

# Ferndown Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113878
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	338260
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Chris Grove

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	585
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Newton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gillian Allen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 April 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent 16 hours and 30 minutes of inspection time looking at learning, visited 30 lessons and inspected 29 teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils including some members of the school council. They observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' attainment and progress, records of governors' meetings, the school's development planning and monitoring, and a range of policies and procedures, including those associated with safeguarding, curriculum planning documents and a small sample of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from a sample of pupils. Evidence was also gathered from parental questionnaires, of which 242 were received.

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

- the extent to which teaching offers the challenge to ensure good or better achievement by all groups of pupils, at both key stages
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, and supports the progressive acquisition of skills in core subjects
- the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in their monitoring and evaluation, use of tracking and target setting and improvement planning
- how well the school promotes cohesion at all levels between different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups.

## Information about the school

Ferndown Middle School is smaller than average when compared with other secondary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is small, and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, principally specific learning or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, is lower than average.

The school is a member of the East Dorset Education Partnership. Among the range of awards that the school holds are the International School and the Unicef Rights Respecting School awards.

**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

Ferndown Middle is a good school. It also has some outstanding features. The headteacher and senior and middle leaders have developed a very positive ethos and strong team spirit in the school with the result that pupils are very happy and enjoy what is on offer. The overwhelming majority of parents are greatly appreciative of the school and its leadership. One parent noted that the school 'always seems a very happy environment with a lovely rapport between children and staff, and indeed parents and staff'. Another family wrote that their children 'had all thoroughly enjoyed their experiences at school and are growing up understanding the importance of respect, politeness, courtesy and fun'. Pupils also feel very warmly about the school. One described it as a 'really good school with caring teachers who are there when I need help'.

The inclusive atmosphere and the very high quality of the care lead to personal outcomes for pupils that are at least good and in some instances excellent. The relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and trusting. This is reflected in the outstanding quality of pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils' practice of healthy lifestyles is also outstanding. Attendance is very high.

From broadly average attainment on entry, pupils make good progress through the school. Attainment by the end of Year 8 has consistently been above national expectations for pupils of this age. Consequently, pupils achieve well. Good progress results from teaching that is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. However, some teaching is less successful because the tasks set are not sufficiently challenging, and expectations are not always high enough. The use of assessment information to support pupils' learning is satisfactory, because teachers' marking does not consistently indicate the ways in which pupils could improve their work. Pupils gain from the broad curriculum that is offered. In addition, the school provides an excellent extra-curricular programme.

The close cooperation between the headteacher and the senior and middle leaders leads to the confident vision for the school. Together, leaders have created an atmosphere of warmth that pervades the school so that pupils feel secure and parents find staff approachable. A large range of partnerships of excellent quality has been developed which support pupils' learning and personal well-being and teachers' professional development very well. The engagement of parents is outstanding.

Leaders have developed an effective cycle of activities to monitor and evaluate the outcomes for pupils and the quality of the school's provision. These observations, and evidence from tracking of pupils' progress and from the management of staff

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performance, lead to good improvement planning and appropriately challenging targets. Given the school's record of sustaining above-average attainment and provision of good quality, including outstanding care for pupils, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
  - sustain consistently high expectations of what pupils should achieve
  - set tasks which challenge all pupils to make good or better progress in lessons.
- Improve the use of assessment information, so that practice across the school is consistently good, by:
  - ensuring that marking regularly gives pupils the feedback to understand the next steps in their learning
  - indicating more clearly to pupils how they can improve the quality of their work.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make good progress. This is because they often have good opportunities to develop their thinking and to explain their reasoning through active participation. This also allows teachers to assess pupils' understanding. For instance, in a very good lesson in English with a Year 6 class of lower attainment, pupils were very well challenged by the writing tasks which also included thinking through for themselves the criteria for good work. Overall standards at the end of Year 6 have been above average in recent years, but broadly average in English and mathematics.

In Years 7 and 8, pupils' progress generally continues to be good because the work is sufficiently challenging. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 made good progress in developing the range of their problem-solving skills which also involved the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). The most able pupils in Year 8 made outstanding progress in developing their understanding of Romeo and Juliet because tasks were very well matched to the different abilities, and pupils quickly rose to the challenges that they were set. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is as good as that of other pupils because they are well supported by staff. School data show that current attainment at the end of Year 8 is above national expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils' attainment has consistently been higher in mathematics than in English. .

Most pupils enjoy school. They are sure that the adults look after them extremely well. As a result, the great majority feel safe. Although a few of the youngest pupils express a little apprehension, most pupils believe the school is good at managing incidents. Pupils show a good understanding about personal safety, including cyber-bullying, and about the need to be alert over internet safety. Pupils are extremely well behaved around the school. Outstanding behaviour shows in high levels of attentiveness to teachers, and in

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cooperativeness and application to tasks. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, though the opportunities to develop an understanding of cultural diversity have been limited. Pupils have outstandingly healthy lifestyles. As well as two hours weekly of physical education, pupils undertake termly fitness tests. The school offers an excellent range of clubs centred on physical activities in which there are high levels of participation. Improved arrangements have led to nutritionally balanced school meals. About half the pupils now take up this option.

There are good opportunities for pupils to make positive contributions within school, for instance through the school council, which has had a good impact. However, opportunities to participate in the wider community are more limited, although pupils are actively involved in fund-raising for national and international charities. Pupils' future economic well-being is well supported by their skills in literacy and numeracy, which are above national expectations. They are aware of green issues through the work of the eco council.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

<sup>1</sup> 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 majority of teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Such teaching involves a rapid pace to learning, high expectations of pupils and challenging tasks. In these lessons, teachers' on-the-spot assessments support learning well. In an outstanding music lesson, for instance, the teacher successfully challenged a class of pupils of mixed ability to assess their own progress as they performed Pachelbel's canon on individual instruments. Where teaching is less successful, teachers sometimes underestimate pupils by setting tasks that are not well enough matched to their learning needs, or that lack challenge. Furthermore, in such satisfactory lessons, learning objectives and the criteria for good work are not always made sufficiently explicit.

Pupils do not consistently get feedback about the next steps in their learning from teachers' marking of their work. Although there are positive instances where marking clearly tells pupils what they need to do to improve, there are also examples of marking that consist only of praise or that give too little indication of improvements needed. This weakness gives rise to the views expressed in some of the pupil questionnaires that pupils do not know how well they are doing at school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It contributes well to pupils' learning and to their personal well-being in terms of enjoyment and motivation. There is good provision for English and mathematics, including additional classes to support any identified weaknesses in pupils' learning. ICT is taught as a discrete subject and also provides good support for learning in other subjects. French is taught from Year 5 by specialist staff. Aspects of careers education, sex and relationships education and citizenship are taught partly through the two daily periods of tutor time and partly through the personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. Lessons in PSHCE are taught on a rotational basis, and do not have fixed points in the weekly timetables of classes. This arrangement runs the risk that an important element of pupils' curriculum entitlement is perceived to have unequal status in comparison with other subjects because pupils do not experience it as a subject with a discrete time allocation. Extra-curricular provision is excellent and includes a large range of musical, sporting and other opportunities in which there are high rates of participation.

Teachers and teaching assistants show a high level of commitment to the school's strongly caring ethos. Support for pupils by class tutors and the staff who teach those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very thorough. Those pupils who attend the nurture group experience outstanding provision. The needs of other vulnerable pupils are also identified and met outstandingly well. The school is very good at responding sensitively to all pupils' individual needs. Parents who replied to the questionnaire judge that the school meets their children's needs particularly well. Arrangements at the points of induction and transfer are comprehensive because of excellent cooperation with the first and upper schools and with local agencies.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3

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<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team provides good leadership, and as a result, other leaders feel empowered. Subject coordinators are effectively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body has a good understanding of its strategic role. Governors are closely involved in the school and offer warm support. They know how to act as 'critical friends', and are improving their role in monitoring the work of the school. Most parents are happy with their child's experience, and this attests to their excellent engagement in the school's work. The success in involving parents, including some who are hard to reach, is based on very good communication. The school adopts an inclusive approach. It is committed to promoting equal opportunities, and has good systems to track pupils' attainment and progress closely.

The school has undertaken an audit of provision and developed a strategy to promote community cohesion. Effective contributions are made at the levels of the school itself and the local community. This is well supported by the Rights Respecting School award. Similarly, the International School award helps to address the global level. The school has plans in hand to develop cohesion at the national level. It has taken effective steps to address the socio-economic dimension, but attention to the ethnic and religious dimensions is less secure. At the time of the inspection the school's procedures and systems met the requirements for safeguarding. Child protection procedures are robust, and where necessary involve appropriate collaboration with outside agencies. The school's recording of accidents and of bullying incidents is secure, but is not located in a central system to enable the school's management to exercise full oversight.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents have positive, and often very positive, views about the school. The great majority are happy with their child's experience. Most feel that their child enjoys school and that the school keeps their child safe and supports healthy lifestyles. Most also think that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors agree with all of these judgements. Almost all parents believe that the school meets their child's needs. Inspectors agree with these views.

Teaching is judged by almost all parents to be good. A large majority also think that their children are making enough progress at school. Inspectors agree that much teaching is good or better, and judge that pupils are currently making good progress. However, they also judge that greater consistency in the quality of teaching and better use of assessment is needed in order to improve pupils' progress further. With few exceptions, parents feel well informed about their child's progress. Most feel that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree that leadership and management are good.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ferndown Middle 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 242 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 585 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	37	140	58	7	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	109	45	128	53	5	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	93	38	132	55	12	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	97	40	131	54	6	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	115	48	122	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	31	148	61	13	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	25	159	66	16	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)	80	33	127	50	6	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	33	153	63	3	1	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	79	33	148	61	8	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	26	150	62	11	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	89	37	142	59	1	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	112	46	123	51	2	1	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



1 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferndown Middle School, Ferndown, BH22 9UP

We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at break times and lunchtimes. We especially thank those of you who filled in the pupils' questionnaire.

We think that Ferndown Middle is a good school with some outstanding features.

These are the positive things about your school:

- your school has a very welcoming feel and a very positive climate for learning
- you greatly enjoy school, behave extremely well and display very positive attitudes
- the headteacher and staff are good at their jobs and know how to improve your school
- all the adults take extremely good care of you
- you have an excellent understanding of healthy living, and feel really safe in school
- your attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average by the end of Year 8, and your progress is good across the school
- a lot of the teaching is good and you find the curriculum interesting
- your participation in the excellent range of extra-curricular clubs is outstanding
- your parents are very pleased with your experience at the school.

We have also asked your school to make some further improvements.

What your school needs to do now:

- make sure that teaching is more consistently good by ensuring that all teachers expect you to achieve more and always set you work that is suitably challenging
- make sure that marking includes feedback to help you to understand what you need to do next in your learning, and tells you what you can do to improve your work.

You can help, too, by continuing to work hard and taking advantage of the improvements that your school will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Grove

Lead inspector

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