

Falconer's Hill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121887
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327591
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	David Mankelow

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)	159
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	44
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Holloway
Headteacher	C P Wilkins
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ashby Road Daventry NN11 0QF
Telephone number	01327 702878
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Falconer's Hill is a smaller than average infant school. The proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication difficulties is well above average. The percentage eligible for free school meals is also above average. An increasing number of pupils are newly arrived from overseas and at the early stage of learning English. The school has received a number of national awards, including Healthy School, Active Mark and Green Flag Eco-School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Amongst its many major strengths are excellent teaching, exemplary pastoral care and an outstanding curriculum. These strengths result in pupils' excellent personal development and outstanding achievement. Children enter the Reception classes with levels of skills that vary widely from year to year. Sometimes skills are well below levels expected for their age, sometimes below and sometimes broadly in line with expectations. There is also a wide range of skill levels within each year group. From their starting points, children make excellent progress. Results of statutory assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2008 were above previous national averages, especially for the proportion reaching above the expected level in writing. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A very large majority take the opportunity to attend the daily 'good morning' sessions when they spend 15 minutes alongside their children discussing their work with them. These sessions make a significant contribution to the cohesion of the school community. A parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'The "good morning" time is invaluable as it gives us a chance to have daily contact with both the class teachers and the headteacher.' Pupils have a deep understanding of the needs of others in the wider and indeed global communities. When discussing the charitable work of Samuel Pepys, pupils in Year 2 compared it immediately with their own sponsorship of six pupils in Buhoma School, Uganda.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and accurately, and use the information gained to plan further work that is well matched to pupils' individual prior attainment. A team of outstanding, well trained learning support assistants provide excellent help to pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stage of learning English. As a result, most of these pupils make the same excellent progress as their classmates.

The school's exciting and stimulating curriculum results in pupils' excellent achievement and outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. From the time they enter the school, pupils take part in conservation and recycling projects, and are very proud to generate their own electricity from a wind turbine and solar panels. They were disappointed though, that during the week of the inspection they had only generated enough power to run three computers because there was no wind and very little sun! Most pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school because, as one parent put it, 'The staff cannot do enough for the children.' However, a very small minority of pupils have absences for reasons other than illness and this reduces their achievement.

The leadership and management of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, are outstanding. The headteacher's vision, energy and enthusiasm are shared by staff and governors and result in the school always looking for ways to be even better. Governors and all staff are involved in monitoring the school's provision and its impact and they do so accurately. Pupils and parents are also consulted and their views are incorporated into the school's improvement plan, which very effectively drives continued development. The school is in an excellent position to maintain its strengths and to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Reception classes is outstanding. There are excellent induction procedures and the classrooms are very safe and secure so children settle quickly and happily into school routines. At the time of the inspection many children had only been in school for three days and already they were familiar with routines such as washing their hands before snack time. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding because early assessments, made in home visits, are used to ensure that individual needs are met exceptionally well. Children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning because teaching is highly effective. There is an excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff provide activities that fully engage and motivate the children, for example, 'roll-a-ball'. The teacher demonstrated a painting technique by rolling a ball through paint on paper in a frame. Children patiently took turns in doing it for themselves, one simply responding, 'Wow!' when seeing the results.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with parents to reduce the number of unnecessary absences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

