

Ferrars Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109540
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	337317
Inspection dates	21–22 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	329
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Anne McCarthy
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 24 lessons, and 12 teachers were seen. They also undertook other general observations, including displays of the pupils' work. All classes were observed but not all the teachers seen were full-time staff as a few remained stranded overseas at the end of the Easter holiday. Inspectors held meetings with the governors, staff, a local authority school improvement adviser, the school council, head boy and girl, and house captains. They talked informally with other pupils and met with parents and carers at the start of the school day. Inspectors looked at documentation including policies, development planning and self-evaluation, monitoring files, curriculum and safeguarding documents. They examined minutes of governing body meetings, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, local authority reports on the school and information provided for parents and carers. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 120 parents and carers, 89 pupils and 19 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the work the school is doing to raise pupils' attainment and achievement
- the ways by which the school is working to improve the progress of all pupils as they move through the school from Years 3 to 6
- the impact of the school's strategies to ensure consistently good or better teaching and learning throughout the school
- whether the pupils' personal development is a strength of the school.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized school. It serves a diverse, multicultural, local community. Pupil mobility is increasingly high with an above average percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school during the course of any academic year. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well-above average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the large majority having moderate learning, or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The headteacher joined the school, as consultant headteacher, shortly before its 2007 inspection and has subsequently been appointed on a full-time basis. Half the staff have been appointed since the last inspection. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status. It is recognised by the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA) as a centre of good practice in the management and development of staff.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Attainment in the Year 6 national tests is average overall, but science is below average. Most pupils make satisfactory progress. School performance is affected by a transient local population and, on average, a fifth of the pupils from all year groups change annually. Most pupils joining the school either have special educational needs and/or disabilities or come from minority ethnic groups with English as an additional language. Many of these new pupils are at an early stage of English language development. Such pupils and their families are supported very well, and in this the role played by the school's family workers is exemplary. Pupils' personal development is a real strength. The contribution they themselves make to the school as a multicultural community is excellent, and valued highly within the wider community. Since the last inspection, there have been steady but important improvements. There has been a three-year trend of improvement in English, and a similar two-year trend in mathematics. In 2009, those pupils who had been at the school for all four years attained average results in English, mathematics and science. Pupils clearly enjoy school, and this is reflected in improved attendance rates, which are now above average. The school has worked hard to achieve this. Good curriculum developments have ensured a more creative approach, and the individual needs of pupils are being met increasingly well. There is now strength in depth in the leadership of the school, from subject and year-group leaders to governors. All are making a positive contribution to school development. Their work is underpinning the school's good capacity for further, sustained improvement which is supported by its gradually improving record over the last three years.

The school evaluates its performance closely, analyses well what it needs to improve further and this is reflected accurately in its good development planning. Attainment in science is not high enough, nor is the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels by Year 6 across the three subjects tested and assessed nationally. The new science coordinator has worked effectively with senior leaders and governors to produce an appropriate action plan to raise standards. This plan is in the process of implementation but has still to impact on attainment. Improved assessment methods are being planned, in line with the national strategy for assessing pupils' performance. Across English, mathematics and science, work is being undertaken to develop further both teaching skills and lesson planning to provide increased challenge for more-able pupils. Some subject leaders are still acquiring management skills in the analysis, evaluation and use of data on pupils' performance. This is being enabled by the good tracking and assessment information currently coordinated by the headteacher.

Teaching and use of assessment information are satisfactory overall. There is

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increasingly good and occasionally outstanding practice, but this has still to impact on raising progress above satisfactory levels. There is a strong determination on the part of all staff to work together to improve the quality of teaching to underpin pupils' learning and secure improved progress. There remain inconsistencies in approach, particularly in the use of written feedback to pupils and the use of assessment in lessons. However, school and local authority monitoring confirms that the proportion of consistently good or better teaching is now greater than at any time in the last few years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement across the school by:
 - improving standards in science throughout all year groups
 - introducing new assessment methods for science from September 2010
 - providing increased challenge in the work provided for more-able pupils, so that more can reach high levels of attainment by Year 6
 - increasing subject leaders' skills in the analysis, evaluation and use of data on pupils' performance.
 - Increase the proportion of good or better teaching across the school by:
 - ensuring a more consistent approach to the use of written feedback to pupils to aid their understanding of what they need to do to improve
 - ensuring a more consistent approach to the use of assessment in lessons, linked more firmly to objectives for learning and the school's planning for the support of individuals and groups.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

