

Fosse Bank School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	8866066
Unique Reference Number	119016
Inspection number	329549
Inspection dates	19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Fosse Bank, founded in 1892, is a small independent coeducational primary school for pupils aged from three to eleven years. There are 115 pupils on roll, which is a significant rise since the last inspection. The school is a charitable, non-profit making trust run under the supervision of a governing body. The school moved to its current site in Hildenborough in 2004. There are eight classes, including two for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school's mission statement is that 'Fosse Bank is a caring, happy, small school where pupils are treated as individuals and inspired with confidence to reach their full potential. In a stimulating learning environment pupils are encouraged to be true to themselves, showing honesty, respect and trust within a family community.' In 2008, 80% of the Year 6 pupils achieved a grammar school place. The school was last inspected in June 2004 and the provision for government funded children in the EYFS was inspected in June 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Fosse Bank is a good school with good provision for children in the EYFS. Important areas of strength include the school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, and the development of pupils' personal skills, which are judged to be outstanding. The school has come a long way since the last inspection, when it had just moved to the current premises. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation and the school has successfully regained the confidence of parents in its continuing existence. This has happened because of the commitment of staff, their reflective approach to school development and, in particular, the attention to securing improvements by the headteacher and governing body. Children and their families are overwhelmingly positive about the school. It meets all of the regulations, including those that were not met at the time of the last inspection.

Quality of education

The curriculum for the school is good overall and in the EYFS it is satisfactory with many good features. Curriculum plans are soundly based on the National Curriculum and religious education, and delivered through a good balance of separate subjects and topic based learning. This approach is being developed currently and staff are in the process of formulating a curriculum map to show how different areas of the curriculum are being covered and built upon. The curriculum is being developed well, benefiting from the effective work of the subject coordinators. The quality of subject policies and schemes of work varies. The best are closely tailored to the school's particular ways of working, the available resources and staff expertise. These schemes support teachers effectively in their daily planning for different levels of pupils' ability and interests, as well as identifying links to other subjects so that learning can be supported and extended. The curriculum is enriched through themed activities such as the recent 'mediaeval day' and performing arts enrichment week. A rich and varied programme of extracurricular activities and clubs is a significant and popular feature of the school day.

The quality of teaching is good because teachers and support staff are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and are conscientious in seeking the best for the pupils. As a result, pupils are similarly enthusiastic and make good progress in their learning. The quality of lesson planning varies and in some respects is hampered by the lack of detail in some subject plans. Lesson objectives are not always sufficiently clear to pupils, sometimes relating to what will be done rather than what will be learned. This then misses opportunities for pupils to contribute and for staff to further extend pupils' thinking. Similarly, the support given to pupils through marking is not always as helpful as it could be in suggesting ways to improve the work next time. The use of questions to pupils is a regular feature in lessons. This works well to elicit responses and to assess what pupils know. In the very best cases, pupils are not only required to show what they know but also to explain why they have come to the conclusions and how they have understood the concepts. Lessons for information and communication technology, music, French and physical education are taught by subject specialists, making a significant impact on pupils' enjoyment and progress.

Arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements are good. The system allows for methodical tracking of attainment twice yearly, measured against targets for expected progress from one year to the next. This helps the school to analyse whether pupils have exceeded the expected progress. However, the targets are not sufficiently refined to show whether those who are less able and more able are challenged appropriately. Similarly, the progress from one key stage to the next is not clearly identified, reducing opportunities to evaluate any particular areas of strength or weakness. For example, the sometimes average attainment of pupils in the EYFS and Key Stage 1 is juxtaposed by the good and sometimes outstanding progress that pupils make by the time that they leave the school. Nevertheless, the information is well supported by regular assessments in class and at the end of each year. More frequent assessments take place for pupils identified as having an

additional learning need, according to targets on their individual education plans and under the watchful eye of the special educational needs coordinator.

