

Ferndale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135522
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	333760
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Anthony Shield

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	322
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	Malcolm Channon
Headteacher	Michael Welsh
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wiltshire Avenue Swindon SN2 1NX
Telephone number	01793 332425
Fax number	01793 332427

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ferndale Community Primary School is a new school, created out of the merger of two schools in September 2008. While most pupils are from a White British background, there are small and increasing numbers of pupils from a wide range of other ethnic heritages. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also increasing and is currently around 10%. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Ferndale Pre- school, a privately run nursery, operates from a building adjacent to the school, and most of its children go on to attend the school's Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception class) at the age of four years. The current headteacher has been seconded for one year from a neighbouring school to oversee the amalgamation of the two schools. A new headteacher has been appointed from September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Ferndale Community Primary school is satisfactory. However, there are a number of good features and the school has made tremendous strides since opening less than one year ago. A strong commitment to valuing pupils as individual children shines through. This results in delightfully friendly, polite and confident young people. Their good personal development, inspired by the school's good care, guidance and support, is perhaps the most striking feature of the school. The school's newly adopted motto, 'everyone learns, everyone cares', is already woven into the fabric of the school.

The driving force behind the new school has been the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. His vision, widely shared by all staff and governors, has guided and united the school in a common bond. Teamwork and shared ideals are the hallmark of the school's good leadership and management. Already the school has established a clear identity. Most parents are supportive of the new school, but a small minority have concerns about behaviour and the quality of communication. These concerns were investigated, but not borne out by inspection evidence. The school has set about raising expectations of standards and behaviour and has been successful in both. Increasing numbers of parents attend parents' evenings and the school has imaginative plans to improve communication through new technologies.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Thereafter, progress is satisfactory. While standards are broadly average, and a little lower in Key Stage 1, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. They are improving and some pupils are making good progress, but this is not consistent through the school. Progress accelerates as pupils move through Years 5 and 6, but is not consistently good for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Writing, and boys' writing in particular, is a relative weakness and an impediment to faster progress across a number of subjects. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although much is good and some is outstanding. Classrooms are lively and vibrant environments and teaching, at its best, is characterised by good pace and good levels of challenge, and is supported by a good curriculum. However, this is not consistently the case. Some teaching is over-directed and pupils are not given opportunities to work things out for themselves, or the skills to know how to improve their own work. At times, not enough demands are placed on the more able pupils.

The school's careful approach to the support and guidance of all pupils is at the heart of its philosophy. Pupils are known well to all staff and feel safe and confident. While pupils' emotional well-being is given a high priority, and the support for vulnerable pupils is particularly good, their academic support is also thorough and designed to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can. Regular reviews of pupils' progress keep a close tab on how well each pupil is doing. Intervention programmes are proving effective when needed.

Pupils enjoy school, and take pride in belonging to the new school. Attendance is good. In lessons, good attitudes ensure that pupils make progress. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is thoughtful and courteous. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and contribute to the running of the school in a number of different ways, including in the appointment of the new headteacher. Given what has already been achieved, the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Reception classes enables children to get a good start. There are some outstanding features, notably the excellent attention to children's welfare and their extremely good personal development. Children joined the school with skills well below expected levels, particularly in communication and language. They are making good progress and are given good support and encouragement to achieve well, becoming happy and confident learners. Good quality planning and organisation encourage a love of learning. Well-designed activities develop the full range of skills and children's self-confidence in choosing and working alongside others. Relationships between the children and with adults develop securely. Children's progress is assessed carefully and tasks adapted and matched to individual children's needs. The outside area is used exceptionally well. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there have been significant steps in improving the provision since opening in September. Children are well prepared for entry to Year 1, although their language and literacy development remains weaker than other aspects of their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills and confidence in writing, especially the boys'.
- Ensure more consistently good progress in numeracy and literacy, particularly for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and for more able pupils.
- Develop pupils' learning skills and encourage more active and independent learning, with pupils taking more responsibility, solving problems on their own and working out for themselves how they might improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Since the opening of the new school, there has been a sharp focus on raising expectations and achievement. This remains central to the school's comprehensive development plan. Standards are broadly average overall, although pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics tends to be higher than writing through the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but there are pockets of good progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Intervention support programmes have already made a difference to the progress pupils are making in reading. While there is more to be done, particularly to ensure all pupils have good writing skills and that more able pupils in both Key Stage 1 and 2 fully achieve their potential, the school has well-considered plans to tackle this. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's approach to ensuring pupils that are respected and valued encourages good personal development. Relationships are good and the school has done exceptionally well to mould two schools together so quickly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are reflective and respectful during assemblies. In lessons, they work purposefully

