

Fir Tree Junior School

Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0NY

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. Teamwork is strong and staff morale is high.
- Leaders place the well-being of all pupils at the heart of this highly inclusive school.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of interesting and exciting opportunities.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and work well together. They behave well and are courteous and polite.
- Teaching is good over time. Teachers make effective use of assessment to identify and address previous gaps in pupils' learning, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress because carefully planned work meets their individual needs effectively.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils have a good understanding of different religions, cultures and British values.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently higher than that at most other similar schools.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is thorough and effective.
- Governors support and challenge leaders effectively and hold them to account for pupils' outcomes.
- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The headteacher has established an environment where every child, parent and member of staff is highly valued.
- Parents and staff speak very highly of the school. They work well together and say that they are proud to be part of the school community.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make rapid enough progress in writing. This is because they are not given sufficiently challenging work and they do not develop their writing skills sufficiently well.
- In some classes, pupils' presentation and handwriting are untidy and messy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve their potential in writing by:
 - giving pupils more support to develop their writing skills in order to accelerate their learning and exceed expected standards
 - ensuring that all adults expect the most from pupils and provide them with tasks of a suitable level of challenge
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing, especially in their presentation and handwriting skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide good leadership. Their drive to raise standards, coupled with excellent training and development for staff, ensures that pupils achieve well. This helps the school meet its aim of 'learning and growing together'.
- The school's self-evaluation shows that leaders accurately identify the areas requiring development. They review how successfully these have increased pupils' progress and make changes where necessary. For example, leaders know that they need to ensure that more pupils make better than expected progress in writing.
- Staff are very committed to improving pupils' achievement. In the online staff questionnaire, 100% of staff agree that the school is well led and managed. They are all proud to be a member of Fir Tree.
- Middle leaders are effective in their roles. They use assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and identify how to improve the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher puts into practice her firm belief that all members of the school community should be challenged and supported equally, carrying out regular checks on the quality of their performance. Staff have clear guidance on how to carry out key aspects of their work, such as how to manage behaviour and how to implement the school's marking policy. Leaders' follow-up checks of lessons and pupils' books ensure that each member of staff understands and follows school policies.
- Leaders have developed a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum which children enjoy. The curriculum provides a good balance of reading, writing and mathematics, but also a clear emphasis on teaching music, sports and art. Pupils experience outdoor learning in their forest and vegetable garden. These opportunities develop the pupils' social skills, and this helps to build self-esteem and confidence. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the schools they have links with internationally. Together, these experiences enable pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world and help prepare them for the next phase of their education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of respecting other cultures and clearly value the richness of diverse opinions and beliefs. The school is strongly committed to equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and discouraging discrimination.
- The school promotes pupils' understanding of fundamental British values effectively. Leaders foster the principles of democracy, for example through pupils taking part in elections to select members of the school council. The school's key values, such as respect and perseverance, encourage pupils to understand and display these principles around the school. Leaders make sure that every child is valued. Mutual respect and tolerance are key features of this school.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding to provide additional support where needed, both in the classroom and through developing pupils' emotional and social skills at other times. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils grow in confidence and make good progress as a result.

- The school makes good use of the primary sports funding, providing a wide range of clubs and staff training and a variety of sports and physical activities, including football and swimming. Pupils' participation is high because leaders regularly seek their views on how to spend the funding and provide positive responses. For example, pupils said they wanted a judo club. The school answered by organising judo lessons as part of the weekly timetable, which has led, also, to an increase in participation outside of school.
- The school's breakfast and after-school clubs are well led and managed. They provide a safe and nurturing environment that supports pupils' social development.
- The local authority has provided effective guidance and support to the school since the last inspection.
- Parents and carers express support for the school's leadership and all aspects of the school's work. One parent summed up the views of many others by saying, 'All in all a fantastic, well-managed school.'

