

Fort Royal

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131534
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	341159
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Janet Thompson HMI

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Seymour
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Long
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Another of Her Majesty's Inspectors was present throughout the inspection. Inspectors observed 26 lessons, seeing 15 teachers, and held meetings with pupils, staff, a parent governor, a representative from the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including pupils' work, tracking of pupils' progress, a range of policies and the school development plan. They read 65 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well those completed by staff and students attending the school.

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

the progress pupils make against their curriculum targets and the ambition included in these targets

- the effectiveness of additional support provided for pupils who are identified as not making as much progress as they can, both academically and in their well-being
- how well teachers use detailed assessment to inform their teaching so that opportunities for learning are good for all pupils
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in assessing need and levels of understanding and using this information to inform child-directed activities as well as those that are led by adults
- the effective use of time throughout the school day.

Information about the school

Fort Royal is a generic special school providing primary education for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. The great majority of pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum disorders. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery assessment unit which serves the south of the county. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from a range of other ethnic groups. There are twice as many boys as girls and a very few pupils who are looked after by the local authority.

The school opened in September 2007 following the amalgamation of three all-age special schools. At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to require significant improvement and was given a Notice to Improve. The current headteacher was seconded to the school for a year prior to being appointed to the permanent post in September 2009. At this time, a full staffing restructure was also put in place, creating a new senior leadership team. New buildings opened in October 2009 enabling all pupils to be taught on one site.

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

The good progress made within areas of significant weakness at Fort Royal mean that in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school now provides a satisfactory standard of education for all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Good leadership and a high level of commitment from staff have helped the school to improve its provision so that all pupils can make at least satisfactory progress and a growing proportion make good progress. Good levels of care guidance and support enable pupils to develop the skills that give them growing independence and the ability to make choices. Many pupils enthusiastically take on responsibilities within the school. Some pupils have received training for helping other children who use wheelchairs and they were very keen to tell inspectors about this.

Pupils' behaviour is good and the 'behaviour zone boards' used in classes help pupils make the right choices. Pupils who find it difficult to respond appropriately in a range of situations receive good additional support and make good progress in improving their behaviour. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory and a growing proportion is good. Teachers are starting to use assessment more rigorously to help them plan lessons so that pupils have better opportunities for learning. This is not consistent across all lessons and, on occasions, time is not used effectively for learning.

The planning and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the Assessment Nursery, is satisfactory. The use of assessment to inform the range of adult-directed activities and add challenge to child-initiated activities is not consistent. Planning for progression from the youngest age and through Reception is satisfactory, both for pupils who thereafter remain at the school and for those who move on to mainstream classes.

The whole school curriculum has been well designed so that key skills can be taught through a range of creatively-linked subjects. Implementation of the curriculum is satisfactory because the focus on learning is not consistent throughout the day. There are too many missed opportunities or larger group sessions that reduce rates of progress.

Safeguarding procedures meet with requirements. Pupils say they feel safe at the school and almost all parents and carers agree this is a strength of the school. However, there is insufficient clarity from the local authority about monitoring arrangements for a pupil attending alternative provision.

The progress made by the school since the last inspection is good and arrangements

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reflect a good capacity to improve further. The leadership team have pursued improvement with rigour and have helped staff develop their skills so they can better meet the needs of all the pupils. A continued focus on improvement is evident and the separate elements of tracking and monitoring are in place. These are used well to identify underachievement but not yet well enough to ensure targets for pupils' progress across all the desired outcomes are as challenging as they could be in all classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing a more consistent approach across classes
 - planning opportunities for progression from the earliest ages through to the end of Reception
 - ensuring assessment more accurately leads the range of adult-led activities as well as adding challenge to child-directed activities
 - ensuring all children are able to access a wide range of experiences, including indoor and outdoor learning, more equally.
- Ensure the best use of the time available during the whole school day so that opportunities for learning are maximised by:
 - reducing the time spent learning in larger groups
 - planning timetables so that meeting the needs of some pupils does not reduce the time spent learning for others.
- Bring together information from established tracking, work monitoring and assessment to ensure an increase in the challenge for pupils that is consistent with enabling them to make good progress in all lessons.
- Work with the local authority to establish more robust monitoring arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- 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 make at least satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, including communication and early cognitive skills. Pupils enjoy learning especially when given opportunities for more active participation. Variation between pupils' achievement shows no patterns for particular groups, apart from progress in speaking and listening being slightly better for boys than girls. Learning in personal and social skills was often good in lessons observed. Progress varied across other subjects and was closely linked to the quality of teaching. In lessons where staff have high expectations and plan purposeful, challenging work for different levels of ability, progress was good. Suitable challenge occurs less frequently in lessons for pupils with more complex needs, even when starting points and needs are taken into account.

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Attendance is average and that of the few pupils with low attendance not related to health needs has improved as a result of input from the school. Pupils are very positive about 'their school' and feel confident that staff will help them address any concerns they have. Pupils unable to communicate as easily with inspectors appeared happy and relaxed within school and responded well to the good care from staff.

Pupils are keen to participate in additional sport and exercise, and pupils with physiotherapy programmes responded well to the activities. The pupils' perceptions of a healthy diet and understanding within some aspects of the health education programme were satisfactory. Although growing independence and ability to work in teams is good, for many pupils the application of basic skills, including information and communication technology in other contexts, was satisfactory.

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	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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.