The progress that pupils make from their starting points is good overall and accelerates in Key Stage 2. When compared to national averages, pupils' attainments represent above average standards in general, and in 2008 the standards were exceptionally high for English, mathematics and science. This provides pupils with very good opportunities to go on to local grammar schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding across the school. This is because, not only does the school offer a wide and varied range of opportunities, but the pupils take very good advantage of these. They relish the chance to represent their school in sports and community events. Others play their part well in school and take their roles and responsibilities very seriously. For example, the 'buddy' system is working well to help the younger children at playtimes while they wait for their play area to be completed. There are high expectations of pupils to conduct themselves appropriately around the extensive and complex school site. They do this extremely well. Their outstanding behaviour and consideration for others contributes significantly to the smooth running of the school and the safety and well-being of themselves and others. Among their many other qualities, pupils are confident, respectful, polite, and demonstrate an understanding of the needs and differences of others. Their cultural awareness is fostered effectively through after-school clubs and themed curricular events, such as those for different festivals. Regular involvement with the local church and parish council provides well for their spiritual development and their sense of responsibility within the local community. Wider aspects of responsibility are demonstrated through the work of the eco-school council, who were recently awarded Green Flag status.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Fosse Bank has outstanding arrangements for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Appropriate arrangements are in place to check the suitability of staff to work with children. A well established range of procedures and practices ensures that any risks are assessed and appropriate action taken. An accessibility plan and scheme are in place. The views of parents, carers and pupils are sought regularly and the school's responses are widely made known. For example, while some pupils expressed the view that portions of food at lunchtime are too small, the headteacher looked into it and encouraged the pupils concerned to ask for larger portions. The monitoring of welfare, health and safety is given high priority by the governing body, which works conscientiously in tandem with the school to ensure that standards are maintained. This attention to detail has enabled effective improvement and maintenance of the building as the school has expanded and developed.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the children in the EYFS is good overall and outstanding in the quality of welfare, health and safety. The leadership of the EYFS is good. There is a strong spirit of collaborative working between the staff and this is strengthening consistency and progression within the curriculum and teaching. The coordinator is new to the school this term and has already made a good start to make further improvements. All of the recommendations identified in the last inspection report for the nursery provision are now met.

While the curriculum is satisfactory overall, there are significant strengths. These include thorough planning at all levels and particularly good planned support for children's phonics development. In 2007 and 2008, attainment was particularly good in this area of linking sounds and letters, reflecting the impact of the school's focus. The development of speaking and listening skills is similarly well supported and prepares the children well for the opportunities offered when they enter Key Stage 1. The curriculum for mathematics is less strong and an area where attainment is weaker. The school has already identified this and has enhanced the resources. The provision of a suitable outdoor learning area is problematic for the school because planning restrictions prevent the development of a covered area in close proximity to the building. A new, appropriately resourced area is due for completion soon but is not close enough to the classrooms to allow free access to learning in an outside environment. The staff are currently reflecting on how to use the new facilities most effectively. The quality of teaching is good. Staff are well trained, experienced and highly organised.

The children develop into gregarious individuals who have the confidence to engage with staff, friends and visitors. By the end of the EYFS, children's attainment is generally in line with national averages, sometimes above. This represents generally good progress from a range of initial starting points but the pattern of achievement is inconsistent. In keeping with their reflective approach and determination to improve, the staff are already looking into more effective ways of measuring progress and moderating the assessments.

The children are particularly well cared for. Welfare requirements are met fully. A keyworker system is in place, staff engage well with families and provide them with good information about their children. Parents and carers are very supportive of the provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

Whole school

- make better use of information about pupils' progress when evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum
- consider forming links with external professionals to moderate and support the school's judgements about the quality of the provision and outcomes for pupils.

EYFS

- raise expectations in aspects of mathematics
- refine methods to measure the progress made by children in the EYFS
- integrate the new outdoor learning area into the whole curriculum.

Inspection Judgements

outstanding	Good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Fosse Bank School		
DCSF number	8866066		
Unique reference number	119016		
Type of school	Independent primary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1892		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 62	Girls: 43	Total: 105
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 6	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,960 - £8,655		
Address of school	Noble Tree Road Hildenborough Tonbridge Kent TN11 8ND		
Telephone number	01732 834212		
Fax number	01732 834884		
Email address	office@fossebankschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Lovatt-Young		
Proprietor	Fosse Bank School Governing Body		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	19 November 2008		