



Farmor's School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 115728
 Local Authority Gloucestershire
 Inspection number 290319
 Inspection dates 9 November 2006
 Reporting inspector Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	The Park
School category	Voluntary controlled		Fairford
Age range of pupils	11–19		Gloucestershire GL7 4JQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01285 712302
Number on roll	877	Fax number	01285 713504
Number on roll (6th form)	228		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Barbara Bridges
		Headteacher	Mrs Anne Stokes
Date of previous school inspection	15–18 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
11–19	9 November 2006	290319

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Farmor's School is a very popular 11–18 mixed comprehensive school in Fairford but with a sizeable intake of students from Swindon and Wiltshire. The school mainly serves an area of contrasting but broadly above-average socio-economic characteristics. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There are few students whose first language is not English. Attainment on entry is slightly above average. The school achieved Business and Enterprise specialist status in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school **Grade: 1**

Farmor's is an outstanding school. Students are justifiably proud of the school and the overwhelming majority of parents are extremely happy with all that it provides. One parent expressed the views of most when she commented, 'both my children absolutely love their school'. The calm and friendly atmosphere is underpinned by excellent relationships throughout the whole-school community. There is a strong sense of purpose and students of all ages and capabilities say how much they value the unending quest for excellence that pervades Farmor's.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Attainment on entry is slightly above average but students consistently attain high standards throughout the school and make excellent progress. One student said that 'we feel that we are simply bound to succeed at this school'. Personal development and well-being are excellent. Students have exemplary attitudes to learning. Their attendance and behaviour are excellent. Students feel really safe at school, and adopt healthy lifestyles very well. The school enables students to take responsibility and demonstrate leadership skills in a wide variety of ways. As one student said, 'we are being well prepared for life in the future'.

Teachers work extremely hard and successfully to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is excellent and this is a major reason for students doing so well. One student said that 'teachers at this school don't just go the extra mile, they go ten'. As a consequence, relationships are of the highest quality and staff know their students very well. Farmor's includes all students exceptionally well.

The excellent school curriculum provides a wealth of activities to meet the many and varied needs of students. All students are involved in imaginative and stimulating enterprise activities and new vocational subjects have been provided. Nevertheless, the school rightly seeks to improve the curriculum even further, for example, through the South Cotswold Partnership, in order to ensure that appropriate courses are available for all students. Care, guidance and support for students are extremely good. The pastoral structure enables the school to support all students most effectively. This is demonstrated in the way that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve extremely well as a consequence of the excellent individual support they receive.

Extremely well led by the headteacher and her excellent senior leadership team, staff and governors share a determination to sustain very high standards and to ensure all students have the opportunities to do as well as they can. There is a continuous focus on school development and improvement. All staff are encouraged to develop their leadership skills and this results in excellent school and departmental self-evaluation and monitoring.

Students are set challenging targets which, through excellent support, they regularly meet and often surpass. The school rightly identifies that its assessment strategies have yet to provide sufficient details about students' progress within National Curriculum levels. Typically, though, the school is already piloting an assessment scheme in one department which will make the necessary improvements. The school deploys its resources extremely well to provide excellent value for money. It has made extremely good progress since the last inspection and demonstrates excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form Grade: 1

The sixth form provides students with an excellent education. Standards are consistently high and achievement is excellent. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Staff at all levels work extremely hard and effectively, but with enthusiasm and enjoyment, to ensure that all students achieve their best. As a consequence of outstanding pastoral and academic support and guidance, students develop into confident and impressive young people who are very well prepared for the future. The vast majority of students gain admission to the university or college of their choice. Not surprisingly, the sixth form is very popular and students attend from a wide geographical area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Tighten current assessment strategies in order to demonstrate in more detail how students progress between levels.
- Improve curriculum provision so that all students continue to follow courses that best meet their needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Throughout the school, for all groups of students, achievement is excellent. Standards are consistently high. At Key Stage 3 the standards attained by students in the core subjects has been significantly above the national average since 2001. Both male and female students have achieved value-added scores that are significantly higher than average since 2003. At GCSE, the percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics has been significantly higher than average since 2002. Results for 2006, when students attained 75.1% with five A* to C grades, represented a further impressive increase on previous results. This represents significant value added by the school. At A level, the points per entry attained by students in 2005 were the second highest in the local authority for non-selective schools. In 2006, 55.2% of entries attained an A or B grade. AS results have indicated excellent value added in recent years.

Personal development and well-being Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Students really enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and extremely well cared for and supported. As one student said, 'teachers really know you and want you to do your best'. Students know that staff will help them if they have difficulties or problems of any kind. They particularly enjoy practical aspects of learning to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils are courteous and helpful and have a very clear sense of appropriate behaviour. They confidently engage adults in conversation and are respectful of each other.

