The Royal First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110014
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	356670
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vivien Benn
Headteacher	Carolyn Jones
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2007
School address	The Great Park Windsor SL4 2HP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited ten lessons and observed four teachers. Inspectors held meetings with governors and staff and talked with pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. Inspectors examined questionnaires from 41 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress pupils make in the mixed-age classes.
- How well pupils with special educational needs build on their starting points.
- The impact of recent staff changes on the leadership and management of the school.

Information about the school

This is the only Crown aided school in the country and is located near the centre of Windsor Great Park. It is smaller than average. Almost all pupils have White British heritage. Those with other backgrounds speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. There are four classes in the morning, comprising mixed Reception and Year 1, mixed Years 1 and 2 and separate Year 3 and Year 4 classes. In the afternoon, Years 3 and 4 pupils are in the same class. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was on maternity leave. A temporary headteacher had been appointed from outside the school until her return.

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? 2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 2

Main findings

Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and feel extremely safe in the warm and welcoming environment of this good school. Since the last inspection, almost every aspect of the school's work has improved. In particular, the teaching is much more effective. As a result, pupils' progress has accelerated and their attainment has risen to above average levels. Several parents remarked on the recent improvements and their views are overwhelmingly positive. Typical of their comments were, 'We couldn't have asked for a better start to our daughter's education.' 'My child has flourished educationally and socially,' and, 'Our children are very happy here, enjoy their learning and love going to school.'

The outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive are evident throughout the school day. All pupils are known to all adults and pupils are secure in the knowledge that they are looked after extremely well. Staff go to great lengths to provide highly effective support for all individuals and groups. Consistently good, and often outstanding, teaching seen in Key Stage 2 is based on a thorough knowledge of pupils' starting points. This means that those needing additional help and those who are very confident are challenged appropriately. The school is, rightly, endeavouring to share the excellent strategies evident in Key Stage 2 across the whole school, especially with staff in Key Stage 1 where the teaching is good, but not quite as strong as elsewhere.

The school lives up to its values acronym (FAMILY) regarding faith, achievement, motivation, inclusion, learning and community. Especially successful aspects of this are apparent in pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their exemplary behaviour, and the excellent way the school engages parents in their children's learning.

The governing body has successfully steered the school during recent changes to the leadership and teaching staff, ensuring a continuous drive for improvement. Self-evaluation is rigorous and provides senior managers and members of the governing body with a clear idea of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Strategic planning is effective. For example, the school is rightly planning modifications to the curriculum in anticipation of the changing balance of age groups in the mixed-age classes. The school correctly recognises that the attractive grounds and extensive parkland surrounding the school are not used as extensively as they might be and this is being addressed in the curriculum review. The school's track record in building on strengths and addressing weakness, together with a stable staff, indicates a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by embedding across the school the excellent strategies used in Key Stage 2 including:
  - providing feedback through marking which makes explicit the next steps for improvement
  - involving pupils in planning their own investigations
  - helping pupils devise their own success criteria so they gain a clear idea of how their work is to be assessed.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to learn within the attractive grounds and in the extensive parkland that surrounds the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils 2

Children build well on their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They thoroughly enjoy learning and their achievement through the school is good. Pupils' excellent behaviour contributes significantly to their good learning and progress. All groups of pupils, including those in mixed-age classes, made at least good progress in almost all the lessons observed. Levels of attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 have risen steadily over recent years, except for a dip in 2010 which was due to the particular characteristics of the year group. Pupils' workbooks indicate good progress over the last year. Pupils in Year 2 read well and this contributes to their good writing skills. Pupils enjoyed re-telling 'The Gingerbread Man' in their own words and creating a different ending. They wrote neatly in joined script with many using exclamation marks appropriately and inverted commas correctly.

Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make great strides in their learning. This was evident as pupils in Year 3 quickly learned to locate points on a grid using conventional notation. In Year 4, pupils rose to the challenge of creating frequency tables, converting these in to bar charts and copying them into a computer paint program. Levels of attainment in writing in Year 4 are well above those expected of the age group. Most write with confidence and flair and use punctuation effectively. Much of the writing is not only constructed extremely well but also reflects pupils' outstanding spiritual and moral development. After a discussion about the diary of Anne Frank, pupils showed mature insights in their thoughtful and powerful responses. One boy wrote, 'At 5 o'clock I was woken up by howling coming from the showers. At last a hot shower why were people howling? Gas not water•' Another pupil captured the essence of the situation with her own diary entry, 'I could hear the screams of the children, and see the blood running over the floor, then suddenly, I heard my name being called and knew it was all over•'

With the strong support of teaching assistants, pupils who find learning difficult make good progress. They respond well to one-to-one tuition and, because teachers tailor tasks to meet the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes, they make good headway during lessons. The most able pupils thrive in Years 3 and 4. Most do well in Years 1 and 2, although occasionally they are not sufficiently challenged and this restricts their progress.

Pupils of all ages get along well. 'We know everyone,' said one Reception child. Pupils feel extremely safe and they say bullying is unheard of. They know how to avoid potential hazards, for example when walking along the road tracks in the Great Park. Pupils know

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how to use the internet responsibly and safely. They know the importance of a balanced diet, but their understanding of the benefits of exercise is not as secure. Pupils talked enthusiastically about their leadership roles as school councillors and house captains and were proud of their fundraising concert 'The Royal's Got Talent'. Despite the school's isolated location, pupils gain good insights into cultural diversity. When asked about a recent visit to a contrasting school, pupils commented on its urban location, its size and the number of pupils. Until prompted, they did not mention the diverse ethnicity of the pupils indicating the success of such first-hand experiences in helping pupils to gain insights into similarities rather than focus on differences within the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

[1] The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Parents were unanimous in their praise for the level of care for their children. One praised the school for 'going the extra mile' in finding out as much as possible about her child's particular needs even before she starts school in September. Another said staff are always happy to discuss concerns and look for ways to resolve them. A significant factor in the caring and nurturing ethos within the school is the excellent relationship between adults and pupils which underpins the teaching and learning. This means that pupils not only stay focused throughout lessons but also have the confidence to seek clarification when they need it. Teachers across the school are skilful in engaging pupils. In the Years 1 and 2 class, for example, pupils were held spellbound as the teacher read a story expressively.

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Pupils in Years 3 and 4 respond extremely well to the fact that teachers treat them as mature learners. The success of a Year 3/4 lesson on evacuees, for example, owed much to pupils' confidence in offering their own ideas. Looking at a photograph of children about to leave their parents, one remarked, 'They are smiling, but might be putting on a brave face so the parents aren't upset.' Asked whether they would recommend 'The Diary of Anne Frank' to other people, one Year 4 pupil replied, 'Well, maybe not to older people as it might bring back sad memories of the war.'

Teachers take full advantage of pupils' extremely positive attitudes. At the start of a Year 4 lesson, pupils were asked to suggest ways a tube of sweets might prompt mathematical investigations. Their ideas included work on circumference, ratio, fractions and percentages, sorting using Venn diagrams and weighing small amounts.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 benefit from detailed feedback through marking which, even when their work is of a high standard, includes prompts about how it could be improved. Pupils are often asked to suggest their own success criteria so, when approaching a task, they know exactly how it is going to be assessed. Teachers use information from marking, from dialogue during lessons and from formal testing to assess where pupils are, and provide challenging work which moves them on. In Key Stage 1, the overall quality of teaching is good and pupils' work is marked regularly. However, staff are not always as skilful in pinpointing in their marking precisely what pupils need to do to improve, or in involving pupils in planning independent investigations and devising their own success criteria.

Curriculum activities are designed with enjoyment and engagement in mind. These include a 'mad scientist' assembly, visits from a Yeoman of the Guard and hedge laying in the Great Park. The school is seeking ways to extend opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors in order to further promote their independence and resourcefulness. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual development very well. Music plays a strong part in this, as was seen during an assembly led by Year 3 pupils. They sang songs from the Second World War with great sensitivity and read their own prayers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	**2**
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	**2**
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	**1**

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body has provided strong support during recent changes in the leadership team and teaching staff. Members of the governing body have remained focused on ensuring continuity and cohesiveness, at the same time driving improvements. In partnership with senior staff, they keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The acting headteacher has the confidence of parents and staff. One of the three teachers appointed over the last two years commented, 'I'm amazed at what has

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been achieved this year and thrilled, excited and pleased to be part of it.' This view was reflected in the entirely positive staff questionnaires, indicating a common ambition and drive to move forward.