School tracking of performance shows that most pupils, across the different ethnic, gender and ability groups, are making the nationally expected two levels of progress between Years 3 and 6. The large majority of pupils, irrespective of when they join the school, make satisfactory progress from their attainment on entry. This includes pupils with a special educational need and/or disability and those for whom English is an additional language. Standards by Year 6 are currently average in mathematics, but remain below in science. The school's improvement in English continues, and this benefits well those whose first language is not English. In an outstanding Year 3 lesson, for example, all pupils were making good progress in their work on writing formal letters. In a similarly outstanding Year 6 lesson, pupils made excellent progress in persuasive writing. Such work reflects the school's successful focus on pupils' writing skills. 'Brainteasers' help pupils to make links between subjects, and develop well their thinking skills. Year 5 pupils talked enthusiastically about how playing 'battleships'

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helped them to use grid references in geography mapwork. Progress in science is hampered by difficulties in understanding specialist, technical vocabulary. Some Year 6 pupils still have difficulty in matching the components of an electrical circuit to symbols in diagrams. Similar limitations in pupils' understanding of scientific concepts were seen in other year groups.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and often outstanding in lessons. These strengths arise from the care and support they receive, and the school's consistent approach to behaviour management. Pupils are keen to learn. They are invariably polite, courteous and demonstrate a strong sense of right and wrong. Almost all pupils show a good understanding of the very few who have difficulty in managing their own behaviour. A wide range of pupils' take on responsibility readily, and show due respect for each other. In such ways they make an outstanding contribution to the school as a cohesive community. Pupils are developing well their roles as young British citizens, and the building of a harmonious multi-cultural society. They make a positive contribution to the school's decision-making processes, not only through the school council but also the prefect system and peer mentors. Pupils help to lead assemblies, which boosts their confidence in a public arena. Most show a good awareness of the benefits of leading a healthy and active lifestyle, and make informed selections at mealtimes, although the contents of some lunchboxes do not always reflect sufficiently healthy options. There are high levels of participation in a range of sporting activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Learning is supported well through positive working relationships. Lessons are nearly always structured and organised well, with tasks which meet most pupils' needs. Some lessons do not always sufficiently challenge for more able pupils. Nevertheless, the pace of most lessons is good, promoting variety and pupils' interest. The use of talking partners and discussion work enables pupils to make good progress in exploring and sharing their ideas. Most teachers are skilful in their use of questioning to enable pupils to explain their thinking. However, the practical use of assessment and the checking of pupils' progress and understanding throughout lessons are inconsistent. In such cases, the link between assessment strategies, pupils' learning and the criteria to judge how well they have gained the intended knowledge and understanding are not sharp enough. Behaviour management is good and enables pupils to work cooperatively and sensibly. The active role of teaching assistants in supporting those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who are at an early stage of English language development, is particularly good.

The well-balanced curriculum includes a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, which contributes significantly to pupils' good personal development. The new creative curriculum is enabling the increased involvement of pupils in learning. Through the school council, pupils have been involved in the long-term review of curriculum planning, and contributed to improvements. This has led to improved pupil engagement and enjoyment of the curriculum. The regular use of 'brainteasers' is supporting well mathematics and science through the development of pupils' problem solving and investigation skills. Links with literacy in order to help pupils develop a more technical science vocabulary have been introduced, but are still to have full impact on attainment. Creative expression through art and dance promotes pupils' enjoyment in learning. Attractive displays of well-presented pupils' work instil their confidence and pride in learning. Pupils are developing increased skills in use of information and communication technology, including through the use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. The curriculum is enhanced well through purposeful educational trips and the wide range of extra-curricular activities which pupils undertake.

