

Fawbert and Barnard Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117149
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326536
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	238
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	Mrs Sarah Evans
Headteacher	Mrs Sylvia Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Knight Street Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 9AX

Age group	3–7
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Inspection number	326536

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an additional inspector.

Inspectors explored the reason for girls reaching higher standards in reading and writing than boys at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008; how well the school promotes community cohesion; and what the school is doing to further improve attendance. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Fawbert and Barnard is an average-sized infant school. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals and the number of pupils with special educational needs are both well below average. There are no pupils with a statement of special education needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, with few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English.

The school has achieved the Hertfordshire Quality Standard for Early Years and the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Exceptional', 'excellent', 'wonderful', 'brilliant' and 'outstanding' were the adjectives most frequently used by parents to describe the school, with 'I couldn't be happier' repeated time and again. The school community know their school well, they judge it to be outstanding, and they are right!

The ethos in school is calm, harmonious and very purposeful. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are confident. They recognise and appreciate both their own achievements and those of others and demonstrate a caring attitude to one and all. The school can rightly claim that community cohesion underpins everything it does. Pupils show a strong understanding that every person is equally special and important whatever their differences. Behaviour is exemplary. They work together in pairs or groups to tease out answers to challenging problems, demonstrating a high level of independence and team-working. Pupils readily take responsibility in their classes through the range of monitor roles and through the school council. When in Year 2, they all apply for the advertised play-leader jobs, despite the training and commitment required. Pupils say they feel very safe. They are quite confident that they can seek help from adults and that any problems will be swiftly sorted out. Their claim that they love coming to school is reflected in their above average attendance. This has improved since the last inspection because the school in partnership with the junior school rightly insist that unless ill or in exceptional circumstances, children should attend school and not take time out for holidays. All pupils have regular opportunities for exercise, such as 'Take 10' aerobics, brain gym and a range of sporting activities including tennis and tag rugby. They know the value of this exercise, not only for their physical development but also for their learning. As they say, 'It wakes our brains up and helps us learn'. They have a keen awareness of healthy living and how to keep themselves safe. As a result of this outstanding level of personal development and well-being and because the school makes sure that all pupils have a very high level of basic skills, pupils are extremely well prepared for their futures.

Achievement and standards are outstanding. When they join the Nursery, children's attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. They make very good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes which continues throughout Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been significantly higher than average for several years, and in 2008 were exceptionally high, particularly in writing. The school identified that there was a difference between the standards reached by boys and girls in reading and writing but are right in their claim that there was no difference in the amount of progress each group have made. Current pupils are on track to reach their very challenging targets. Data is used with great effectiveness to make sure that work is pin-pointed to the needs of each and every pupil and all are given a high degree of challenge at exactly the right level. Pupils are not allowed to fall behind. Any potential underachievement is immediately identified and action is taken to make sure these pupils catch up. As a result all pupils make at least good progress with many making exceptional progress by the time they leave.

All aspects of provision are outstanding. There is real consistency in the quality of teaching. All teachers plan and deliver lessons which are fast-paced and interactive, and truly engage all pupils whatever their preferred learning style. The use of technology to enhance teaching is exemplary. Well-trained teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers and considerably enhance pupils' learning. Activities, which contain a sophisticated level of problem solving, are fun, motivating and varied. They are designed not only to enable pupils to learn

key skills throughout the curriculum, but also cleverly use pupils' ideas as a starting point. For example, a project about different forms of life evolved into a study of Charles Darwin's work. Another on the theme of homes became a study of castles and medieval life. This outstanding curriculum is further enriched by visits out, visitors and after school clubs. Parents recognise that care, guidance and support are of very high quality, and inspectors agree. Parental comments included 'My child has developed and blossomed here: children are treated as individuals with each child's needs taken into consideration'. Systems to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health and safety are robust. Academic support is also outstanding. Teachers enable pupils to identify and explain the features of high quality work and give them clear guidance as to how to improve their work.

This rich provision and the outstanding standards reached by pupils are the result of highly effective, skilled leadership and management. Parents' comments capture the key characteristics of leadership. They say 'Mrs Wilson is a great leader: her charisma and dedication influence pupils, parents and the enthusiastic and equally dedicated staff' and, 'The school lives up to its excellent reputation. Staff continually seek innovative and interesting ways to improve' due to the, 'Vision that encourages and enables new approaches and ideas'. Practice is consistent due to high expectations and to rigorous and well-embedded self-evaluation procedures, which accurately identify areas for improvement. Well-informed governors know the school through information received from the headteacher and staff, from their own monitoring of the school's work and through their linked roles with individual classes. Governors hold the school to account effectively, for example, through the termly meetings of the teaching and learning committee which is made up of all governors, as the governing body know this is such a critically important area. Resources are used very well. The school provides outstanding value for money and has outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to a wonderful start in the Nursery. They settle into routines quickly because procedures are clear and practical. The involvement and liaison with parents is outstanding. Parents are rightly pleased with the excellent provision in this phase of learning, which is very well managed by the dynamic leader. She is enthusiastically supported by her able team who always have the children's best interests at heart. The children progress very well in the Nursery with especially strong achievement in personal, social and emotional development. This progress is built upon and continued into the Reception classes so that by the time they are ready to move into Year 1, the majority have attained the goals expected and many have exceeded them. Thorough assessment procedures help the staff plan activities that take into account children's prior experiences and learning needs. The strong focus on teaching letters and sounds makes a significant contribution to the outstanding progress in early literacy skills. In one lesson seen, a teacher encouraged the children to sound out complex words like 'robot'. This fun approach to learning along with good levels of support and encouragement are helping to develop high levels of independence. Children gain an increasingly broad understanding across all areas of learning. They learn to apply their knowledge gained from one area to another because activities are planned to do this. Children's welfare is given the utmost priority and this is a key factor in helping them keep safe and to flourish. Learning opportunities both indoors and outside are well organised and creative so that all children are able to access them safely. Parents are very pleased with the start their children make and typically say, 'My child has had a wonderful start to his education. The school provides a very caring and nurturing environment'.

What the school should do to improve further

Inspectors could not identify any significant issues that were not already being addressed successfully by the school.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	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	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fawbert and Barnard Infant School, Sawbridgeworth CM21 9AX

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school and meeting you all. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us. We were very impressed by the way you all work together and the respect you all show each other. I know that you really enjoy being at your school and find your work really interesting. We think your school is outstanding, and I know your parents agree with us! Lots of them say it is an excellent school and that they 'could not be happier'!

The adults at your school are a fantastic team. They look after you extremely well and, importantly, want you to do as well as you can in your learning in every possible way. Because they know you so well, they are able to plan work for you that is not only at exactly the right level, but also challenges you to make sure you can all do your very best. Although we thought very hard, we couldn't find anything that your school needs to do to improve that they are not already doing. That is exceptional!

I hope you continue to have an interesting and exciting summer term.

With best wishes

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector