

Fernhill School

Neville Duke Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 9BY

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, there is still too much inconsistency in pupils' outcomes.
- Although subject leaders are focused on the correct priorities for improvement, the quality of provision in English and mathematics is not yet good enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough.
- The rates of fixed-term exclusions are falling but need to reduce further, especially for pupils in vulnerable groups.
- Most-able pupils are not always challenged appropriately because expectations are not consistently high enough. Consequently, the most able pupils are not making enough progress.
- Pupils who have special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are cared for well, but they are not achieving as well as they should.
- School leaders have recently developed a culture where the attendance of every pupil is important. As a result, rates of absence are falling.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has very quickly communicated his key priorities to improve the school. Staff are fully supportive of his vision and expectations.
- School leaders, at all levels, understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
- Pupils feel safe. They are well cared for because staff know them well.
- Pupils behave well. They are proud of their school and have positive relationships with each other. They learn in a calm and purposeful environment.
- Teachers are beginning to benefit from a new approach to professional development and training, including the sharing of good practice already evident within the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and for those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that their rates of progress strengthen, and their outcomes improve.
- Increase the levels of challenge offered to the most able pupils, so that they make better progress and improve their attainment across a range of subjects, especially in mathematics and English.
- Continue the focus to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions, especially for pupils from vulnerable groups.
- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it impacts positively on pupils' outcomes by:
 - further increasing the impact of subject leaders on improving classroom practice
 - sharing more widely the pockets of good practice already evident in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new headteacher brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of school improvement. He has wasted no time in sharing his improvement agenda with staff. As a result, staff feel inspired and challenged to develop the school further.
- School leaders accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of education. They are now using well-focused actions to improve the school. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment are improving.
- In the recent past, leaders have not used additional funding to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils well enough. Although teachers are beginning to support disadvantaged pupils more effectively, the impact of their work is not consistently good. As a result, the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils' achievements and that of other pupils is still too wide.
- Subject leaders are becoming more effective in improving pupils' outcomes and work well with teachers to check the quality of pupils' work and are held accountable for these standards by senior leaders. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress.
- Recently appointed leaders of English and mathematics know the areas that they need to develop. Their fortnightly meetings with teachers are raising teachers' expectations and pockets of good practice are developing in the school.
- The curriculum is interesting and wide ranging and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils engage enthusiastically in discussions about a wide range of social, moral, spiritual and cultural topics. These include current issues that impact on their life outside school, such as personal safety.
- School leaders have developed a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. For example, the library writing club and art club are popular. There are many sports clubs and after-school activities that engage pupils in learning beyond the classroom. For instance, Year 10 boys have recently won creative writing awards in a local competition.
- School leaders have a well-thought-out plan to support pupils to catch up in literacy and numeracy. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work on pupils' outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school increasingly well and are committed to improving the quality of education for all pupils. Recent changes in membership, and a newly constituted committee focusing on raising standards, mean that governors are now better placed to support school improvement.
- Governors are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities. Their recent, successful appointment of a new and experienced headteacher is to be commended. Governors understand fully that holding leaders to account is key to securing the rapid improvement the school now needs.