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All teachers use detailed planning. The planned 'I can' statements for pupils are more often about learning than reported in the last inspection. Resources are well prepared and staff are usually well deployed. Teachers use signs or symbols regularly and pupils usually respond well. Having this in place provides a suitable foundation for learning but in too many lessons the level of challenge was not high enough for all pupils. Teachers and support staff are not sufficiently skilled at ensuring good learning for all pupils when working in larger groups and yet this happens quite frequently. Assessment informs planning but there was often not enough adjustment during a lesson in response to the pupils' levels of understanding. Where staff use assessment well, they have a clear understanding of the pupils' needs and adapt teaching accordingly so that there is a good level of challenge.

The curriculum is enriched by a range of activities including interesting sports, cultural and musical events. Links with other schools are supporting pupils to build links with other groups in the local community as well as providing experiences for some away from home. Speech and language therapy and physiotherapy make a suitable contribution to the curriculum on offer for many pupils.

Care guidance and support from staff, including therapists, is sensitive and adjusted carefully according to the needs of the pupils, helping them become more independent relative to their needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with the support of the leadership team, staff and governors, has established the necessary climate for continued improvement. The improved ambition for all pupils, although not fully accepted by all staff, is shared by most. A focus on improving the quality of teaching has been successful. This, alongside rigorous monitoring and taking action when pupils are at risk of underachieving, has helped ensure pupils make satisfactory or better progress academically and in their well-being. There is suitable monitoring of the outcomes for different groups of pupils. Inequality in achievement and other outcomes are diminishing. Partnerships to help community cohesion are developing, while the school's work with others to address pupils' complex social and educational needs is well developed.

Parents and carers are viewed as key partners to help improve the progress made by pupils and the school offers them good support. Although many parents and carers were

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very positive about their engagement with the school, a few expressed concern about the quality of communication, particularly about their child's progress. Inspectors found home/school communication books are usually used well although there are some differences between staff and opportunities to discuss progress are regular.

The headteacher, supported by the governors and local authority, has successfully established a balanced budget from a previously large deficit while maintaining the necessary level of staffing to ensure all pupils' needs are met. Governors are providing suitable support and challenge, but have not yet established a high profile within the school that is recognised by all staff, pupils and parents. The planned actions for improvements in equality of opportunity are embedded in the development plan but not clearly indicated, making it difficult to evaluate the impact of these actions.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The rates of progress are variable across the classes when taking into account the children's needs and starting points. Children are involved in a suitable range of activities across the areas of learning but progress is uneven. The emphasis on improving communication in some classes is demonstrated by children making good progress but this is not consistent. Additional communication systems for example, signing, symbols and pictures are not used consistently. Focussed work with adults is usually well targeted at the level of need, but there are times when it lacks challenge.

The use of assessment to lead adult-directed and add challenge to child-directed

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activities is variable. Staff appropriately record children's attainment in each area of learning, but this is not always systematic enough against the stages in the child's development. Gains in learning over time are difficult to evaluate and record systems are not consistent across the classes. In some classes, the balance of child-chosen and adult-directed activities is well managed but in others it is not sufficiently well embedded in the routines of the class. When children are taught in larger groups for too much time, learning slows down because children with different abilities do not receive well targeted challenge. For example, a long session for choosing and eating snacks was well targeted for some children but not for others. In another class, the teacher made a very good decision to delay a whole group session and continue with a range of well-planned activities as children were focussed and making good progress.

Curriculum plans include all areas of learning and activities are accessible for children working at very different levels. Nearly all classes created some opportunities for learning outside, but due to continued premises developments, access was not as easy for others.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers believe the school is well led and managed. Nearly all of those responding to the questionnaires believed their child or children enjoyed school. A large majority believe the school is preparing children well for their future lives. However, a few do not think the particular needs of their child are being met and, as a result, their child is not making as much progress as possible. Inspectors found some variation in progress with some not achieving as well as others, however care observed to meet individual needs was good. The commitment of staff is recognised in many comments, although a very few responses indicated that levels of communication and support are variable between staff. Although one parent was not sure about how the school was dealing with a situation that had arisen with their child, other parents commented on how quickly the school responded to concerns raised. Inspectors found the school quick and responsive to concerns raised with teachers and the senior leadership team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fort Royal 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 154 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	69	19	29	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	65	22	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	54	28	43	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	45	27	42	4	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	58	25	38	0	0	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	38	35	54	3	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	46	28	43	5	8	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)	22	34	26	40	3	5	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	55	23	35	5	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	40	34	52	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	45	32	49	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	48	29	45	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	62	23	35	2	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

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.



14 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fort Royal, Worcester, WR5 1DR

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleagues to your school. We enjoyed our visit and were interested to see your work. Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

There have been good improvements since the last inspection and the headteacher understands how to help this continue. Your school is now satisfactory and no longer requires significant improvement.

You enjoy your lessons and make satisfactory progress in your work. More and more of you are making good progress because lessons are interesting and teachers expect you to learn more.

Staff care for you well, and you feel safe and supported. Your parents and carers agree with you about this.

You have helped the school improve by behaving well and being enthusiastic about your work and other jobs in school.

Teachers usually plan interesting work but sometimes do not use all the time available to make sure you make as much progress as possible.

Staff get to know you well, but sometimes do not use all the information to make sure you are learning as much as you can.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is too much difference between the classes and some children do not get the same opportunities as others.

I hope you continue to enjoy school and learn even more than you do now.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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