

Parklands Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111238
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	356882
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2010
Reporting inspector	David Cox

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Darby
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Downes
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
School address	Little Sutton Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH66 3RL
Telephone number	0151 3382220
Fax number	0151 3382220
Email address	admin@parklands.cheshire.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed twelve lessons taught by eight teachers. They held meetings with pupils, pastoral and academic staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at development planning, self-evaluation reports, pupil progress monitoring documentation and pupils' workbooks. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers. Questionnaires completed by pupils and staff and 49 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were also read and analysed.

- Whether the recent improvement in pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 is sustainable.
- The rate of children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Whether monitoring and evaluation procedures are rigorous enough and if senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's performance.
- The effectiveness of strategies for improving pupils' progress at Key Stage 2, particularly in English.

Information about the school

In this smaller-than-average-sized primary school, most pupils are White British with a very small proportion from ethnic minority heritages. A small number of pupils from Traveller families attend the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than that usually found. The school has gained a range of awards, including accreditation for ActiveMark (Gold) and Basic Skills Quality Mark, and has achieved Healthy Schools status. Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone significant changes in staffing, particularly at Key Stage 1.

The range of extended provision includes before- and after-school childcare run by the governing body.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Parklands provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The headteacher and the governing body give high priority to supporting the pupils' personal development. In this they have been very effective. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good although their understanding of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom is less well developed. Pupils feel safe in school and the care, guidance and support they receive are good. This is reflected in their good behaviour in lessons and around the school. The vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the opportunities the school affords their children and many are particularly enthusiastic about the welcome the school gives.

Children enter the Nursery class with levels of skill well below those expected for their age, especially with regard to their communication, literacy and language development. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the good provision they receive. By the time they start in Year 1 they are much closer to average levels. Pupils make satisfactory progress with their learning throughout Years 1 to 6. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has fluctuated from year to year but is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics but perform less well in English, particularly in aspects of writing. Too often their ideas and imagination run ahead of their resolve to present their work in the best possible light. Work in their books is riddled with elementary errors of presentation and spelling. This is because strategies to improve attainment in English, particularly basic writing skills, are not applied consistently by all staff. Systems and procedures for early identification of deficiencies in pupils' writing skills and to match interventions to accelerate pupils' progress are not always rigorous enough.

Teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of outstanding practice. In the best lessons the pace and variety excite pupils. However, in a few lessons activities are not always sufficiently challenging. While the curriculum is satisfactory, the planning of topics does not always link different subjects, which reduces opportunities for pupils to develop and practise basic skills, such as writing, in different contexts.

The headteacher has led the school strongly and single-mindedly during a period of significant changes in staffing. A newly created Key Stage 1 team is focused on raising attainment and improvements are already measurable. However, there have been few opportunities to delegate leadership responsibilities below senior level and not enough attention has been given to developing the skills of other leaders. This means that, while monitoring and self-evaluation is rigorous at senior level, at other levels it is not strong enough to eliminate inconsistent practice in aspects of teaching. Self-evaluation judgements are generous with regard to pupils' attainment and achievement. Nevertheless, senior leaders have identified correctly the school's main priorities. Governors are supportive but not yet fully involved in monitoring. Given the staff team

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now in place and the improvements noted at Key Stage 1, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and progress in writing by:
 - ensuring systems and procedures identify the individual learning needs of pupils rigorously and consistently
 - ensuring strategies for intervention are matched to the specific needs of each pupil
 - increasing the amount of writing done by all pupils and providing more opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects
 - ensuring all staff, including teaching assistants, take a more consistent approach to improving pupils' basic writing skills.
- Make monitoring and evaluation more rigorous by:
 - delegating more responsibility for leading aspects of the school to middle leaders
 - making middle leaders more accountable for monitoring and evaluating the work of their areas of responsibility, particularly teaching and learning
 - ensuring all governors are involved fully in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In the best lessons, pupils show a real interest in learning and are eager to become involved and extend their knowledge and skills. They enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning, particularly when they are engaged in practical activities. Pupils have a passion for being creative and an exhibition of pupils' art work drew applause from parents and carers. They enjoy a challenge although this is not provided in all lessons and progress slows.

