

Fairfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111197
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	337637
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Isherwood
Headteacher	Mrs I Hodkinson
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons taught by 11 teachers. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress and the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspectors also analysed 67 questionnaire returns from parents and carers.

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

- the level of pupils' attainment when they join the school and the quality of their progress from their starting points as they move up through the school
- how consistent the quality of teaching is and its impact on pupils' learning and progress at different stages
- how accurately leaders and managers team evaluate the school's work and act on the outcomes of evaluation to plan for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and the awards of Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, Eco-Schools and ICT Mark.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles and the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures are outstanding. Since the last inspection good leadership and management have tightened procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the school to provide an accurate evaluation of its performance. This has enabled leaders and managers to identify areas for improvement and introduce strategies to tackle them rigorously. As a result, many aspects of the school's work have improved significantly, demonstrating the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Good teaching overall and a good curriculum enable pupils to make good progress and achieve well. They promote good levels of enjoyment and positive attitudes to learning. However, pupils' progress slows in the minority of instances where teaching is satisfactory because there is some lack of pace and challenge, and here teaching is also inconsistent in how closely it matches tasks to pupils' needs and abilities. As a result, some pupils find work too easy and some too hard in some classes. Good levels of care, guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities both in class, and in special support classes ensure that these pupils also make good progress.

Pupils say how much they enjoy school and how safe they feel in school. Good provision for care, guidance and support ensure that they feel known and valued as individuals. The school has developed an extensive range of strategies to check on absenteeism and promote attendance. These are starting to have a positive impact as seen in the rising trend in attendance figures. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Most are very polite and respectful. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their solid grasp of basic skills and, above all, their high levels of maturity and self-confidence ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Good leadership and management provide the school with a sharp focus on improvement. Good levels of teamwork are evident across the school. Planning for the future is of good quality. The leadership team accepts that it needs to do more to communicate effectively with parents and carers so that it can better understand and respond to their concerns and views, and promote a more positive perception of some aspects of the school's work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve the rate of progress where it is less than good by:
 - improving satisfactory teaching so that it is livelier and more challenging
 - making sure that teaching is consistent in matching tasks closely to the needs

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and abilities of different groups of pupils.

- Communicate more effectively with parents and carers by:
 - seeking the views of parents and carers more regularly and effectively
 - making sure that parents and carers are clear about school policies and how they are put into practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are eager to contribute their ideas in most lessons. They enjoy working in pairs and small groups, where they contribute well and listen respectfully to others' contributions. Good relationships between adults and pupils mean that pupils' behaviour is good. Only occasionally, when tasks are too easy or too difficult, does pupils' concentration wander. Pupils generally take great pride in presenting their work neatly. The school's extensive and accurate benchmark testing shows that attainment on entry to Year 3 varies but is, overall, below average. By the end of Year 6 attainment is average and rising. This represents good achievement. There has been a significant improvement in attainment in writing because the school has focused sharply on improving this aspect of pupils' work. Good support from a team of skilful teaching assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress as they move up through the school. Pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is impressive. They talk enthusiastically about their participation in the school's 'healthy living week' and what it teaches them. Very high numbers participate in the extensive range of sporting enrichment activities. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities by becoming, for example, sports ambassadors and peer mentors. The influential school council has brought about playground improvements and organises charity events. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are respectful, behave sensibly and are tolerant of those who are different.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good; some is outstanding and some is satisfactory. Teachers generally plan their lessons well, although occasionally tasks set for pupils are not aligned closely enough to their abilities. Learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons so that pupils know what is expected of them. Teaching makes good use of information and communication technology to add extra stimulation and interest to learning. Group and pair work is used skilfully to encourage pupils' cooperation and independent learning skills. Nearly all teaching uses questioning effectively to make pupils think hard about their answers. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Their comments are generally helpful in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work. The good curriculum is managed well to provide themes and topics that are of interest to pupils. Topic work adds relevance to pupils' learning. This has been one of the keys to improving pupils' writing skills. There is an extensive range of enrichment activities that are very popular with pupils. Sports, the arts, school trips and visitors all broaden pupils' horizons and add to their enjoyment. Good care, guidance and support ensure that pupils are known and valued as individuals. Pupils are comfortable in seeking help and guidance from adults working with them. Good links with the local high school ensure that pupils are confident about the move to secondary education. Transition arrangements for children joining Year 3 from the neighbouring infants' school are improving as the two schools develop a closer working relationship.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
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?

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Good leadership and management are driving the school forward well. Development planning is based solidly on the outcomes of good self-evaluation procedures; it gives the school a clear vision for the future and measurable steps by which success can be measured. Governors know the school well. They are very supportive and keen for it to do well. They are keen to seek information and ask pertinent questions to hold the school to account. Although the leadership team communicates regularly with parents and carers through, for example, regular newsletters and termly meetings about pupils' progress, it accepts that communication with parents and carers needs to be more effective in picking up on their concerns and taking account of their views.

Good attention to providing equal opportunities and tackling discrimination ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are integrated seamlessly into the everyday life of the school. Good care, guidance and support enable these pupils to make good progress and achieve well.

The school pays meticulous attention to safeguarding. It works very effectively and innovatively with a cluster of local schools to share ideas and promote best practice. Meticulous attention is paid to risk assessment. Staff's training in safeguarding and child protection is exemplary. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities exceptionally seriously.

The school promotes community cohesion well. It has conducted an accurate audit of needs and has produced an action plan to guide its work. The school is a harmonious community. Pupils are encouraged to play an active part in the local community. Links with multi-ethnic partner schools are developing, as is a link with an orphanage in Tanzania. The school evaluates its impact on community cohesion effectively.

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	3
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are supportive of many aspects of the school's work. However, a significant number of parents and carers expressed concerns, especially about how effectively the school deals with unacceptable behaviour, how rigorously the school takes parents' and carers' views into account and how effectively the school is led and managed. Consequently, inspectors looked very closely at these areas, including discussions with a selection of parents and carers, who all expressed how happy they are with the school.

Inspectors found behaviour around school and in lessons to be good. Procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and records of what actions the school has taken are comprehensive. Pupils told inspectors, and pupils' responses to their questionnaires confirm, that they think behaviour is good and that teachers deal with any poor behaviour effectively and fairly.

Inspectors were satisfied that the school has satisfactory procedures to seek the views of parents and carers and is planning to develop them further. Inspectors found the quality of leadership and management to be good. The school has improved since the last inspection in many ways, especially in pupils' progress and achievement. Leaders and managers are giving the school good capacity to continue improving.

Nevertheless, in recognition that a significant number of parents and carers have negative perceptions of some aspects of the school's work, inspectors are asking the school to improve its communication with parents and carers so that it can gather and respond to concerns more effectively and ensure that parents and carers are clear about its policies and how they are put into practice.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fairfield 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 280 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	41	44	48	6	7	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	45	49	38	41	6	7	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	42	44	48	7	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	42	42	46	7	8	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	37	40	49	53	4	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	38	43	47	13	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	36	51	55	6	7	0	0
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)	31	34	50	54	5	5	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	39	45	49	8	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	35	35	38	19	21	5	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	34	44	48	10	11	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	33	36	41	45	10	11	5	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	39	43	47	9	10	2	2

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.



16 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairfield Junior School, Widnes, WA8 6TH

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you and see you at work and play.

The inspectors judged that you go to a good school which has improved since it was last inspected just over three years ago. You get on very well with each other and with the adults working with you. Your teachers provide you with good teaching and interesting things to do so that you all make good progress and achieve well. You behave well and are keen to do your best – well done! The questionnaires you completed and returned were overwhelmingly positive and show how happy you are in school. Some of the questionnaires returned by your parents and carers were not so positive, however, so we are asking your headteacher to make sure that the school communicates more effectively with your parents and carers to gather and respond to their views. In addition to this improvement, the school is also being asked to:

Raise attainment and improve the rate of progress where it is less than good by:

- improving satisfactory teaching so that it is livelier and more challenging
- making sure that the tasks you are given in lessons are always matched closely to how easy or hard you find learning.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard and help your school go from strength in the coming years.

I wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Stephen Wall

Lead Inspector

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