

# Field Court Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115599
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326228
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Browning

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)	314
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Jarrett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kelly Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Courtfield Road Quedgeley Gloucester GL2 4UF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01452 720066
<b>Fax number</b>	01452 723417

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than the average primary and shares the site with an infant school. Attainment on entry is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school is undersubscribed with a falling roll. There has been considerable disruption to leadership and management since 2006. After a year of joint acting headteachers, a new headteacher was appointed with effect from September 2008. The appointment was made in April 2008 and the person appointed has worked closely with the school from that time. The school is part of a local authority (LA) programme of support to raise standards. In recognition of its work, it has Healthy Schools Status and an Active Mark award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the inadequate achievement and standards in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms weaknesses in pupils' writing skills, in their use of punctuation, spelling and presentation of their work. In mathematics, pupils' basic use of number and problem-solving skills are weak. The new headteacher has undertaken a thorough evaluation of the strengths and areas of development needed to raise standards and to ensure all pupils make the progress they should. With the good support of the local authority, she has made some significant changes in important areas of the school's work. Prior to the changes, the school has not been effective enough in moving all pupils on from their starting points. Consequently, there remains some significant underachievement, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6. There are signs that since September pupils are beginning to make better progress because of the actions taken by the headteacher, with improvements already seen, notably in pupils' behaviour and in the quality of teaching. Overwhelmingly, parents comment favourably on these recent improvements, although a significant minority still have concerns about behaviour and provision, particularly for those with specific learning needs. Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly and it is now good. The school is clear that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. Pupils welcome this change and say, 'It's much calmer now, we can learn'. Pupils say they enjoy school more. They show a satisfactory understanding of how to lead healthy, safe lives. Their attendance and personal development are satisfactory and improving. However, their weak literacy and numeracy skills mean they are not well prepared for their future. Academic guidance is a relative weakness. Most pupils know their literacy targets and numeracy targets are just being introduced. Marking is generally helpful for pupils, but they do not always know what they need to do to improve. This is why the quality of care, support and guidance is satisfactory. The curriculum is now focused strongly on reinforcing basic literacy and numeracy skills and this is helping pupils' progress across subjects. Enrichment, through the arts, sports and visits, is a stronger element of provision.

The reorganisation and re-defined responsibilities of the senior leadership team have ensured a more effective management structure. Managers are increasingly informed and are held to account. Developing their roles further is an identified priority within the school's future planning. The monitoring of the school's work is improving, with better analysis of data and tracking of pupils' progress to identify underperformance. Teaching is now satisfactory and improving. There was some good and occasionally outstanding teaching seen in the school, but it is satisfactory overall. Leadership and management have been effective in ensuring that teaching is now more sharply focused on the standards pupils should reach. Support from the local authority is helping teachers to improve pupils' writing and numeracy skills, particularly in Years 4, 5 and 6 where gaps are most apparent, but provision to increase support is at an early stage. Although often planned for, opportunities in lessons to challenge all pupils, especially higher attainers, are occasionally missed. An audit of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has taken place, and support is under review to ensure it meets their needs properly. Staff demonstrate a united determination to move the school forward and welcome the rigour that new leadership has brought.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress for all pupils in English, especially in the use of punctuation, spelling and presentation of their work, and in mathematics, especially in improving their use of number when problem solving.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good with tasks always well matched to all pupils' learning needs, especially higher attainers.
- Make better use of assessment information and targets and enhance the quality of marking, to give all pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Last year, all groups of pupils did not make the progress they should have made and consequently standards fell to well below average at the end of Year 6. Targets were not met and the trend was a declining one. Standards in mathematics were especially low. Pupils' written English is weak and this affects their progress in other subjects. In the past, pupils did not make sufficient progress, particularly in English and mathematics, as they moved up through the school. Standards and achievement are not yet good enough but pupils' progress is improving because the quality of teaching has improved. Since the start of the school year, pupils' progress, including that of higher attainers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, shows improvement and all groups are beginning to make up for 'lost ground' and are making satisfactory progress. However, these improvements are too recent to have raised standards. Weaknesses remain in pupils' writing and mathematical skills.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils generally enjoy school and demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Their good behaviour is a recent and significant improvement. Attendance is average and improving and the persistent lateness of a few at the start of the day is being tackled well. Pupils have helped to develop the outside environment, chosen equipment and designed totem poles in the grounds based on the theme of their house system. Improvements to the school learning environment and a more stringent approach to behaviour management have led to improved playtime behaviour. Pupils show a satisfactory understanding of the importance of keeping fit, healthy, and staying safe. They say they know there are adults they could talk to if they were in difficulty. Pupils take their responsibilities as peer mediators, playground buddies and house captains seriously. Although pupils have many personal attributes, preparation for their future economic well-being is hampered by their limited literacy and numeracy skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Through their strong links with schools in Crete and Latvia, pupils show an increasing understanding of diversity in the global community, and a satisfactory understanding of Britain as a diverse society. They organise fund raising events such as 'sport relief mile' but their involvement in the local community is limited.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching has improved and is now satisfactory. Learning is enhanced by positive classroom relationships and pupils' good behaviour. Pupils now stay focused and most work hard. Teaching assistants give good support when working with pupils. Teachers give clear explanations and use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding. Although they plan carefully for the range of pupils' abilities in their classes, in practice opportunities are sometimes missed to extend higher attainers. Teachers work hard to create a calm, orderly working atmosphere and pupils respond well to this. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slow with too much 'teacher talk' and limited opportunities for practical and independent learning. New assessment procedures have been introduced. These assessments and some helpful marking that guides pupils for their next steps in learning are beginning to be used to help pupils improve their work. Teachers are enthusiastically looking to develop their professional skills but opportunities to do so are a recent development and have had insufficient effect on raising pupils' attainment.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school is rightly focused on the need to develop pupils' basic skills. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 benefit from additional support specifically in writing and mathematics to help them make up for previous 'lost ground'. The school acknowledges that it needs to provide more opportunities to meet fully the needs of different groups, including higher attainers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. To capture pupils' interest, the school has developed themes across a range of subjects and each term begins with a 'Big Bang' and ends with a finale or performance. However, there are not enough planned opportunities to bring learning alive through practical experiences; this restricts pupils' enjoyment of learning. All Years 4 and 5 pupils learned to play a brass instrument last year, and in recognition of its arts enrichment the school has gained a Silver Arts Mark. As part of the School Sports Co-ordinator scheme, pupils receive coaching in several sporting activities. Partnerships with local schools have led to Year 6 pupils learning Spanish and involvement in a Forensic Science Day. Extra-curricular activities are popular and pupils had great fun making Christmas cakes.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Health and safety, risk assessment and child protection procedures are secure. Pupils are well cared for and staff provide a safe, welcoming environment. The school works well with external agencies. Links with parents are being strengthened and contacts with the infant school are growing. Targeted pupils with particular needs are supported appropriately in small groups, and most classes receive support for literacy and numeracy lessons. Arrangements are underway to strengthen provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A register of gifted and talented pupils is in place and enhancement of provision is now planned. Academic guidance is less effective than the other aspects of care. A new assessment system is in place, which is helping teachers plan the next stages of learning and check that pupils make better progress. All pupils have individual targets for literacy, and numeracy targets are being introduced, but these are not used well enough in all classes. Not all pupils know them clearly