Pupils progress satisfactorily and attainment is broadly average although the results of national tests dipped slightly at the end of Year 6 in 2010. While most pupils reach the level expected for their age, too few excel in writing. Too often pupils' writing falls short of the complexity of form and structure necessary to secure higher levels of attainment. Accuracy of spelling and the use of extended vocabulary lack precision. However, when pupils are given clear guidance on what is needed, the quality of their work is often impressive. This is evident in some of the Year 6 pupils' interpretations of the poem 'Jabberwocky'. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from Traveller families make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They comment that the school is a fun place to be and it provides a haven of security. Pupils have a good knowledge of first aid and how to deal with accidents in the home. The school operates a Golden Book and staff enter pupils'

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names if they see them meeting that week's target, for example, 'saying please and thank you'. Pupils strive to be included in the book. Most pupils have a good quality, healthy school meal every day. Although most pupils know what constitutes a healthy diet, a very small minority bring packed lunches containing too much fat and sugar. Pupils take on positions of responsibility such as play leaders and buddies. The highly-effective school council works hard to improve every aspect of school life. Members of the school council have a small budget and maintain resources for 'Wet Play'. Their most notable recent success was campaigning to get rid of flight trays used for hot meals. Pupils take part in activities such as 'Make a pound grow', which gives them a chance to think as budding entrepreneurs. Their attendance is average and by the end of Year 6, they have a solid foundation for future learning and life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

The best lessons are characterised by teachers' very strong relationships with pupils. In these lessons, enthusiastic teaching motivates pupils who are engaged fully through well-planned and lively activities. Pupils' learning is checked regularly and lessons have good pace and variety. Teachers create a calm environment for learning and effective techniques are used to manage pupils' behaviour; only very occasionally do some pupils fail to comply with instructions. Occasionally pupils are allowed to be too passive and the rate of learning slows. Teachers target questions to pupils that make them think, reason,

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and apply and explain their thinking. However, in a few lessons, questions were not demanding enough to extend pupils' knowledge or thinking. On occasions, opportunities for pupils to explain their progress towards the learning targets are missed and writing assignments are not linked sufficiently closely to real-life situations. Assessment is accurate and marking is regular. The use and effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable. They are used well to manage pupils' behaviour but are less effective in developing pupils' learning.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal and emotional development well and does much to raise pupils' confidence and belief that they can succeed. Involvement in the arts is encouraged and pupils' creative talents are acknowledged through public exhibitions of their work. Specialist teaching in sport, dance, French and music is provided by partnership with a local high school. The curriculum plays a satisfactory part in pupils' academic development. Curriculum development is ongoing and the school has still to complete the move to a fully creative and interlinked programme to promote basic skills and learning. Pupils have too few opportunities to write at length and extend skills in other subjects. There is a very wide range of clubs and enrichment activities and pupils have opportunities to attend residential visits. Parents and carers speak highly of the many opportunities afforded their children. The highly popular breakfast club makes a very important contribution to helping pupils attend regularly, arrive on time and be well-prepared for lessons. The school has a well-established organic kitchen garden and orchard; produce from this is sometimes given or sold within the community.

Good care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school's work. Strong links with other schools ensure pupils settle quickly. Pupils praise teachers for helping them deal with any problems. Effective links with outside agencies ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who may be vulnerable receive good support. The integration of pupils from Traveller families into the life of the school is good. The school pursues rigorously parents and carers whose children do not attend on a regular basis. Learning mentors and the headteacher make house calls to collect children who fail to attend on a regular basis and overall attendance is rising. The identification of pupils' specific learning needs is not always rigorous enough and, whilst intervention strategies often meet the needs of groups of pupils, they are not always tailored to meet the needs of individuals especially in writing.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's vision and clarity of purpose have created a welcoming and harmonious ethos which permeates throughout the school. As a result of this high degree of care and trust, staff support each other well. Morale is high. Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning rigorously but other leaders are not sufficiently focused on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning in order to accelerate and raise attainment. Whilst attainment dipped in 2010, this was predicted by senior leaders and the school met its targets. The management of the before- and after-school clubs is effective.

