



Fairmeadows Foundation Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112982
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289481
Inspection date 30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Nelson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fairfield Crescent Newhall, Newhall Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0SW
School category	Foundation	Telephone number	01283211019
Age range of pupils	3-11	Fax number	01283226900
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mr Jacques Sigston
Number on roll (school)	240	Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Day
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector in one day.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school that serves an area of mixed housing in South Derbyshire. Nearly all the children are White British with a very small number of mixed heritage and only a few whose home language is not English. More children are eligible for free school meals than is normally the case and twice as many as usual need extra help with their learning. The number with statements of their special educational needs is average. In the last two years four experienced teachers have moved on and been replaced by teachers new to the school. This has led to a restructuring of management roles with some teachers in charge of subjects being relatively new to their posts of responsibility. The school attracts a higher proportion of children part way through a year than is usual. When children start nursery their skills and knowledge are below what is normally expected of their age.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money. This is a view shared by pupils and their parents, one of whom wrote, 'I think Fairmeadows is a wonderful school'. It also matches the school's view of itself.

Achievement is good. In the Foundation Stage many children start from a low base and make good progress to enter Year 1 at the expected levels because teaching is good. Teaching continues to be good throughout the school so that children achieve well by Year 6. The overall trend in standards is a rising one. However, children do better in science and mathematics, where they enjoy the practical, investigative nature of the activities, than they do in writing where they are less motivated. This resulted in 2005 in standards that were exceptionally high in science, above average in mathematics but only average in English at Year 6. A combination of staffing changes and an influx of children who needed extra help with their learning part way through Years 3 to 6 caused standards to dip to average in 2006. However, the school's very good records of children's progress show that nearly all those who went all through the key stage made faster than expected progress.

As this is a school where every child matters, pastoral care is excellent. Consequently, children feel safe and comfortable in school, secure in the knowledge that, if they are upset or worried, there is always somebody on hand to help. This ensures that their personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary and children relish the responsibility that comes from being school councillors, playground buddies or peer mediators. Overall care, guidance and support are good. The school provides very good support for children who need extra help but some older and more able children do not get enough encouragement to plan, organise and extend their own learning.

One major factor in the school's success is the excellent leadership of the headteacher. She is passionate about involving every single child in the whole life of the school and shares this vision with all staff and governors. Because several of the staff and some governors are new to their management roles and still gaining experience, overall leadership and management are good rather than outstanding. Nevertheless, there are good systems for the checking how well the school is doing and identifying how it could be better. Overall standards have improved since the last inspection, children's personal development is better than it was then and teaching has been maintained at a good level, despite recent staff changes. This good record of improvement indicates that the school is well placed to get even better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more practical activities that stimulate children's desire to write and help them to appreciate the benefits of doing so.
- Give older and more able children more independence and responsibility for extending their own learning.
- Develop the leadership skills of staff and governors who are new to their posts of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards have risen well since the last inspection. At that time standards at Year 6 were below average. The 2005 results show that standards were above average overall and exceptionally high in science. Children did not do as well in writing as they did in reading which led to standards in English being average. Standards are also better at Year 2. At the time of the last inspection they were below average and in 2005 they were slightly above average. Pupils' current work and the school's thorough assessment records show that good standards and achievement are being maintained. There are no differences in the achievement of different groups of children, and targets for the future are suitably challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They are exceedingly polite and well mannered to adults and to each other. When teachers ask them to pay attention or to tidy away, even the youngest children do so with a minimum of fuss. Children know how they are expected to behave and respond extremely well to the high expectations that staff have of them. They say bullying is rare, and usually limited to children falling out with each other.

The school council is, rightly, proud of its achievements and the way teachers take their ideas seriously. Younger children look to the playground buddies or peer mediators for support if they need it during break times. Children enjoy their involvement with the wider community, through projects like entertaining older people and raising funds to replace church windows.

Children are exceptionally positive about school. They say: 'Teachers sometimes give hard tasks but school gives you all sorts of opportunities'. The above average attendance also confirms how much children like school. Their very well developed social and interpersonal skills, along with a good grounding in English and mathematics, prepare them well for the next stage of schooling and for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and as a result, children make good progress. Teachers know that the children at Fairmeadows particularly enjoy practical and investigative activities and go out of their way to provide these. This has been particularly successful in science and teachers are now developing ways of making writing more meaningful and exciting for children to increase their motivation. Children say they know what their targets are and that teachers help them to achieve them. This is because regular

and rigorous checks on how well children are doing enable teachers to plan future lessons effectively. Less experienced teachers who are new to the school are well supported by senior colleagues and growing in confidence and expertise as a result.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities to help children to learn. These cover all the required subjects and more, including French, where the school has identified several children with particular talents. Children in Year 4 all learn a musical instrument and play in a band. Trips out to places of interest, including a mosque and to London for an engineering competition (where the children came third) add interest to children's learning. They spoke excitedly of the dance expert who worked with children throughout school, and one child has won a national poetry competition. The school organises a good and varied range of after school clubs which children appreciate. These include plenty of opportunities for sport activities. Visits from local experts, like the police and the dentist, help children to understand how to stay safe and be healthy. Teachers increasingly use information and communication technology to enliven learning, but there is a need to develop this further as resources improve.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Children enjoy excellent pastoral care so that they feel safe and comfortable in school. This is confirmed by a parent who writes: 'All the staff are dedicated and caring professionals'. All the required checks to ensure children's safety and well-being are in place. The school regularly accepts children who have not settled in their previous schools and, by providing excellent care and support, ensures they settle well at Fairmeadows.

The school has rigorous procedures for checking how well children are doing and staff use these to plan work at appropriate levels. This ensures that those who find learning hard get the support they need to meet their targets. However, some older and more able children are not given enough responsibility for extending their own learning because teachers prescribe too closely what they will do and how they will do it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership with a clear vision of the caring ethos she wants throughout the school. This is recognised by staff, governors and parents, one of whom wrote: 'Mrs Day is an excellent head'. The departure of some experienced senior staff and arrival of some enthusiastic but less experienced teachers has meant some restructuring of management posts. Those new to management are being supported effectively by senior colleagues. They are growing into their roles but need time to gain the required experience to be fully

effective. The work of the governors is good. The governing body includes some very experienced governors who are confident in their roles of supporting and challenging the school to account for its performance. There are also some relatively new ones who are still growing into their role. Parents have overwhelmingly positive views of the school with one writing: 'Any problems or queries are dealt with quickly and effectively'.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

1 December 2006

Dear Children

Fairmeadows Foundation Primary School, Fairfield Crescent, Newhall, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 0SW

Thank you for the excellent way in which you looked after me when I came to inspect your school recently. This letter is to tell you how good I think your school is and how it could be better.

Fairmeadows is a good school. Your excellent behaviour and manners do you credit. You say that bullying is rare but that children sometimes fall out with each other. The younger ones look up to the playground buddies and the peer mediators for support. You also told me that there is always an adult to help if you get worried or upset. Because your teachers and the other adults in school look after you so well you are able to enjoy school and achieve well with your learning. However, you do not do as well in your writing as in other subjects and I have asked your teachers to help you with this.

Your teachers give you a good range of activities to help you to learn in lessons and in after school activities. When you need extra help with your learning teachers give it to you. Some of you older and more able children could take more responsibility for organising your own work. This is something I have asked teachers to work on.

Some of the teachers in charge of particular subjects are new to those roles. I have asked the school to help them to gain the skills and experience they need to be fully effective.

Given the way your headteacher and her staff are committed to caring for you and making sure you do your best you should continue to do well in the future. You can play your part by continuing to work hard in class and behave well around school.

It was a real pleasure coming to your school and meeting you, especially your school council and those who looked after me so well at lunchtime. I am sure your mums and dads would be proud of the excellent manners you all showed.

Yours sincerely

Ian Nelson Lead Inspector