Pupils and their families matter in this school. This priority impacts on the care children show for each other, and the way that barriers are removed so that all can access learning. The pastoral care team, made up of family workers and learning mentors, provides very good provision for all pupils. They plan well according to the needs of each individual and are both proactive and reactive to any issues which may arise. Pupils and their families often see this team as their first point of call for support. Transition

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into Year 3 and onto secondary school is planned well, if necessary with one-to-one help and guidance which is much appreciated by the pupils. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well, and their progress is reviewed regularly. The special educational needs coordinator is relatively new in post. A full evaluation of pupils' performance according to their category of need is still being completed. This is necessary in order to accelerate further pupils' progress and ensure suitably challenging targets are set, including for the gifted and/or talented.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Strong and well-focused support from the headteacher and other senior staff is just one element of the good partnership approach within the school. All staff returning their questionnaire agree that the school is led well, their contribution valued, that they are involved in self-evaluation and know what the school is trying to achieve. Some middle leaders are new in post and still developing their management skills. All are able to point to instances where their initiatives have been adopted, but the overall impact on attainment is still being realised. Leaders at all levels are involved actively in the promotion of professional development and the monitoring and leadership of teaching and learning. A member of the governing body has specific responsibility for governor training to keep the school up-to-date. Consequently, statutory duties, including safeguarding and child protection are secure. There are good partnerships established with a range of agencies, and the local authority, in order to support vulnerable pupils. The staff and governing body reflect well the ethnic diversity of the school and local community. The school has a very good action plan to support the continued promotion of its excellent community cohesion, and this is being incorporated successfully into main school planning. It is now working on fine-tuning, for example by promoting and developing further its international links to enhance its outstanding local multicultural contribution. The school works hard to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. Development planning to raise attainment and improve pupils' progress is focused well on resolving any variations in performance. The school maintains good records, and all required documentation and information was provided. However, some specific records and documents maintained on computer by different staff were not always located readily. Improved indexing to aid further the school's systematic monitoring and evaluation systems is now necessary. Overall, the good impact of the school's leadership

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and management can be summed up by one pupil who wrote, 'I enjoy school. It is very educational and a safe environment. I learn a lot, the teachers are very kind, and they solve your problems.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire are very happy with the school. There are particularly high levels of satisfaction with teaching and safeguarding. Almost all say their child enjoys school. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns about behaviour. There are a very few pupils with behavioural difficulties, but inspectors find that they are managed very well by the school. A few parents and carers feel the school does not take their views into account. There are very good opportunities for them to have discussions with their children's teachers or the family workers. Most are happy with the opportunities provided to raise any concerns. Through written comments and in discussion at the school gate, parents and carers commented positively on the ways the school is able to meet their children's individual needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ferrars Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 329 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	49	58	48	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	52	56	47	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	58	48	58	48	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	30	76	63	8	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	34	77	64	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	35	72	60	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	34	73	61	4	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	34	71	59	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	29	74	62	8	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	35	67	56	7	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	21	83	69	4	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	50	42	65	54	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	40	65	54	5	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferrars Junior School, Luton, LU4 0ES

There is a notice on the door leading from the staffroom corridor into your school. It reads, 'Only positive attitudes allowed beyond this point.' We found very positive attitudes on both sides of that door, not least from you. We would like to thank you for the ways in which you helped us to understand what your school is all about.

These are some of the things about your school with which we were most impressed.

You make an excellent contribution to the school and local community.

The school helps you to grow and develop well as future citizens.

Staff at your school work very well with your families to help you learn.

Your attendance at school is improving and is now above average.

Your teachers, and other adults at the school, take good care of you.

Your headteacher, other senior teachers and governors lead your school well.

Your teachers are keen to look for ways in which they can help you to learn and improve your progress. We have asked them to continue their work to raise your attainment and achievement beyond the national average. They will do this by improving your standards in science and challenging even further those of you who are more able. Your teachers and subject leaders will also be working on new ways of assessing your work and progress. They will ensure they reinforce the good help and advice they give you in class through the written feedback they provide in your books. This is to help you understand even better how to improve.

Finally, we appreciated the warm welcome you gave to us during the inspection. Your contribution to the school community is an important one. We were struck by your enthusiasm when you sang in assembly: 'All you've got to do is open your eyes. Your world is full of treasures. Your treasures are your friends.' Please continue to make good friends with all visitors to your school.

With all best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Miller

Lead inspector

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