- Governors' oversight of additional funding has not yet had sufficient enough impact on improving the outcomes of pupils from vulnerable groups.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school and know who to talk to if they have any concerns.
- Staff are trained well and understand current safeguarding legislation. They know who to talk to when they have concerns about pupils.
- Governors work well with school leaders to ensure that the school is safe. A nominated governor visits the school regularly to check safeguarding procedures. The school's records are up to date and recruitment procedures are sound.
- Pupils say bullying is dealt with effectively on the rare occasions it happens.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online survey said that their children feel safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Teaching and learning has not been consistently strong over time to secure good outcomes for pupils. This remains the case in key stage 4.
- The headteacher and school leaders are working on the right priorities to improve teaching and learning. For example, a much tighter focus on teachers using assessment information is impacting positively on pupils' progress.
- Pupils value feedback from teachers. Inspectors saw good examples of pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. This was particularly the case in geography and science. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.
- Staff are aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils in their classrooms and are starting to use effective teaching strategies to support this vulnerable group. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are beginning to catch up with other pupils.
- Teaching does not always meet the learning needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The progress of these pupils is not methodically tracked well. As a result, their progress is variable across subjects and year groups.
- Most-able pupils are not always appropriately challenged. Consequently, they do not make enough progress. Pupils from this group told inspectors they enjoyed their lessons, but often they did not find the work difficult.
- Some teachers use questioning well to help pupils learn. Where questioning is used effectively to extend pupils' thinking, it helps pupils become more self-assured and move forward in their learning. When questioning does not stimulate thinking, pupils appear less confident and their learning is not as strong.
- A fresh approach to staff training and development is helping to improve teaching. Regular meetings between teachers and subject leaders are enabling staff to share good practice within subjects and across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are well cared for. They value the support they receive from staff and they know they will be listened to if they have any problems.
- Pupils engage fully in a personal, social and health education curriculum that helps them learn to live well in society today. They are taught how to stay safe when using technology. They told inspectors how they learn about online safety, road safety, laws and crime in Britain.
- Pupils learn about democracy in a variety of ways. They take part in school elections, write to their local Member of Parliament and learn about British values through a range of interesting topics. Consequently, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Prefects are part of the school culture and represent pupils' views to school leaders. As a consequence, pupils' views are known and acted on. A good example of this is their part in changing the school canteen food offer.
- Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers programme. They have individual career guidance meetings and learn how to prepare for the world of work by writing their curriculum vitae. They visit universities, local colleges and employers, such as BMW and McLaren Formula One, to help them make informed choices for the future.
- The few pupils that attend alternative provision are well supported because of effective communication between school leaders and the providers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves calmly and respectfully around the school. They behave well during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The school's records show that negative behaviour incidents have greatly reduced. The use of the school's Reflection Room has decreased substantially over the past year. Consequently, pupils' learning is improving because lessons are rarely disturbed by poor behaviour.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions is falling. School leaders attribute this to a focus on improving teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are becoming more engaged in their classrooms and are making better progress.
- Pupils' social skills are well developed. They are polite and courteous. They have strong relationships with each other which help them to learn better.
- Pupils have pride in their school. They keep the school playgrounds and building clean and free of litter.
- School leaders are successfully developing a culture that ensures all pupils attend school regularly. Family support workers, tutors and an attendance officer act swiftly to

address attendance issues. Attendance is improving and is broadly in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because there is too much variation in current pupils' achievements within subject areas and across the different year groups in the school.
- Most-able pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points. School leaders have not secured enough improvement in these pupils' outcomes, especially in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils with similar starting points because their progress is only now beginning to improve.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. Strong personal support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities helps them develop their inter-relationship skills and supports their well-being effectively. However, the progress they make is not consistently good enough.
- At the end of key stage 4, pupil outcomes are not good. Historically, pupils have not made enough progress from their starting points by the end of key stage 4, particularly in English.
- The school's unvalidated end of key stage 4 results in 2018 suggest that attainment in some subjects, such as French and history, is likely to be in line with other schools nationally. However, attainment is still too low in other subjects.
- Pupils' outcomes in key stage 3 are improving. Key stage 3 pupils are generally enthusiastic and engage well in lessons. As a result, current key stage 3 pupils are making better progress than that seen in recent years.
- Pupils studying at alternative providers are prepared well for their futures. They are guided to study appropriate academic and vocational courses. As a result, they attend regularly and make good progress.
- Pupils who start Year 7 with lower literacy and numeracy skills are supported well. This was not the case in the past. However, effective interventions have recently been introduced and are having better impact in helping pupils catch up.
- The school supports pupils well for the next stages in their education and further training. As a result, increasing numbers of pupils move on to further education and training at the end of key stage 4.

School details

Unique reference number	116447
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10046495

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	607
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Nigel Hill
Headteacher	Mark Kingswood
Telephone number	01276 702540
Website	www.fernhill.hants.sch.uk
Email address	adminoffice@fernhill.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 June 2016

Information about this school

- Fernhill School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- A new headteacher and a new chair of governors have been appointed since the last full inspection.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils from a disadvantaged background is above the national average. Likewise, the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is also above national average.
- The school uses three alternative providers: Rowhill School, The Clock Tower (Hampshire inclusion) and Farnborough College of Technology.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook 48 full- or part-lesson observations, many with the headteacher and/or senior leaders.
- Inspectors undertook several learning walks around the school, including a focused learning walk to assess the quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met with the vice chair of governors and four other members of the governing body.
- The inspection team considered the 35 responses to the staff survey, the 17 responses to the pupil survey and the 80 responses to the parent survey, including accompanying free-text messages. A parental concern raised through the Ofsted duty desk was also taken into account.
- The lead inspector talked to a local authority adviser working with the school. An inspector spoke to representatives of each alternative provider used by the school.
- Inspectors checked the single central record and other safeguarding policies and documentation.
- The inspection team considered information provided by the school for the monitoring of teaching and learning, and the school's self-evaluation and development plans, as well as plans for the use of additional funding.
- Inspectors considered the school's published performance information and its internal progress and attainment information.
- An inspector heard Year 7 pupils read.

Inspection team

Dylan Davies, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Keith Pailthorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Kutty	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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