enough or what they need to do to improve. Marking is not always helpful in showing pupils how to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has made some significant and important changes, with a clear focus on raising standards. This has led to substantially improved pupils' behaviour and an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Before her appointment, there had been an unsettled period of leadership. The headteacher has shared self-evaluation findings with all staff and governors and they are now much more closely involved in school development planning. Such action has resulted in a clear direction and brought about positive changes. A rigorous system to check pupils' progress has been introduced and is being used to inform teachers' planning and guidance for pupils. Consequently, teachers' expectations are higher and the targets they set are more challenging and better focused on national standards. The school has a satisfactory understanding of where improvements are needed. The new system to check pupils' progress is starting to provide a sharper focus on areas requiring improvement. The school's new targets are more challenging and focussed clearly on the need to raise standards. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are on course to reach these targets. The headteacher's open approach has gained the confidence of staff, governors and parents. Governors are supportive and increasingly better informed of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are also undergoing training to sharpen their role as critical friends. They are mindful of their role to promote community cohesion and are beginning to involve the local community in their plans. Given recent improvements, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve 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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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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>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
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	4

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

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

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Field Court Junior School, Gloucester, GL2 4UF

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you. Your school is not effective enough in the education it provides for you and it needs to improve. You try to work hard but too many of you are not doing as well as you should because in the past not enough has been expected of you. Things are starting to get better and you are now making better progress than you were before. Teaching is improving and is now satisfactory.

These are some important things we found out about your school:

- You have good attitudes to learning and your behaviour is good.
- Your new headteacher knows what needs to be done to improve things. Together with the staff and governors, she is working hard to improve the school and improvements are beginning to be made.
- You understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise and you told us you feel safe in school.
- The school provides interesting activities, trips and visitors to help make your learning enjoyable and, because of the links you have, you know a lot about children growing up in other countries.
- The school looks after you well and teaching assistants give you lots of help.
- We were impressed with the work of the buddies and mentors.

This is what we have asked the school to do to make it even better:

- Help you improve your skills in English, especially in writing, and the use of your mathematical skills to problem solve so that you can achieve your very best.
- Ensure that lessons are always taught really well and that the work set is at the right level for you, especially those of you who find work easier than others.
- Use information better about how well you are doing and give you clear targets to help you improve, and make marking more helpful.

You can help too by letting teachers know if the work is too easy or too hard and asking if you do not understand how to improve it.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Browning

Lead inspector