and are keen to please and talk about their work. However, many pupils lack confidence in their ability to work independently and without the help of the teacher. Behaviour is good and has been improving since the school opened. There have been no exclusions. Pupils are confident that any bullying will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is infectious and they talk excitedly about their participation in school trips and activities. Pupils know very well how to keep safe. Their understanding of healthy lifestyles is good and they are aware of the importance of regular exercise. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, and the school council is active. They also have a growing understanding of their responsibility to the local, national and international community. They are developing satisfactory workplace skills for later life. Pupils' good personal and social skills contribute much to the school's happy atmosphere.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classrooms are lively and stimulating places in which pupils are encouraged to work hard and to do their best. Planning is carefully thought through and activities are usually well designed to gain the pupils' interest and attention. Much attention has been given to ensuring lessons are geared to the needs of individual pupils and that learning is brisk and keeps pupils on their toes. Much of the best teaching does just that. However, this is not consistently the case, and overall, although teaching is improving, its impact on pupils' learning and progress is only satisfactory. Sometimes, there is a lack of challenge for the more able pupils, and explanations fail to clarify things when pupils do not understand. Support for the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is effective. Teaching assistants, who are fully involved with teachers in planning the work, provide well-targeted support. Many pupils lack confidence in their ability to succeed and are encouraged through regular use of praise. Feedback, both through marking and discussion, is usually good, but pupils are not always encouraged to think for themselves how they might improve their own work. Pupils enjoy opportunities to think things out for themselves, but sometimes opportunities are missed to do this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum gives due weight to the teaching of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, but also gives appropriate time to other subjects. Planning in teams is effective in ensuring consistency across year groups. There is a good range of well-supported extra-curricular activities, and visits and visitors make an important contribution, helping to ensure interest and make the curriculum more relevant to everyday life. Increasingly, writing is being planned across the curriculum, although this remains a weaker aspect. Intervention programmes for those at risk of underachievement are effectively planned. A well-planned personal, social and health programme supports pupils' good personal development. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to design activities that encourage active and independent learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's strong commitment to the care and well-being of all pupils is evident in the culture of good care and support which all staff help nurture. This is best seen in the concern shown for vulnerable pupils and those at risk. Learning mentors provide sensitive and well-targeted support. Relationships with outside agencies are good and ensure extra support is provided when needed. The increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who arrive at school mid-year are well supported and enable them to integrate seamlessly into the school. Health and safety procedures are comprehensive and safeguarding, and child protection procedures fully meet requirements. Procedures for supporting pupils' academic progress are thorough and provide a reliable benchmark for measuring progress and identifying potential underachievement. Regular meetings of phase teams to discuss individual pupils ensures that careful attention is paid to all pupils' academic progress. The systems are in place, but there is more to be done before performance data is reliably used to ensure all pupils fulfil their potential and raise expectations and achievement even further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Outstanding leadership by the headteacher has quickly established a vision and purpose for the new school. He is well supported by his senior team who lead with confidence and energy in their areas of responsibility. All staff have welcomed the headteacher's agenda for change and have relished the opportunity to make a contribution. The sense of teamwork and shared endeavour is palpable. The school development plan provides a realistic and appropriate framework for the future. Monitoring is regular and thorough and, along with the school's comprehensive performance data, enables school self-evaluation to be good. Governors have come together well to support the new school and, following training, are making an increasingly effective contribution to strategic school planning and monitoring. The school's resources are very well husbanded. In many ways, the school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. An audit of its provision has already been carried out, but the school has not had time to properly evaluate its provision.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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	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	3
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**

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferndale Community Primary School, Swindon SN2 1NX

- We very much enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming, and for helping us during the inspection. We agree with a lot of what you told us and are not surprised that you enjoy coming to school so much. Ferndale is providing you with a satisfactory education but is getting better all the time, and there are lots of good things about it. Some of these are as follows:
- You enjoy coming to school and try hard to do your best in lessons.
- Most of you behave very well. We found you polite and kind to one another.
- Everybody at school gets on well together.
- While some of you are making good progress, progress for most is only satisfactory and there is still some catching up to do, particularly in writing.
- Teachers plan lessons well and your classrooms are lively and interesting places to be.
- The school takes great care of you, ensuring that you feel safe and well looked after.
- The headteacher and all the teachers are working successfully to make your school even better.

We have asked the teachers to do the following in order to make things even better:

- Make sure that you make better progress in writing, particularly the boys.
- Ensure that all of you make good progress, especially pupils in Years 3 and 4 and those of you who are capable of the highest standards.
- Take the opportunity to sort things out on your own and be confident to know how to improve your work.

You can certainly help the teachers with these things. Thank you once again for your help during our visit, and good luck with your work in the future!

Yours faithfully

Tony Shield

Lead Inspector