

Parkgate Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117162
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379361
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2012
Lead inspector	George Logan

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hastie
Headteacher	Sarah Pipe
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
School address	Southwold Road Watford WD24 7DN
Telephone number	01923 243905
Fax number	01923 443660
Email address	admin@parkgatejm.herts.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

George Logan

Additional inspector

Keith Brown

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent seven hours and five minutes visiting 14 lessons taught by nine different members of staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and another representative of the governing body, and with staff and two groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's documentation, which included records of teaching, the main improvement plan, records relating to safeguarding and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken. The inspection team analysed 168 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with 26 questionnaires from staff and 102 from pupils.

Information about the school

Parkgate Junior is an average-sized junior school. Although the majority of pupils are of White British heritage, the school serves a community which, in recent years, has become increasingly ethnically diverse. Pupils of Pakistani heritage currently form the largest single ethnic group. A very small number of pupils come from a Traveller background. While around one-third of pupils speak English as an additional language, only a few of these are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the current government floor standards. The school has gained a number of awards in recent years, including the National Healthy School and Active Mark Awards. There has been some instability in the senior leadership of the school in the last two years, at both headteacher and deputy headteacher levels. The current headteacher took up post in July 2011, having held the role in an acting capacity for the previous year.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Despite some loss of momentum in the last school year, decisive action by the new leadership team has ensured that the school is now improving at a brisk pace.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Pupils' progress in Years 3 to 5 is typically satisfactory. In general, progress in reading is good. Slower progress last year in Year 6, particularly in mathematics and for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, has been rigorously addressed, with evidence of accelerated progress now coming through.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, in the many good lessons, pupils are challenged effectively and learn quickly. Systematic development of quality teaching has ensured increasingly good learning across the school. Teachers' improved skills in analysing data enable them swiftly to identify any loss of pace in pupils' learning. Written work is generally neatly presented.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' personal development are good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and attend regularly. Provision for pupils' welfare and for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Despite the concerns of a few parents and carers, bullying is generally dealt with effectively. The school has well-established systems for managing pupils' behaviour. Records indicate that both incidents and exclusions have declined.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school now has a clear direction, systems are increasingly embedded and staff are committed to sustaining the accelerating pace of pupils' learning. Governance is a strength. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The curriculum provides a broad learning experience which engages pupils' interest well.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate and improve further the progress pupils make in mathematics by:
 - ensuring a consistently close match of work to pupils' ability and needs
 - rigorous questioning of pupils to ensure that learning is embedded
 - rigorous analysis of assessment data to ensure that all work set provides appropriate challenge for pupils
 - additional training for subject leaders in the interpretation of data.

- Embed changes already implemented to support learning and progress and further raise the attainment of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs by:
 - close monitoring of the effectiveness of specific intervention programmes
 - evaluation of the impact of support staff working both independently and within lessons
 - ensuring that pupils' specific learning needs are accurately evaluated, particularly those who are also at an early stage of learning English.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. They are, in part, correct, but only in relation to reading. Overall achievement remains satisfactory, though improving steadily. Pupils enter Year 3 with broadly average levels of attainment. Typically, they make satisfactory progress through the school, attaining broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. The Year 6 pupils who left in 2011 had a much higher entry profile than any other recent intake. The school's review of their attainment, on entry to Year 3, identified that these pupils had more ground to cover than entry data indicated. Pupils made overall satisfactory progress in reading and writing, but there was some loss of momentum in mathematics particularly in Years 5 and 6. For some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, this was exacerbated by relatively high pupil mobility. Senior leaders recognised the need to accelerate progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6, to ensure the momentum of learning, already secure in Years 3 and 4, could be effectively sustained. Thorough tracking systems, rigorous analysis of progress, new progress targets, a closer focus on learning, more efficient grouping of pupils and deployment of staff are all ensuring accelerated progress at present, particularly for the oldest pupils. Progress this year is already more rapid than was the case last year. Standards and progress in reading are slightly above average.

Many lessons are briskly paced, although at times the pace of learning is slightly slow. Within the recently-introduced ability groups for mathematics, for example, tasks are usually closely aligned to pupils' needs. Occasionally, teachers spend

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excessive time on introductions and reinforcement activities, so that pupils have insufficient time to work independently or to practise their skills. Provision to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has been thoroughly reviewed and restructured, under new leadership. The current, more rigorous approach to evaluating pupils' needs and the progress they make is enabling the school to demonstrate increasingly good impact on the learning of these pupils. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective initial help when they enter the school, supported by specialist teaching assistants and, overall, make satisfactory progress in their learning. The very small numbers of Traveller pupils make steady progress, although the extent of this progress is closely tied to the regularity of their attendance.

