

Fordwater School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126163
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340932
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Timothy Feast

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beryl Dyton
Headteacher	Sue Meekings
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
School address	Summersdale Road Chichester West Sussex PO19 6PP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent just under a third of the time inspecting learning and visited 13 lessons observing 12 teachers. They had meetings with school governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, assessment information, curriculum planning and 35 parental questionnaires. The school's safeguarding procedures were evaluated.

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Information about the school

Fordwater is a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum has increased in recent years and now accounts for nearly two thirds of the pupils. There are many more pupils in the sixth form and the secondary age groups than there are in the primary and Early Years Foundation Stage classes. The school has recently been awarded specialist school status in 'Cognition and Learning'.

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

Fordwater provides a good standard of education. It has made big improvements since the last inspection under the positive leadership of the headteacher. It has developed new strengths. The most evident is the excellent care, guidance and support the pupils receive, which includes outstanding practice in relation to safeguarding. As a result the pupils say that they feel extremely safe. This is greatly valued by both pupils and their parents and carers. As one parent commented, echoing the views of many others, 'My child has blossomed here with dedicated and hardworking staff who really care. This has affected not only my son in a positive way but my whole family.'

Pupils in all the classes achieve well in their learning because the school has high expectations of them and staff make the learning as enjoyable as they can. As one pupil put it, 'I learn a lot in lessons.' Staff expectations have been raised by comparing these pupils' learning with those of similar pupils nationally. As a result teaching and learning are good throughout the school and there is much good assessment practice, for example, in the fine tuning of questioning to match the pupils' very varied needs. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent, with pupils taking increasing responsibility for managing their own and the behaviour of others. Pupils make an excellent contribution to both the school and to the wider community, for example contributing to the local council's planning of a play area in Chichester's main park.

The school has brought about these improvements because of the positive way in which senior leaders and governors have set out their ambitious vision for the school and tackled areas which needed improvement, such as teachers' planning more challenging activities for pupils and the improved use of assessment information to accelerate pupils' progress. Governors in particular have improved significantly their impact on the school's work. The severity and complexity of the pupils' needs has increased significantly over the last few years. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and has supported the steps taken to improve the school's capacity to cater for these pupils. School leaders recognise the need to continue to develop resources, staff expertise and the curriculum for the improvements to be sustained. As such they demonstrate a strong capacity to make further improvements. Some middle managers are not yet sufficiently strategic in their planning and monitoring of the impact of their work on outcomes for pupils. The school's excellent partnerships with other schools and agencies bring significant benefits not only to Fordwater pupils but pupils in other local schools. An example of this is the 'massage' project with a local primary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

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- Strengthen middle leadership skills by:
 - increasing middle leaders' capacity to plan strategically and their capacity to monitor the impact of their work on pupil outcomes.
- Consolidate the current improvements in meeting the needs of the growing proportion of pupils with complex needs by:
 - increasing the specific expertise of staff in providing for pupils with significant multiple learning difficulties.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils consistently make good progress in their lessons because staff focus relentlessly on both their academic and personal development. All groups, including those on the autistic spectrum and those with multiple learning difficulties, make similarly good progress to their peers. Looked after children and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Pupils enjoy their learning, persevere well with the challenges presented to them and are really appreciative of the success of other pupils who do well.

Pupils love coming to school and feel extremely safe. They develop an increasingly good understanding of risks such as those attached to crossing the road. Older pupils show a good understanding of pattern and meaning in aboriginal art. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well and pupils really appreciate the range of physical activities on offer to them. Pupils treat each other with consideration and kindness. For most pupils their attendance is good, but health issues stop some pupils from attending well.

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	*
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	1

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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	
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

School leaders have successfully focused on improving teaching and assessment since the last inspection and there is now a wide range of good practice in the school. There is much expertise within the staff team, although the school recognises that some are less confident when working with pupils with significant multiple difficulties. Teachers now use a range of tracking and progress information to good effect when planning activities which are more challenging for the pupils. Lessons are clearly planned with outcomes identified for individual pupils. Teachers and support staff work extremely well as teams to maximise pupils' academic and personal development. Support staff are highly proactive and effective when working with individuals and small groups. Occasionally in lessons some periods are not as productive because pupils spend too long waiting for their next turn to contribute.

Pupils enjoy the good curriculum and its enrichment with a wide range of activities. Creative activities provide good opportunities to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The development of life skills, including independence skills, has a high priority and results in pupils making good progress in acquiring these skills. The curriculum is being adapted well to meet the changing needs of pupils joining the school and the school acknowledges that further work is needed.

The care of pupils at Fordwater from the Early Years Foundation Stage to post-16 provision is exceptional and the excellent support and the good links with parents and carers help ensure a continuation of this best practice between the school and the home. The school works extremely well with a wide range of agencies to ensure that the care, support and guidance given to the pupils are exemplary.

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	1

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

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders show a very strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all within a safe environment. The school is highly inclusive with a focus on promoting pupils' independence and is effective in eliminating discrimination. The senior leadership team has developed an effective strategy for improvement and this has effectively driven the school's direction, for example in acquiring specialist status. Middle leadership has been restructured. Not all of them currently demonstrate strategic planning for their roles to have a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils. Overall the school's work is complemented by good self-evaluation which identifies clearly what still needs to be done. There is wide consultation on the way forward, including with pupils and with parents and carers as well as staff, as demonstrated by the work on the new curriculum for the older pupils and students. Staff feel valued and morale and commitment are high. There is much good training to meet staff needs but some staff still require further support to develop their expertise in meeting the increasing challenge of the pupils. The robust child protection policy is understood and implemented very well by all staff. Safeguarding records are accurate and comprehensive and school leaders and governors have been well trained in safer recruitment. Risk assessment is very secure and comprehensive, ranging from arrangements for the start and end of the school day to covering the risks of the many trips out and visitors in.

Governors have improved their way of working since the last inspection. They provide excellent support and challenge to school leaders. Their hands-on approach has benefited communication with both staff and parents and they know the pupils' views particularly well. Community cohesion is promoted well, particularly in respect of the school and local community and this is enhanced by the excellent partnership arrangements.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good as they settle down quickly in a secure and happy environment and make good progress and achieve well. Children's happy faces are a testament to this. Staff work well as a team and have very good relationships with the children. They provide a good range of suitable activities and a variety of tactile and sensory resources. Activities are carefully planned based on detailed monitoring of individuals' needs. However, some staff are not quite as confident when interacting with children with more complex needs and on occasions children's learning slows. The outside area is secure but is yet to be fully adapted to meet the changing needs of the children. The welfare of the children is a high priority and is excellent. Dietary and medical needs are very carefully met. Leadership and management are good. Parents and carers are engaged with well. Staff are supported and guided well and the stage leaders are looking to develop staff expertise further.

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

Sixth form

Students told the inspection team that they enjoy being in the sixth form. Their progress is good in developing academic and personal skills including those of working independently and these skills prepare them well for when they leave the school. This good progress is a result of the good teaching and the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. Students make excellent contributions to both the school and to the local community, for example through their community work on Duke of Edinburgh award activities. The curriculum offers a good range of accredited courses, such as those from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Good opportunities are provided for work experience and for taking courses at college and students value these opportunities highly. The improvement since the last inspection reflects the good leadership and management. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurately identifies areas for improvement, including meeting the needs of students with multiple and increasingly complex difficulties.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

About 35% of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and almost all of them were happy with their child's overall experience at the school. An overwhelming majority of parents expressed positive views about nearly all aspects in the questionnaire. All parents and carers said the school is well led, that the teaching is good and that they feel well informed about the progress their child makes. Typical comments from parents and carers highlighted the support given by staff and about how happy their children are.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fordwater 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 100 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	86	4	12	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	83	5	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	69	10	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	74	7	20	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	71	7	20	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	66	12	34	0	0	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)	20	57	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	74	7	20	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	66	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	54	14	40	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	66	11	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	77	7	20	1	3	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.



15 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fordwater School, Chichester, PO19 6PP

Thank you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. We especially thank those of you who filled in the questionnaires and those of you who met us to talk about Fordwater.

Fordwater is a good school and these are some of the positive things.

- The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school.
- You enjoy coming to school, behave well and make a good contribution to your school and the local community.
- You make good progress in both your studies and in your own personal development.
- The curriculum is good and you identified many enjoyable activities.
- The school is very effective in ensuring that everyone can do well and can succeed.

We have asked the school to make some improvements. These are the things the school needs to do now.

- Make sure that all the staff are given the skills to confidently help those of you who are coming to the school with increasingly complex needs.
- Help some of the staff to be able to plan their work with a wider perspective and to look at how their work has a positive benefit on your academic and personal outcomes.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Timothy Feast

Lead inspector

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