Safeguarding procedures are well established and are regularly checked and reviewed by the governing body. New staff are appointed following safe recruitment guidelines, although some have not yet been trained in safeguarding. Staff promote equality of opportunity well. Any differences in the attainment of progress of different groups, such the dip in Year 2 last year, are quickly spotted and strategically addressed.

Parents and carers are active partners in their children's learning and are kept very well informed. Daily informal contact, together with curriculum and social events, help staff get to know families well. Many parents or carers volunteer to help during the school day. They also help out in other ways. For example, the school is adorned by flower boxes and hanging baskets through the 'sponsor a pot' scheme. Links with The Crown Estate bring considerable benefits, for example by bringing in funds for the new hall built in 2010 and declared open by the Queen. Pupils attend services, such as Mothering Sunday, at the nearby Royal Chapel.

The school promotes local community cohesion well, bringing together children and their families from all walks of life for educational and social activities. Pupils' awareness of global issues is raised well through their studies in geography, and they develop further insights through supporting charities and contributing to disaster funds. Their understanding of cultural diversity within the United Kingdom is promoted effectively though links with a school in a contrasting neighbourhood.

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	**2**
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	**1**
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	**2**
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	**2**

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's enjoyment, excellent social development and highly positive attitudes are obvious as children compete to explain to any visitor what they are doing. One said eagerly, 'We're making seed packets and I'm doing the instructions,' and proceeded to demonstrate her well-developed literacy skills, writing, 'Give it worter evreaday'. Such plausible attempts at spelling are widespread among the children and are due to the strong emphasis given to letters and sounds from the outset. Children's early numeracy skills are developed through lots of counting and sorting and through role play. In the 'garden centre', one asked, 'Would you like some seeds or plants? I'm counting the money.' Others wrote shopping lists, copying the adults as they thought aloud and modelled the process.

Children thoroughly enjoy the wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. During one session, where children were free to choose, there was a hive of activity. Indoors, children were looking at caterpillars in small pots. 'Look, look!' one exclaimed, 'It's eating the apple and water.' Other children were busy in the small room geared up for created activities. One explained, 'So far, I've made two giraffes, a crocodile and two baby lions. I'm making a collection for my mummy's birthday.' The newly developed outdoor area includes high-quality climbing apparatus, large musical instruments and sturdy pedalled vehicles, all on a colourful soft surface. These facilities are also used well to promote children's social, physical and creative development. With the support of the teaching assistant, children made 'helicopter seeds' from paper and experimented in dropping them from various heights. The strong partnership with parents and carers is evident not least in the fact that so many volunteer their support during the school day, and they are often to be seen interacting very positively with the children.

Teaching Reception children and Year 1 pupils in the same class is largely beneficial to both groups. The older children provide good role models but, at the same time, have access to a good range of resources to support their own learning through play. Sometimes, however, introducing new work to the whole class, rather than in smaller groups, does not provide enough opportunities for all children to contribute their ideas. A recent review of the curriculum resulted in judicious plans to provide further opportunities for pupils to learn about the natural world in the wooded areas of the school grounds.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	**2**
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was above average. All were happy overall with their children's experience. They were rightly almost completely unanimous in their positive views of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Royal First School 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 85 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	85	4	10	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	71	12	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	51	18	44	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	51	20	49	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	63	15	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	63	15	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	59	15	37	0	0	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)	21	51	15	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	59	17	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	56	15	37	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	59	15	37	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	54	19	46	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	80	7	17	0	0	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 all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see **www.ofsted.gov.uk**).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. ■ 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 pupils' 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.

24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Royal First School, Windsor SL4 2HP

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed watching you work and play happily together. You get on extremely well with one another and with your teachers.

The school is providing you with a good education. Children make a good start in Reception and this continues as you move through the school. The good teaching helps you to make good progress in your learning and to reach above average standards. You enjoy your lessons and behave exceptionally well. We were especially impressed by how you all paid attention in class and tried your best. Those of you in Key Stage 2 have really mature attitudes. Your teachers encourage this of course, as we saw during the lively discussions about war-time evacuees and the experiences of Anne Frank.

The adults take great care of you and help you if you have problems. Those in charge of the school are working hard to make it even better. We have suggested that one way of doing this would be for teachers to share their good ideas. We also think the school is right in exploring ways you can take full advantage of the lovely school grounds and the wonderful parkland around the school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best all of the time.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector

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