Students are very clear about the need to eat healthily and voted to change the school canteen menu to serve only healthy foods and to ban crisps and chocolate at breaks. The 'eco bytes' healthy snacks sold in the school are very popular. They have an exceptionally well-developed awareness of the need to keep fit, for example, through participation in sport.

Students think the school council provides them with ample opportunities to make their voice heard. All pupils make exceptional progress in preparing for the world of work through lively and practical 'enterprise experiences' organised across the school. Attendance is excellent and pupils are aware of the need to go to school in order to make progress in their learning. Above all, pupils are well-rounded individuals ready to take on the challenges of life when they leave school. Sixth form students' personal development and well-being are also outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and students are highly motivated to learn.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge most effectively to plan stimulating lessons and engage students actively in their learning. Teachers develop extremely good relationships with students that result in students responding confidently in lessons. Teachers benefit from the advice and guidance of a teaching and learning mentor, whose impact has been to bring greater consistency of approach to teaching across the school. All staff are committed to including, challenging and supporting all groups of students to develop their learning skills very well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum which is broad and balanced and enriched with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities such as clubs, visits to places of interest and visitors to the school with specific skills.

These activities include a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. There is flexibility in the curriculum, particularly for older students, to ensure that they can choose the combination of subjects that best meets their needs. This has included the development of the vocational curriculum to include engineering, health and social care and catering. Those pupils for whom the full academic curriculum is not appropriate at GCSE have the opportunity to take part in work placements and life skills courses, which are popular and effective. As part of the school's business and enterprise speciality, all pupils engage effectively in enterprise activities developing their financial, group and presentational skills. Specialist school status has also improved the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment effectively, resolving an area for improvement from the school's last inspection. The sixth form curriculum gives a good choice of advanced courses, with improved facilities, particularly for ICT, ensuring that students can develop their studies effectively. The school is not complacent and rightly identifies extending the curriculum still further in order to ensure students continue to have appropriate courses to follow that meet their individual needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The level of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The pastoral support provided to students is excellent and the attention to personal development by tutors and Heads of Year is highly valued by parents. Links with outside agencies are used extremely well to meet students' needs, for example, the Connexions Service and the Youth and Community Service. The school also employs two counsellors who provide excellent support for vulnerable pupils. Anger management groups have a very positive impact on students who have been identified as needing support in this area. Rigorous child protection procedures are well known by staff and implemented effectively.

Learners are guided and supported extremely well in their work, enabling them to make excellent progress. The care for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent and is tailored to individual needs. The school takes a justifiable pride in including all students and very successfully supports vulnerable pupils. A measure of the importance that the school gives to this area is the establishment of a multi-agency group for the inclusion of children (MAGIC) which coordinates the support for vulnerable students with considerable success. Academic information is effectively recorded and provides good quality information on students' progress.

The care, guidance and support that sixth form students receive are outstanding. Tutors are highly committed to help individuals to manage life and work problems and students greatly appreciate the help they receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is led extremely well by the headteacher. She is deeply committed to developing leadership and management at all levels in the school and her senior leadership team demonstrates excellent leadership as a result. Staff at all levels are motivated to do their best to improve the school still further. This improvement strategy is based on excellent self-evaluation throughout the school. Student performance information is analysed very carefully to generate appropriately challenging targets for all groups of students. The school rightly identifies that its assessment process still lacks the capacity for teachers to monitor individual student progress between levels. It is piloting an assessment scheme to address this issue, which is an example of how quickly it responds to any areas identified as requiring improvement.

Specialist status has been very well led and managed. It has had a very positive impact on the school not just in terms of results in business studies but also in helping to build strong links between other subjects. There are many stimulating enterprise activities which engage all students well. The governing body is an experienced group that continues to support the school extremely well in its pursuit of improvement. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The sixth form team have a clear and effective focus on raising standards, monitoring the progress of students and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Resources have been deployed extremely well to ensure excellent value for money.

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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	16–19
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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	N/A	
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	N/A	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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	1	

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	



12 November 2006

Dear Students

Farmor's School, The Park, Fairford, Gloucestershire, GL7 4JQ

Thank you for welcoming us to Farmor's when we inspected the school recently and for talking with us so openly. We were delighted to see that you enjoy being at the school and agree with your comments and the views of your parents and teachers that Farmor's is an outstanding school. We were very impressed by the test and examination results and noted how well you make progress through the school. You develop excellent working relationships with school staff and make a positive contribution to school life. The school is working really hard to make sure that you all have the best education possible. Staff at the school really know you well and take very good care of you.

To make your school even better we have asked your teachers to develop two areas. These are:

- assessment strategies in order to demonstrate in more detail how you make progress
- curriculum provision so that all of you have appropriate courses to follow that meet your needs best.

Your school is already working on these areas and you can make a significant contribution to these developments. There are many excellent opportunities for you at Farmor's School. We are sure that you will continue to make the most of them.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector