matters. Pupils really appreciate the extra security that the new electronic gates at the front of the school give.

Subject leaders are developing in their roles. They recognise that they need further training in the use and analysis of data and in monitoring and evaluation techniques. This should enable them to be even more effective in improving the overall provision and improving pupils' attainment even further. While the use of data and tracking to inform planning and intervention strategies are improving, there is scope to develop the system further.

Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Despite some classrooms being small in size, extra facilities such as the art/music studio, the information and communication technology suite and the spacious library support the overall very good accommodation. Good use is made of modern technology in pupils' learning and pupils are adept at research in support of their studies. The school's good levels of attainment over several years and the determination of staff to go on improving are clear evidence of the school's good capacity to make further improvements.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum is better balanced to provide increased opportunities for pupils to fully develop their skills in the more practical subjects.

- Further develop the skills of subject leaders so that they are enabled to use data and monitoring techniques more effectively and so improve teaching, learning and standards even further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Attainment on entry is above average. Pupils make good progress and continue to build up their basic skills well. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is close to being exceptionally high in English and mathematics. Reading is a particular strength as the pupils receive good home support, many opportunities for reading in school and there is good support from volunteers. Writing has not been as consistently good but significant improvement has been made during the last year. In particular, boys have been motivated to reach higher standards in writing, for example through the stimulation of film. Following the showing of a film snippet, a Year 5 boy wrote about the passing of a loved one: 'There's a part of me missing like a night sky without sparkling stars.' Pupils' speaking and listening skills are particularly good. Pupils speak confidently using a very good range of vocabulary. All groups of pupils make similar rates of progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and behave extremely well. They are very keen to be involved in their learning. They answer questions readily and listen most attentively to one another's contributions. The school council represents the pupils very well and recently produced its own newspaper for them. Its voice is consulted, for example in the proposals for a dining room extension. Pupils have an excellent understanding of safe and healthy living. Many cycle or walk to school and they make healthy food choices. They really enjoy school and are very keen to take part in extra activities, such as sport and competitions such as mathematics challenges. They take part enthusiastically in school productions, which they say 'make us confident in ourselves'. Pupils are most polite to adults and well mannered. They take a keen interest in the needs of others and raise money for several charities, often through their own ideas and efforts. Pupils engage very well in local events and in activities with other schools.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Classrooms are calm and support effective learning. Some teaching is outstanding. Lower-ability Year 6 pupils worked enthusiastically as 'apprentices' in a mathematics lesson to revise area and perimeter. They selected from a range of equipment to measure and estimated building costs for a 'project'. Teaching assistants are deployed well with groups to ensure pupils are fully engaged. Marking shows an interest in what pupils have written. However, it is inconsistent in helping pupils to improve their work further and in ensuring that they follow up the written comments. Explanations of tasks are clear so that pupils understand what they have to do, although pupils do not always know the factors that will contribute to the success of their work. A notable exception was in Year 3 when pupils listened to a pupil reading out a piece of work to see if it contained all the necessary elements. Writing tasks are often purposeful. These

Year 3 pupils were writing to famous people about themselves and eco matters and asking them how they travel to work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum, together with the very good range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits, promote pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school very effectively. The curriculum supports pupils' life skills very well and so pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils have good opportunities for physical activities. The curriculum organisation particularly supports very good use of literacy in history. Year 6 pupils wrote letters to their MP as Victorian children to oppose the conditions they worked in as 'matchgirls'. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but does not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to fully develop their skills in some practical subjects, such as design and technology and art. The school is making links between subjects with room for further development. Some very good links, for example, are made between history and geography. Good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils and those who find learning the basic skills difficult.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The staff promote high-quality care and support for all pupils. All legal requirements are fulfilled to safeguard children and staff have regular training. Strategies to achieve very good attendance are outstanding and attendance is high. The needs of all pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met very well. Exemplary systems are in place which enable staff to access detailed information on provision and performance. The school gives a very high priority to pupils' health and safety and policies and procedures are reviewed regularly. Very close links with other agencies support pupils' needs and general welfare very well.

Staff track pupils regularly. However, there is scope to develop the system further to make it even more informative. Staff set targets for pupils. Nevertheless, there is some variability in the quality and helpfulness of these for pupils across the school in improving their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has managed a period of significant change very well and has identified very accurately the school's strengths and its areas for further development. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, both fairly new in post, work very well together and have a common perception of the school's future needs. The headteacher has established a committed senior leadership team and the staff are focused on raising standards further.

Subject leaders are developing in their roles, and are taking effective action to raise standards even further. Their subject audits have recognised the areas for further development. For example, it is recognised that more time is needed for art and design and technology. They are keen to develop skills further to improve the effectiveness of their monitoring and evaluation. Senior leaders engage in systematic analysis of data, which means early intervention is swift in addressing underachievement or specific difficulties.

The governing body is outstanding. It is very well led. Governors are highly committed to the school. They monitor the school's work regularly and question and challenge with excellent insight. Committee structures are organised thoroughly to streamline decision-making and to analyse and progress the school's work. Statutory requirements are fully met. The management of finance is very effective.

A very good analysis has taken place of community cohesion and a well-thought-out and comprehensive action plan has been put in place to promote this aspect further.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

23 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Farnham Common Junior School, Slough, SL2 3TZ

Thank you for your help when we visited your school. We were pleased to meet you. Thank you so much for sharing your work with us and talking to us about your school. You are clearly very proud of it. You attend a good school and you make good progress and reach very good standards in your work. We thought that your development as young people was excellent. We were impressed by your politeness and excellent behaviour.

We were very interested to learn of the responsibilities that you take in school and the work of the school council, and also your eco work. You clearly enjoy school very much. Your attendance is excellent. We were very impressed with your joyful singing in assembly.

The staff take excellent care of you and the teachers make your lessons interesting. The school governors do an excellent job in making sure that you have the best possible provision.

There are just two improvements that we have asked the school to make in order to improve further. First, we have asked the school to provide you with more opportunities to develop your skills in subjects like design and technology and art. Second, the staff who have responsibility for different subjects would like to be trained so that they can monitor their different responsibilities better and learn more about how data of your progress can be used more effectively to improve your standards even more.

Thank you once again for your help during our visit. We hope that you will continue to do well, reach the ambitions that you have for yourselves and become good adult citizens later in life. We wish you all the very best.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sudworth

Lead Inspector