The Chair of the Governing Body has an excellent understanding of the needs of the community the school serves. Governors are supportive of the school and fulfil all their statutory duties. Although the sound governing body knows the overall strengths and weaknesses of the school, not all governors are involved fully in evaluating the work of the school. Financial management is prudent and effective and benefits from the meticulous work of the business manager.

Safeguarding of pupils is good and includes good levels of security, robust checking of staff and strong links with local services. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, as in the way that the achievements of groups are checked, analysed and acted upon. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and there was no evidence of it taking place. Community cohesion is good because senior leaders have a very good understanding of the local community and the different groups and families that exist within it. Based on their evaluation, senior leaders are widening links to extend pupils' understanding of different cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They settle in quickly and are keen and happy to learn as a result of high expectations. Children enjoy a range of stimulating activities, indoors and out, carefully chosen to meet their needs and enthusiasms. They are given the opportunity to select and choose their own learning activities and respond well to encouragement and praise to explore and widen their choices. Children play together happily and are well-behaved. Inspectors observed children being really excited when getting ready for their trip to Delamere Forest. Teaching is good overall, with stimulating activities moving at a good pace in a friendly and safe atmosphere. Children start school mostly with skill levels that are well below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception Year, they attain levels that are just below those expected for their age and make good progress. They make good progress with their understanding of numbers and become familiar with money. Weaknesses remain in writing and their understanding of sounds and letters.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. High levels of care and welfare are provided for the children to ensure their well-being. Support for vulnerable children is of a high standard. Teachers and helpers are perceptive and note down significant moments in each child's progress. However, the Early Years Foundation Stage profile analysis is too generous in the level of skill it awards to some aspects of children's learning.

Partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies are strong, so that specialist help is sought and provided when needed. Outdoor provision has been improved since the previous inspection but staff recognise that opportunities for children's physical development are restricted because of limited opportunities to play with large outdoor equipment.

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

Views of parents and carers

In terms of the number of questionnaires returned, the response was fairly typical of most inspections of primary schools. Almost all the parents and carers who responded expressed positive views of the school. This was true of several parents and carers who spoke with the inspection team. Parents and carers value highly the work of the school in helping their children to be happy. Inspection findings endorse these opinions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Parklands Community Primary 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 160 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	59	15	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	67	11	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	55	15	31	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	51	16	33	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	65	12	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	51	18	37	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	53	18	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)	24	49	20	41	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	55	15	31	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	49	17	35	3	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	53	18	37	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	57	16	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	65	11	22	1	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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:	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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.



9 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parklands Community Primary School, Ellesmere Port CH66 3RL

On behalf of the team, can I thank you for your warm welcome, courtesy and help. We thoroughly enjoyed our couple of days in your school recently. It is not easy to cover all the points in a short letter, but here are some of the main findings I found about your satisfactory school.

What I really liked about your school:

- the good progress and teaching in Nursery and Reception classes
- your good attitudes to learning, behaviour and the strong relationships you develop with each other and the adults
- the good contribution you make to the day-to-day running of the school
- your enjoyment of school and the way this is appreciated by parents
- your good knowledge and understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles
- the way the school keeps you safe, including those who attend the before- and after-school clubs
- the school's strong approach to working closely with your parents and others who help you.

To help your school improve further:

- your teachers will help you to improve your writing. I know that you will want to assist in this by always doing your best work, acting on the guidance given and reaching the challenging targets set for you
- the staff and governors will work even harder to check what is going on in the school.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Cox

Lead inspector

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