

Falconhurst School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110355
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	337474
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	371
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephan Suchy
Headteacher	Rod Hudson
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They also held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, governors' minutes, planning documents, pupils' work and questionnaires returned from pupils, staff and 161 parents and carers.

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

- the impact of the school's initiatives to improve the performance of different groups of pupils, particularly White British boys in mathematics and writing
- the achievement of more-able pupils at both key stages, to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- the effectiveness of leaders in bringing about consistently good teaching and learning and putting into motion improvement strategies that make a demonstrable impact on pupils' outcomes.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. Two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils are from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups. More than one fifth of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. One fifth of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs mainly relate to difficulties in communication, or in behavioural, emotional and social aspects of their development. The school has a designated department for 10 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school other than at the usual times. Since the last inspection, the school has been through a turbulent time with regard to its staffing. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into a Nursery and two Reception classes. There is a breakfast club, which is managed by the governors.

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

3

Main findings

Falconhurst School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good. As a consequence, pupils behave well, have good relationships with adults and other pupils and respect each other's achievements. This cohesive community provides a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment where pupils feel cared for, safe, secure and are ready to learn. The good leadership, resolve and determination of the headteacher, ably assisted by his deputy headteacher, have enabled the school to overcome the difficulties of frequent changes in staff and pupils and to make significant strides in improving progress and raising attainment. As a result, the school has successfully reversed a downward trend in attainment and has moved forward securely over the last three years. The successful actions taken to address deficiencies have been based on a clear and accurate review of the school's performance. This has ensured continuing improvements in pupils' progress and enjoyment of learning and confirms the school's satisfactory capacity to continue improving. Children start school at levels that are below those expected for their age, particularly with regard to their language and mathematical development. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress through the rest of the school to reach average levels of attainment at the end of Year 6.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Much is better than this, for example when the pace of learning is brisk and expectations are high, pupils' progress is good. However, because the good and better teaching is currently not shared sufficiently widely, and because of staff changes, such quality is not consistent across the school. The impact of initiatives has not been monitored as closely as it might have been and, in some areas, accountability has slipped. Consequently, there are a few lessons where teachers' expectations are not high enough and assessment is not used effectively to meet the learning needs of pupils. In such lessons, pupils, particularly the more able, are not challenged sufficiently. Pupils make the best progress when teachers' marking helps to improve their work, but again, this is not always the case.

Pupils enjoy the exciting, creative curriculum that has been planned for them. However, in some areas, the focus on ensuring basic skills are developed systematically is not sharp enough to help pupils to build on what they know and can do already. Leaders have concentrated on building a cohesive community within the school, but their plans to widen their commitment to community cohesion are still at an early stage of implementation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- By July 2011, improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - with immediate effect, all teachers mark work consistently and regularly so that pupils know and understand what they have to do to improve
 - lessons have consistently high expectations and appropriate levels of challenge
 - assessment data are used effectively to set and adapt work to meet the differing needs of pupils, particularly the more able, in each class
 - good practice is shared more widely.
- By July 2011, accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment by ensuring that:
 - basic skills are taught systematically across the school and build upon what pupils know and can do already
 - leaders at all levels monitor the impact of initiatives and ensure accountability at all levels.
- By July 2011, improve pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity in the United Kingdom so that pupils can gain first-hand experience of meeting pupils from other backgrounds and cultures.

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

Pupils enjoy learning and the majority achieve satisfactorily, although pupils who have been at the school all the way through make better progress than those who join later. Progress accelerates when teaching is either good or outstanding. For example, the high levels of enthusiasm generated by the teacher's approach meant that pupils in a Year 2 literacy lesson made good progress as they retold *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Their rapid responses to well-targeted 'quick-fire' questioning deepened their thinking and demonstrated that their learning was secure.

As a result of school initiatives to broaden their experience, White British boys are now making similar progress to other pupils, although they are sometimes slower to respond or become engaged in activities. However, where they are interested and actively involved in their learning, for example in a Year 4 debate about ghosts, they show a higher degree of participation. Pupils' progress in writing has improved as a result of the school's fortnightly focus on establishing the level of pupils' independent writing. Improvements made to teachers' own levels of knowledge and understanding and skills in teaching mathematics have been reflected in a significant rise in pupils' attainment in mathematics, which was previously significantly below average at the end of Year 6 and is now broadly average.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those from the designated department, make satisfactory progress. This is a result of the support that they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language benefit from accurately targeted support which helps them to achieve as well as their classmates. More-able pupils make satisfactory progress, but, because they are not always challenged enough, too few reach Level 5 by

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the end of Year 6.

A positive ethos results from the good care that pupils receive. This ethos contributes effectively to the development of the pupils' personal qualities. Pupils work and play harmoniously, come to school regularly and their behaviour is good. They say there is very little bullying and know that there will always be someone who will listen to them. They are confident that they could go to the headteacher or deputy headteacher, who, they say, 'will never let you down'. Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They enjoy a healthy choice at lunchtime and fruit for their break. They are proud to be members of the school council and the contribution they have made to the school's travel plan, which enables more pupils to walk or cycle to school safely.