Quality of teaching

A significant proportion of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, a view shared by pupils, parents and carers. There is much existing good practice. Across the school, the teaching of reading is effective. Particularly for the youngest pupils, the effective teaching of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters), mostly embedding and extending pupils' existing knowledge, is supported by a wide range of activities accurately matched to individual needs. This good quality teaching indicates a strong potential to increase the pace of pupils' progress further, to ensure that pupils' learning over time is consistent and sustained. In a well-paced, highly-effective Year 3 science lesson, the motivating style of presentation, the strong subject knowledge of the teacher and good opportunities for pupils to engage in practical tasks, all ensured that progress and achievement were good. In a challenging Year 6 mathematics lesson, with the more able pupils in the year group, the teaching drew effectively on the teacher's good subject knowledge and activities were subtly planned to take account of the needs of each group of pupils. They were enthusiastic and sustained their efforts throughout the session.

Despite the existing strengths, a few inconsistencies remain. The pace of some lessons is a little slow. There are missed opportunities in some lessons to review learning and check pupils' understanding through questioning and also to extend the challenge for more-able pupils. Across the school, there has been good progress in implementing a range of assessment strategies, including self-assessment by pupils, now well embedded, and the use of individual targets. The marking of pupils' work generally identifies the next steps they need to make in their learning, although there are some inconsistencies in practice. The quality and presentation of pupils' written work indicates that teachers have mostly high expectations. Overall, the curriculum is well developed, promoting increasingly good progress in pupils' core skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents, carers and pupils rightly recognise the positive relationships and good quality of care in the school. This is a happy, cohesive community. Close, positive relationships between adults and pupils, and the excellent range of extra-curricular

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activities and shared experiences, engage pupils well and underpin the good community spirit. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is, for the great majority of pupils, good. Pupils, and most parents and carers, have few concerns about behaviour. Indeed, almost all pupils say that they feel very safe, and most parents and carers also feel that their children are safe in school. The school has rigorously tackled weaknesses in the management of playground behaviour identified at the last inspection. The appointment of a play mentor and the careful management of the available space have contributed to a reduction in the number of incidents – now very few. Even so, a small number of parents and carers have concerns about the behaviour of individual pupils. The ethos of the school is very inclusive, providing, as required, for pupils with a wide range of needs, including a small number with behavioural difficulties. While school records indicate that isolated incidents have occurred over time, the school has implemented effective systems for managing behaviour and, in consequence, episodes of inappropriate behaviour are increasingly rare. There are few recent reports of bullying of any type. Good procedures are now in place to manage any issues that arise.

Leadership and management

School leaders are very effective in supporting the personal development and well-being of pupils and this is rightly recognised by parents and carers. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school is active in tackling discrimination and it is genuinely committed to promoting equality. Following a period of disruption in the leadership of the school, the recently-appointed headteacher has taken decisive action to improve provision and secure more rapid progress and higher outcomes. She is effectively supported by the acting deputy headteacher and an ambitious middle management team. There is a clear, shared vision for further improvement. The introduction of a robust tracking system, together with ongoing training of staff in data analysis, is enabling the school to monitor pupils' progress much more rigorously. Arrangements for the support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have been thoroughly overhauled, with much higher levels of staff accountability. The monitoring and support of teaching and learning is thorough and effective, so that the proportion of good or better teaching is rising steadily. There has been significant professional development to support more effective teaching of mathematics so that teachers are now more confident. This is already showing through in more rapid progress in mathematics.

Links with the main feeder infant school have been strengthened significantly, with much more joint activity, including some shared staffing. School self-evaluation indicates that school leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths, and of what still needs to be done and there is a powerful impetus for change across the school. Capacity for improvement is securely satisfactory. The ambitious governing body demonstrates a high level of commitment in the active support its members provide. They recognise that there is still work to be done to secure the quality of provision and outcomes, but know that this is well under way. The school, through

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its good extra-curricular programme and its commitment to the individual, is very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff now feel more ownership of the curriculum, which, though still satisfactory in the support that it gives for enhancing pupils' basic skills, provides a generally effective framework within which to drive standards up. It also offers a well-judged range of opportunities for pupils to learn through practical experiences.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

30 January 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Parkgate Junior School, Watford, WD24 7DN

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, spending time in lessons and hearing your views. Thank you to those who completed our questionnaire. We found that yours is a satisfactory school, although there is much about it that is good and, under new leadership, it is improving steadily. Our main findings are listed below.

- You generally make satisfactory progress. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Progress last year was not so good in mathematics and for those of you who are disabled or have special educational needs, but the school has taken action to deal with this. You usually make the best progress in reading.
- Teaching has improved and much is now good. You learn well in most lessons, but in others the pace is slower. Your written work is generally well-presented.
- You have very positive views about your school, have good attitudes to learning, behave well and attend regularly.
- Staff care for you well; marking and guidance, though a little variable in quality, is helping you to make quicker progress.
- Senior leaders are really helping the school to move forward. They are very focused on ensuring that your academic progress is more rapid. The curriculum offers many interesting activities.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- build upon the all things which have already been done to enable you to make more rapid and consistent progress in mathematics
- ensure that school leaders closely monitor the progress made by those of you who are disabled or have special educational needs, measuring the impact of all the additional arrangements they make.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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