Governance of the school

- Governors provide effective support and challenge to school leaders. They are passionate supporters of the school and visit frequently in order to offer support and encouragement, and to be better informed to carry out their roles.
- Governors have an accurate view of how well the school is doing compared to others nationally and locally. They challenge leaders about the quality of teaching from the detailed and accurate reports they receive from the headteacher.
- The governors know about the performance of staff. They ensure that decisions about pay are based on performance, and that money is available for training needs identified by the headteacher.
- Governors monitor the use of both the pupil premium and the sports grant, ensuring that they are used effectively and in particular that differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others are beginning to diminish.
- Governors play a key role in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met, including those that relate to the 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher has created a school culture in which safeguarding is of paramount importance to ensure the welfare of pupils. Policies and recording systems are thorough, fit for purpose and followed carefully.
- Staff training in child protection and safeguarding issues is highly effective. Pupils say confidently that they are exceptionally well looked after and that there is always someone with whom to share a problem. One pupil said, 'Any adult can sort out your problems and they all keep us safe.'
- Parents support the view that their children are kept safe in school, and every parent that responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they believe their child is well looked after.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- School monitoring records and inspection evidence show that teaching is consistently good across the school over time.
- Relationships between teachers and staff are excellent. Leaders ensure that there is a strong learning ethos across the school. Pupils work hard, are willing to take risks and want to do well.
- Teaching assistants provide very effective support. They are well trained, and this has enabled them to explain tasks carefully to pupils when appropriate.
- Pupils learn well in mathematics because the teaching is good and activities are planned effectively. Pupils say that they enjoy the opportunities and methods the school has introduced to enable them to deepen their knowledge. For example, in a Year 4 class, pupils enjoyed using their reasoning skills to solve multiplication problems. Pupils were able to clearly explain a range of mathematical methods that enabled them to solve the problems.
- Teachers successfully foster an enjoyment of reading. They introduce interesting books to the class and provide a range of effective ways to encourage pupils to read enthusiastically. Pupils say that they enjoy reading a wide range of texts. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills in different subjects to explore and investigate information.
- The vast majority of pupils who responded to the pupil survey agreed that teachers help them to do their best. They also agreed that they enjoy learning at the school and that teachers listen to what they have to say in lessons.
- Although the progress of the majority of pupils is good in writing, too few of the most able pupils reach the same higher levels they reach in mathematics and reading. Teachers do not always give the pupils the right opportunities to help them write for long enough periods or ensure that pupils can use their skills in writing across a range of subjects. Teachers' expectations of pupils are inconsistent, and pupils do not always transfer their developing handwriting skills into their everyday written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are extremely confident, self-assured learners.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Through assemblies and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils know how to keep safe in a range of situations. Pupils have an excellent understanding of road safety and a good appreciation of e-safety.
- All of the parents who completed Parent View agreed that their children are safe, happy and well looked after. All staff who completed the staff survey strongly agree that all pupils are safe at Fir Tree.

- Staff work highly effectively and relentlessly with external agencies to support children and their families. One parent said, 'The way that the whole staff support the children, the school ethos and parents is remarkable.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy learning. They work well when in their pairs or groups and support each other well.
- The school manages behaviour well. Pupils have a clear understanding of why it is important to behave well, and pupils who spoke to inspectors have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Parents and staff are unanimous in being overwhelmingly positive about pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities. For example, the 'values representatives' try to make the school a better place for all pupils by encouraging everyone in their school community to demonstrate the school's value of the month.
- Attendance is higher than normally found. Pupils enjoy going to school, saying, for example, that the school is 'amazing', 'brilliant' and 'awesome'. Few pupils are persistently absent because leaders help parents and families to understand how important it is to be at school.
- Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Occasionally when pupils do not have sufficient challenge, they are less attentive and do not listen as well as they could.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, the published outcomes for key stage 2 show a good improvement from the previous year. By the end of key stage 2, attainment in mathematics exceeded the national average. Attainment in reading and writing was in line with the national average.
- Pupils leaving in 2017 made strong progress from their starting points in mathematics. This is a significant improvement from 2016, where the progress in mathematics was below the national average. Progress in reading is good and is in line with national figures. Writing progress was not as strong as mathematics, and the school has correctly identified this as a key area of focus.
- Parents are positive about the progress their children make and feel that the school provides them with useful information about their progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and or/disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This is because leaders accurately identify their needs and provide additional support to help them overcome their difficulties.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding well to provide extra support for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders carefully monitor this group's progress and have detailed discussions with class teachers to track the progress of individuals. The work in these pupils' books shows that they are making good progress from their starting points.

- The most able pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics. The progress of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, in writing is less strong because adults do not always expect enough of them.

School details

Unique reference number	123071
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10037804

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glynis Wheatcroft
Headteacher	Nilofer Khan
Telephone number	01491 836341
Website	www.firtreejuniors.org/
Email address	admin.2578@fir-tree.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 March 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Since the last inspection, the school has expanded from one and a half forms to two forms of entry.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British, with very few pupils who speak English as an additional language or who come from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been considerable staff changes since the last inspection, with the appointment of a new assistant headteacher, as well as four new class teachers. The governing body has changed considerably with several new governors.

- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 19 lessons; 12 of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, and pupils' work in books.
- Discussions took place with a group of pupils, as well as informal conversations with other pupils during lessons and at playtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about books they enjoy.
- Meetings were held with school staff, five members of the governing body, parents and carers.
- Inspectors took into consideration 27 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 133 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account 82 responses to Ofsted's 'Parent View' questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Harris, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jon Hills

Ofsted Inspector

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