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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and support them well so that pupils want to learn and do their best. Where teaching is good, the learning is accurately matched to pupils' abilities and teachers use their own good subject knowledge and

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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understanding effectively to deepen and extend pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on using ratio to solve problems, every pupil, whatever their ability, grappled to adjust a pasta recipe for differing numbers of people. They listened intently because they were motivated. The learning was relevant because they looked forward to using their newly gained knowledge and understanding the following day, to make healthy 'smoothies' using different proportions of fruit. The teacher's high expectations meant that not a moment was lost and every pupil rose to the challenge. However, there are other times when teachers' expectations are too low and lessons do not have the right level of challenge for all abilities. Where teachers' marking is helpful, pupils know what they have to do to improve. However, there are also times when pupils are given no indication about how they can improve or avoid repeating mistakes.

The curriculum is creative and makes learning enjoyable. Planning across the curriculum is not sufficient to ensure that basic skills are learned systematically and in ways that build, step-by-step, on what pupils know and can do already. Planning is not as rigorous as it could be and this contributes to pupils' satisfactory rather than good outcomes. Consideration has been given to pupils' particular needs through visits, visitors and studies of the local area. Pupils feel happy and secure because they know that there is a good level of care, guidance and support and that there is always someone there to listen, help or advise. Pupils with the highest levels of need, including those in the designated department, benefit from the nurturing environment, which provides them with effective support, well tailored to their needs. The well-attended breakfast club has had a major impact on improving pupils' attendance and punctuality. Friday morning cooked breakfasts are especially popular, as are the croissants provided in French week.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has successfully emerged from a downward trend in its performance because of the hard work and determination of the headteacher and deputy headteacher to embed ambition and drive improvement. Although senior leaders, regularly, monitor the quality of teaching and learning, they have not used the good and outstanding practice that exists within the school to coach and train all staff to the level of the best. This, together with unavoidable changes of staff, has led to some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and areas where the level of accountability has slipped. Senior leaders share the headteacher's and deputy headteacher's commitment to raising

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attainment and improving progress and are motivated to seek further improvement and tackle this area for development.

Good relationships with parents and carers support pupils' learning in a positive way. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is satisfactory. The school's accurate tracking system highlights any underperformance. Consequently, the school recognises that progress is not consistently good across the school and too few more-able pupils have been reaching the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6.

Governors are actively working to improve their understanding of data and knowledge of how it is used so that they can play a more strategic role in the work of the school. Procedures for safeguarding are good and ensure that all pupils feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are met. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. The school is a cohesive community and pupils respect each other's differences, feel safe and behave well. Although the school has good plans in place, work to promote community cohesion beyond the school is less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Children settle quickly into the welcoming atmosphere because personal development is good, relationships are strong and children are well cared for. Staff foster positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, children behave well, are confident and sustain their concentration. Children in the

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Nursery and Reception classes enjoy the exciting opportunities that exist for exploration and discovery, both in- and out-of-doors. For example, they relished the opportunity to find numbers in the sand tray, or play musical instruments in the willow-weave hut. Adults interact well with children's play, encouraging them and providing good models for their language. Children enjoy activities such as writing lists and invitations for a party, which give them exciting opportunities to practise their skills in writing and word building. Leadership and management are focused effectively on helping children to make good progress, promoting their welfare and ensuring that partnerships with parents and carers and safeguarding procedures are good.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers have positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with the welcoming, caring ethos. Evidence from the inspection supports parents' and carers' views that children enjoy school and that care, guidance and support for pupils are good. A small minority of parents and carers expressed the view that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. However, behaviour during inspection was found to be good. The team's view concurred with that of the pupils who said that the school sorted out any problems quickly and effectively. A small minority of parents and carers felt the school does not always take full account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found that the school regularly sends out questionnaires in order to do this and the school's attempts to respond to the views that parents and carers express are evident, for example parents and carers now have three short reports a year rather than one long report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Falconhurst 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 161 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 371 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	44	80	50	7	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	64	40	88	55	6	4	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	30	96	60	13	8	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	29	104	65	7	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	52	32	100	62	6	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	25	101	63	14	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	25	108	67	5	3	2	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)	36	22	105	65	13	8	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	23	102	63	14	9	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	22	96	60	15	9	9	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	20	94	58	15	9	10	6
The school is led and managed effectively	44	27	101	63	3	2	7	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	39	88	55	6	4	2	1

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 pupils' 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.



8 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Falconhurst School, Milton Keynes, MK6 5AX.

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You helped us a lot. Your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education and there are quite a lot of things your school does well.

You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel safe. We found that everybody in school looks after you very well, especially those of you who have difficulties from time to time. We were impressed with your understanding and knowledge of how to keep fit and your healthy lifestyles. □ We could see that you behave well, get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and his staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do three things.

- It should make sure that, when teachers mark your books, they give you clear help on how you can improve. It should make sure that teachers give you the right level of work to help you to do the very best you can. It should also make sure that teachers help each other so that you can all make good progress.
- It should ensure that your work is planned so that you can build on what you know and can do already and it should check that everyone is doing their best to help you improve.
- It should develop links with schools that have pupils from different backgrounds to your own so that you can make other friends and find out what life is like for them.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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