At the time of the inspection, the pupils in Year 2 had only just moved up from Year 1. This group entered Reception with skills that were below those expected for their age, but already their attainment is above expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents outstanding progress. Standards in information and communication technology are also above expected levels because skills are taught imaginatively in many subject areas. For example, pupils are particularly skilful in taking digital pictures, as they showed when capturing shades of green and different patterns and textures for their art lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' enjoyment of this school is summed up by a past pupil who came in to talk to the inspectors and said, 'If I seem a bit upset it's because I miss this school so much.' However, a very small minority of pupils miss too much school for unnecessary reasons. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle because this underpins their daily lives at school. They make excellent use of the wide range of facilities available at playtime and lead very active lives. They feel very safe and told inspectors that, on the rare occasions that bullying occurs, it is sorted out quickly. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved, courteous and have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong because of the staff's example and high expectations. They readily approach an adult if they have any worries. They genuinely follow the school motto, 'We care about everything', which was demonstrated by the way they looked after a caterpillar that was found at lunchtime. Every pupil is valued and made to feel that they make an important contribution to the school community. They do so by being eco-kids, power rangers, play buddies and school councillors. Pupils understand the economic and environmental benefits of recycling. With their high achievement in basic skills and their excellent social skills, they are very well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching throughout the school is characterised by excellent relationships so pupils have extremely positive attitudes and try to do their best at all times. Relationships with parents are also excellent, which results in them feeling genuinely involved in the life of the school and contributing positively to their children's learning. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge so their explanations are clear, and this makes a major contribution to pupils' high achievement. Teachers make it clear at the beginning of lessons what it is that pupils will be learning and continuously check to ensure that all are on track to succeed. Lessons usually end with pupils sharing what they have learnt and teachers take note of this in order to plan the next day's lessons. Pupils' achievements and their targets for their next stages of development are shared and celebrated with parents and the headteacher, which has a significant impact on raising their self-esteem.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A major contribution to pupils' enjoyment and achievement is the way that teachers plan lessons that comply with statutory curriculum requirements, but also link subjects together to make work interesting. For example, sunflowers grown through environmental science work are used to stimulate paintings in the style of Van Gogh. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise their basic skills in many subjects. For example, in writing about Fizz the falcon's travels around the world they learn about life in other countries while developing spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors, notably the local country park and the park ranger. Pupils' sense of community involvement is demonstrated by their dismay when they heard of vandalism at the park. An excellent range of lunchtime clubs contributes significantly to pupils' academic achievement and personal development. Staff run these at lunchtime to ensure that they are available to all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a school where not only does every child matter, but every family matters. Outside agencies, including the Parent Support Adviser, are used very effectively to support families who find themselves in difficulty. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and meet current government requirements. In terms of academic guidance, pupils know precisely how well they are doing and what they need to do next because teachers give them regular verbal feedback about their work and set them individual targets for improvement that are clearly understood.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's inspirational leadership motivates all staff and pupils to do their best and promotes very strong teamwork. A parent summed up the feeling of most about the headteacher when commenting that 'Her staff are affected by her commitment and enthusiasm and it reflects

in their teaching.' The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the local community, as shown in their conservation work. For their age, they also have outstanding global awareness through links with Buhoma School in Uganda which gives a genuine understanding of life in a developing country. Subject co-ordinators make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement by keeping a close check on it and making sure that high quality support is given where needed. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the inclusion manager are similarly successful for pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language. Governance is excellent. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. Many visit regularly and then report back to the full governing body on what they have found. They very effectively balance their roles of support and of holding 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?	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	2
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

19 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Falconer's Hill Infant School, Daventry, NN11 0QF

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago with another inspector. Thank you very much for telling us all about your school and for making us feel so welcome. I am writing now to tell you what we found.

'Wow!' is what one of you said when you had rolled your ball through the paint and saw the pattern that it made, and 'Wow!' is what the inspectors thought when we were in your school.

Most of you and your parents believe that you go to an excellent school and we agree with you. Your headteacher is so enthusiastic that she gets all of you and your teachers to do your best all of the time. Whatever your level when you join the school, you all make excellent progress. This is because the teaching is excellent and all the adults in the school care for you exceptionally well. This also means that you feel safe and are happy to tell somebody if you are worried about anything. Most of you thoroughly enjoy coming to school because your teachers plan interesting lessons and bring in lots of visitors, like the park ranger. One of the many things that impressed us was the way that you recycle so many things and make your own electricity. We were also really pleased to see how well you understand the targets in your target books.

There is just one thing that we have asked your teachers to do to make your school even better. Sometimes a few of you have time off school without a very good reason. So, we have asked the teachers to talk to your parents or carers to see if you can come to school every day unless you are poorly.

You can help your teachers a lot by continuing to work hard and behave well.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Mankelow Lead inspector