

Fairhouse Community Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114905
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326089
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	147
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Nikki Body
Headteacher	Mrs Glenys Jones
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Long Riding Basildon Essex SS14 1QP

Age group	4–7
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2009
Inspection number	326089

Telephone number

01268 523971

Fax number

01268 526389

Age group 4–7

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This infant school serves the local area. Eligibility for free school meals is usually about twice the national average: currently this represents about a third of the school population. The school has fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and fewer pupils learning English as an additional language than is typical nationally. The proportion of pupils who have additional learning needs is gradually increasing. Currently, a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months, following an unsettled period of leadership with five different headteachers over the previous six years. Over recent years there have been many changes in teaching staff. More than half of the current teaching team joined the school after January 2008. Currently, there are four governor vacancies.

The school provides a breakfast club for up to fifteen pupils each morning. There is also an independent nursery provision on the school site which is managed privately.

The school's Basic Skills Quality Mark was renewed in 2009. The school also gained the Quality Inclusion Mark in 2007 and the Active Mark in recognition of its work in physical education in 2008. It has held the National Healthy Schools Award since 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Fairhouse Community School provides pupils with a good education. This is because the headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, has made a swift and accurate assessment of the school's strengths and areas for development. Since her appointment she has ensured that she holds clear and accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school. This information is shared systematically with staff. It drives the decisions for school improvement and has contributed to improved teaching and learning. One of many tangible developments is the establishment of regular pupil progress meetings. The new staff team has responded very positively to the accountability that this has engendered. Consequently, subject leaders share a strong sense of purpose as the school rapidly evaluates recent developments and strives for the next step. This good leadership and management accounts for good school improvement in a short space of time. This means that the school is well placed for further development. In spite of governor vacancies, governance is satisfactory because of the diligence of individual governors. That said, governors are currently missing opportunities to monitor the work of the school more systematically and formally.

Good teaching and learning means that children make good progress. By the end of Year 2, pupils have moved closer to expected standards, although they are still below national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The percentages of pupils reaching average and above average standards increase as pupils move through the school. These proportions are on track to increase for the current Year 2 pupils, most significantly in reading and writing. The school makes good provision for pupils working at different levels within lessons. Teachers identify those pupils with particular skills as well as those with difficulties and provide special resources to meet differing needs. Consequently, different groups of pupils make similarly good progress and all are equally well prepared for their future education. The school takes close account of pupils' needs by providing a good balance of activities that support key literacy, mathematics and personal and social skills.

Pastoral care is good. Strengths in relationships between adults and pupils, combined with consistent expectations and interesting activities, contribute to pupils' good personal development and good level of enjoyment. Pupils are successfully encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and to take steps to keep themselves safe. They behave well in lessons and around the school because they like being there. This is reflected in the above average attendance rates of the vast majority of pupils. Pupils respond sensibly when given the opportunity to take responsibility, but this is mostly reserved for special occasions. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Identifying that marking in books was not very helpful, senior leaders have introduced individual feedback sessions for pupils with their teacher. They have also very successfully developed the extent to which teachers involve pupils in assessing their own learning in lessons. This is now usually done well, and on occasion the practice is exemplary. That said, this scheme is very recent and the school is still developing a consistent approach to marking in books.

A few parents do not feel sufficiently well informed or consulted. A very small group do not get their child to school often enough. However, most parents appreciate the work of the school. They recognise how much their child enjoys school. They are pleased with their child's progress and the school's concern for their welfare. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment, 'teachers are very approachable and always willing to listen to any concerns you may have and act accordingly.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes. They make good progress in their learning because teaching is consistently good and resources are well-chosen. A high emphasis is placed on developing early social, literacy and mathematical skills. Because teachers have a good understanding of how children at this age learn best, they go to impressive lengths to ensure that children feel happy and secure. Consideration for children's welfare is paramount and excellent steps are taken to welcome and work with families. Considerable care enables children to make a smooth transition into school and become ready to learn very rapidly. For example, parents are encouraged to come into school to share writing activities with their children each morning. Communication is highly appreciated by parents who say, for example, 'There is always someone there to help you' and that their children have come on in 'leaps and bounds' in their first year at school. Children in the breakfast club enjoy suitable activities and playing with older children.

The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has an astute understanding of the strengths and development areas in the provision. Good leadership and management have supported a considered response to the latest national requirements for this age group. Staff have adjusted how they plan activities so they can respond flexibly to children's interests as they arise by providing, for example, the 'baby clinic' in response to children's ideas. They keep close observations, and photographic evidence, of how well each child is doing and use these to ensure that they address what children need to do next. On occasions, adults over-direct children and so restrict their chances for discovering through their own experimentation. Staff are still developing a format for organising specific information more systematically to share progress with parents. Meanwhile children flourish in this extremely supportive environment where their personal and social development is outstanding. Even so, in spite of the good progress children make, they join Year 1 with standards that are well below the expected levels of skill for their age in key literacy and numeracy areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve governors' effectiveness by increasing their numbers and involving them in more systematically monitoring the school's work.
- Enhance pupils' personal development by providing them with more opportunities to take on responsibilities.
- Implement further strategies for working with the minority of parents who do not feel well informed, or those whose children are away too often.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Good progress during Key Stage 1 means that pupils usually reach below average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2. Exceptionally, the current pupils in Year 2 are on track this year to reach well below average standards in mathematics, but having made satisfactory progress. During this year, the school identified gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding and bought new resources to help address these. This has begun to have a positive impact for younger pupils but it is too recent to have had a full impact for older pupils. As a result of good sports opportunities, pupils reach the expected levels of skill in physical education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils enjoy school, which is appreciated by parents. This contributes to their mostly sensible and considerate behaviour in lessons, around school and when they are out in the community. On occasions, such as in a dance lesson with a specialist teacher or in an exciting part of a mathematics lesson, their behaviour is impeccable. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and to each other: most are interested in people from cultures that differ from their own. They willingly participate in the regular opportunities to reflect on personal qualities and to articulate their feelings. Pupils feel safe in school because they trust adults to take care of them. Some willingly accept responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council, but this does not meet very frequently and other regular opportunities to adopt roles and responsibilities are infrequent. Pupils increasingly understand that keeping safe and healthy depends upon choices. They are enthusiastic about physical exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school successfully enriches and accelerates pupils' learning by routinely sharing learning intentions with them. Teachers encourage them to determine how they will measure their success and invite their views about how well they have done. Positive relationships between adults and pupils are a key element of successful behaviour management, so lessons generally proceed smoothly at a good pace. On occasions, the pace of learning slows during part of a lesson or the teaching methods do not fully match the learning intention throughout the lesson. When this happens, learning is satisfactory rather than good. On other occasions learning proceeds at a cracking pace and an exceptional level of enthusiasm is generated. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, especially to pupils who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Activities are increasingly planned through topics that make links between subjects without losing the important emphasis on literacy, mathematics and good provision for personal and health education. Although the school rightly recognises that there are opportunities to extend links between subjects even further, these links, combined with varied and practical activities, contribute to pupils' good enjoyment and learning. For example, pupils enjoy producing art work illustrating the Great Fire of London, or using computers to record the development of a bean. A good variety of popular clubs enriches pupils' experience and most have waiting lists. Special programmes of work for pupils of different abilities contribute to similarly good progress for all. The school has already begun to provide new activities that help to challenge its most able pupils and this work is still developing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet the latest requirements. The school works hard to involve outside specialists and community workers to contribute to the overall provision of good guidance on health and safety matters. Teachers use a consistent system of rewards for good behaviour which pupils judge to be fair. A similar system of rewards has successfully improved attendance for all but the very few. Pupils value winning the weekly cup awarded to the class with the best attendance figures. Senior staff check pupils' progress regularly and accurately. Teachers are increasingly involved in this and a good start has been made to new systems for providing each pupil with individual feedback on how well they are doing on a weekly basis. This is a school that 'goes the extra mile' for its most vulnerable pupils, demonstrating considerable care and thought at emotionally difficult times.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has successfully promoted a good level of teamwork and shared vision for the school in a short space of time. It is to the credit of senior leaders, staff and governors that so much has been achieved so quickly, with such effective enthusiasm. Most importantly, everyone is sharing accurate assessment information, playing their part in analysing it and using it to determine priorities for further development. This shared, whole-team approach means that initiatives are understood and, in spite of their newness to their roles, subject leaders are already making an effective contribution to whole school improvement. The school has sought to increase communication with its local community by first prioritising links with parents. Although most parents are supportive of the school's work, their responses to the school's approaches have been varied. Governance is satisfactory. Systematic and formal monitoring is at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, new governors are willingly attending training, quickly gaining an understanding of the school and already asking perceptive questions that increasingly hold the school 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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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?	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**

13 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Fairhouse Infant School, Long Riding, SS14 1QP

Thank you very much for all your help when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you very much. A special thank you goes to the children who met me in the dining room and showed me some of their work. Here are some of the good things I found in your school.

- You make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science because you work hard in lessons.
- You are kind to each other and thoughtful about each other's feelings.
- You enjoy school a lot and most of you are really good about coming to school.
- You behave well in lessons and at break-times.
- You feel safe and you trust the adults in school to take care of you.
- Teachers plan interesting things for you to do in lessons and after school, and you want to join in with the clubs.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors all work well together to keep making your school even better.

I have asked them the adults in your school to give you more special jobs (like being 'litter pickers'). You can help by coming up with other ideas and continuing to behave as well as you do now. I have asked the governors to keep an even closer eye on how well everything is going in school. I have also asked the staff to keep trying to share ideas with your parents and families so that everyone understands what they are doing for you.

I hope you have fun and work hard for the rest of your summer term and that you always enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Best wishes

Yours faithfully

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector