

Fair Field Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117228
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338972
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Anthony Green

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Bowbrick
Headteacher	Matt Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	4 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons. They held meetings with governors, senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, groups of pupils, including the school council, a sample of pupils from across the school, and a group of pupils to discuss their work in information and communication technology. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school learning plan, policies, teaching and learning guidance, curriculum and lesson planning, information on pupils' progress, and documentation on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils. In addition 73 parent questionnaires, 100 pupil questionnaires and 21 staff questionnaires were received and analysed and their comments taken in to account.

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

- the attainment and progress of pupils in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the achievement of pupils, especially boys and higher attaining pupils
- the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum
- the impact of leaders and managers on raising the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to most junior schools. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The headteacher was appointed in January 2009, following three years as deputy headteacher. During that time he was acting headteacher for periods of a few weeks to seven months. The new senior management team has been appointed since April 2009. Since the last inspection, teacher mobility has stabilised. The school has a number of awards including the Sports Mark award and the national ModeShift Walking Initiative of the Year for 2008.

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

Fair Field Junior is a satisfactory school. It has numerous strengths, particularly in standards in English and the way in which pupils develop and mature. Under the skilled leadership of the new headteacher, the school has made considerable improvements, and all staff are eager to improve the school further. The very large majority of parents recognise this. One wrote, 'The teachers demonstrate real care and understanding and are striving relentlessly to make Fair Field a better school'.

As a result of a lengthy period of instability in the senior management team, staff morale dipped. This has now risen dramatically and, in their responses to the questionnaires, staff write about 'a new found confidence', 'great team work' and 'pride' in what they do. The excellent headteacher is very ably supported by his recently appointed deputy headteacher. Together they have successfully focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards and the achievement of pupils. Standards overall have been above average. However, progress in the school has been slow in the past and pupils' achievement, especially for boys and higher attaining pupils, has previously been inadequate. This picture is changing and data for the last two years, and the current work of pupils, shows that achievement is improving and is now satisfactory. Achievement is good in English. This is as a result of the good teaching now in place. The 2009 national test results show that attainment remains above average though not enough pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics and science. This is because higher attaining pupils have not been sufficiently challenged in the past. Though now not the case, some higher attainers are still catching up and are not quite at the standards they should be. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with national expectations. The gap between the achievement of boys and girls has been closed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other groups of pupils.

The quality of teaching is good, and has improved since the previous inspection. Exemplary lesson planning and good use of data underpin the recent improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. However, although marking is conscientious, not all teachers clearly identify whether pupils have achieved the objective of the lesson or the next steps that pupils need to take to improve their learning. Teachers do not show pupils how to write clearly and legibly and so handwriting and presentation in pupils' books does not match with what they are capable of producing.

The school provides good care for all pupils. They feel safe and enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in the recent improvements in attendance. Pupils are polite and helpful, getting on very well together, so incidents of unkind behaviour are rare and

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dealt with well by staff. Pupil questionnaires show that the large majority support the school. One pupil typically wrote, 'I like this school because it is a good learning environment and everyone's a friend to each other'. Another wrote, 'The school is fun and you get great experiences, with lots of friends'.

The curriculum is well designed to promote pupils' personal development and help them develop important literacy and numeracy skills. ICT is used to support a range of subjects. The enrichment of the curriculum through visits and visitors, after-school clubs, and a mathematics breakfast club, are excellent.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is accurate in its self-evaluation. After a long period of instability, firm foundations are now in place for it to move forward. Based on the recent, and speedy, improvements the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate further the achievement of pupils by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 in mathematics and science
 - ensuring higher attaining pupils make up for lost ground in the past in mathematics and science by setting challenging targets when work is marked.
- Improve the quality of marking by:
 - relating marking to the learning objective of the lesson
 - setting new targets for pupils' based on how well they have succeeded in achieving the learning objective
 - sharing best practice in marking amongst teachers and teaching assistants.
- Improve consistency of handwriting and presentation by:
 - teachers modelling handwriting in a systematic way
 - teachers raising their expectations of pupils' presentation of their work
 - sharing best practice amongst teachers and teaching assistants.
- 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

Pupils enter school with standards that are above the national average in English, mathematics and science. As a result of the improvement in teaching, progress within lessons is good. Most of the past underachievement has been addressed so that pupils' progress over the time they have been at the school is satisfactory. Hence, achievement is satisfactory and standards are improving, especially those of middle and lower attaining pupils and in English for all pupils. However, not all pupils capable of achieving the higher levels in mathematics and science are doing so by Year 6, despite making

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good progress in lessons. This is because they have not entirely caught up on poorer performance in the past. Higher attaining pupils lower down the school are working at levels that are more in line with their prior attainment. The improved provision means that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making at least satisfactory progress.

Pupils feel safe and secure and their attitudes to learning are good. They are keen to learn and respond well to questioning and to activities planned by their teachers. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They care for each other and Year 6 pupils approach their role as playground leaders and 'buddies' conscientiously. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and to each other. Pupils, adults and visitors from different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs are warmly welcomed, and their experiences and knowledge are woven into lessons. For example, good links have been made with the Bhaktivedanta Manor Hare Krishna Temple. Classes are named after countries and this gives pupils a further opportunity to develop their understanding of European and non-European countries.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They make good use of their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in a range of subjects. Economic skills are further developed by a variety of visitors, such as the winner of the television programmes 'Dragon's Den' and 'Science lab winner'. In addition, the school council has visited the Houses of Parliament.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and to take plenty of exercise. This is confirmed in the school winning a local authority travel award and a national travel award, celebrating the inventive way in which pupils are encouraged to walk to school.

In previous years pupils' attendance has been below average but a concerted effort, in partnership with local primary and infant schools and other agencies, is resulting in the rates of attendance steadily rising to be broadly in line with the national average.

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	2
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

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	2
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?

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Some teaching is outstanding. Lessons are well-planned and resourced and now match the needs of different groups of pupils. Well-informed teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning. As a result, pupils work hard in lessons and behaviour is good and, at times, outstanding. Pupils are very clear about the learning objectives and success criteria for each lesson. However, when teachers mark pupils' work, they do not always do so against the objective of the lesson, or always include pupils in self-assessment of their work. As a result, pupils do not always know what has been achieved so that they can set their sights on challenging 'next steps', especially the higher attainers in mathematics and science to help them attain high enough standards. Presentation of work, and especially handwriting, varies throughout the school. There is no consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting. Good use is now being made of assessment data to track pupils and to focus on groups and individuals. This now ensures that planned activities, especially for higher attaining pupils, are sufficiently matched to their needs and are challenging.

Good links are made between different subjects, which make them more relevant and interesting for pupils. Themed days and weeks, such as 'Science week' and 'Around the World week', capture pupils' imagination. Year 6 pupils are proud of their pod-casts to support their work on persuasive writing. Pupils value using ICT to support other subjects because, as one pupil commented, it 'helps the work stay in my brain'.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, assemblies, visits and visitors and the 'Shared values' of the school, including perseverance, kindness, honesty, forgiveness and inclusion, ensure that there are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on their experiences and the world around them. In an outstanding PSHE lesson, pupils were encouraged to reflect on how well they cooperate and to discuss the qualities that are needed to work with others, and to evaluate one another's skills of cooperation. This they did in a very mature and supportive way.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The sharply focused leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has been the key to rigorously addressing identified weaknesses to bring about improvement. Since his appointment, the headteacher has brought about a renewed determination in the school to raise standards. This is recognised by the overwhelming majority of teachers and support staff and most parents. One parent wrote, 'We have seen a major improvement in the school and improvement in things for our child'. The successful drive to improve teaching has been supported by very effective guidance by the senior management team and, in particular, the deputy headteacher, who models good practice and works alongside colleagues. Subject leaders are clear in their vision of how to develop their subject and raise standards and achievement.

The school's contribution to community cohesion, based on a good understanding of its own community, is a strength and has a positive impact on the local and wider community. For example, the school works hard to engage different groups by running adult learning sessions for 'Muddle-free maths,' up to the equivalent of GCSE level, encouraging parents to use the computer suite, and by providing a very informative website for parents, carers and pupils, including a 'micro-blog' page for each class. Good links have been made with local schools and are also being established with schools abroad. The naming of classes after countries, and the celebration of these countries, give pupils a greater insight into other communities. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Effective systems are in place to monitor the progress of pupils from different backgrounds.

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust and meet requirements. Vulnerable pupils are supported well by staff and by the good links with outside agencies. Year 5 pupils go on a 'Hazard Alley' trip where they are exposed to real-life situations in a safe, secure and simulated environment.

Governors are very supportive and they contribute well to monitoring and development. They fulfil their statutory duties well and, together with senior leaders, have worked hard to ensure that the difficulties of the last few years have been addressed, especially through the recent appointments of high quality senior staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of the 73 questionnaires were positive and parents believe that this is a caring and supportive school; views that match those of the inspectors. Almost all are happy with the school and are pleased with the progress their children are making. A small minority expressed concern that they are not helped to support their child's learning. Inspectors found that parents are kept well informed through newsletters, a very informative web-site, and opportunities to talk to staff at a convenient time. A small number also wrote that that the school is not doing enough to prepare their children for private entrance examinations. Inspectors judged that the school is doing all that could reasonably be expected.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fair Field 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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	73	17	23	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	62	26	3	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	4	41	56	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	40	41	56	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	45	38	52	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	48	32	44	6	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	37	44	60	2	3	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)	36	49	33	45	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	53	31	42	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	51	33	45	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	52	33	45	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	54	74	17	23	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	68	22	30	1	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"> ■ 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.



14 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fair Field Junior School, Watford Road, Radlett, WD7 8LU

Thank you so much for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly want to thank the school council and other groups of children we spoke to for the mature and engaging way you spoke to us and for all the interesting things you told us about your school. Your school is satisfactory. This means it is doing many things well but it also could do some better. We also believe that your school is improving fast and we are pleased that so many of you and your parents agree. These are some of the things that your school does well.

The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science by Year 6 are above average.

You get on well with each other and make good friends. Your behaviour is good and, at times, outstanding. We were very impressed by the way you observed the two minutes silence during your Armistice Day assembly.

You are rightly proud of the money you have raised for charities and to develop your new ICT suite.

Teaching in the school is good and so you make good progress in lessons.

The school is very well led by your headteacher and senior leaders.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are working successfully to make your school an even better place for you. We have asked them to do three things in particular to help with this:

- help more of you achieve the higher levels in your mathematics and science work
- set more specific targets in your work, so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve from day to day
- for you, and your teachers, to write more neatly in your books so that the presentation for everyone improves. That is something you can all start to do straight away.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Green

Lead inspector

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