

Parkside Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114482
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	357555
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben Edwards
Headteacher	Norman Wood
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 16 lessons or part lessons taught by eight staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation and pupils' workbooks; they held discussions with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, and senior staff. Questionnaires from 77 parents and carers and eight staff were analysed to help inform the inspection process.

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

- How well pupils attain in their day-to-day work, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- To what extent teaching is accelerating pupils' progress, particularly for boys and higher attaining pupils.
- How effectively the curriculum helps to develop pupils' learning, particularly in their mathematical, information and communication technology (ICT) and science activities and in broadening their understanding of other people.
- How well senior leaders are remedying areas of weakness to improve the school's effectiveness.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in one class. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There are very few pupils of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Since the last inspection, there have been some significant staffing disruptions and changes, including at management levels; one class is being taught by a temporary member of staff to cover a long-term absence. The school has a number of awards reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles, as well as their artistic and cultural development.

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

Parkside Community Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school has a number of strengths. These were noted in the last inspection, such as the good start pupils make when they join and the positive family ethos that helps develop pupils' personal qualities. However, the academic performance of the oldest pupils has fallen since then. The vast majority of parents and carers say their children enjoy the school, although some rightly recognise that 'progress could be better' for some pupils.

Children have a smooth start to school and enjoy the benefits of a well-organised Early Years Foundation Stage, which helps them make good progress. The school builds on this good start well in Years 1 and 2, but by the time they reach Year 6, pupils' progress slows so that their attainment is average. Their progress is satisfactory overall given their starting points. Pupils are articulate and confident speakers, often telling inspectors at length what they like about the school. This confidence in speaking is not always matched with a wide written vocabulary. Pupils' spelling ability varies in accuracy between year groups as they move up the school. While pupils use their writing skills within other subjects, it is not always at great length or depth. Pupils' number and calculation abilities develop systematically, but the opportunities to apply these skills regularly in practical 'real-life' investigations are too few. In science, pupils achieve satisfactorily. In other subjects such as information and communication technology, design and technology and art, pupils often reach levels that are better than expected for their age; the otherwise satisfactory curriculum has strengths in developing these aspects. The school's information on pupils' current progress is looking promising in meeting the school's targets.

Pupils behave well and are respectful to adults and each other. The school promotes pupils' levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well. As a result, pupils know what is right and wrong and have an acute awareness of their local cultures and those represented globally. Their knowledge of others in this country is a weaker aspect of their understanding. Teachers cultivate these positive attitudes to good effect in lessons so pupils behave well. The quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good as not all teaching consistently demands the most of all pupils. Some explanations are overly long and activities lack sparkle or relevance, and the quality of teaching varies between classes and subjects. Pupils work and play together well and relationships are very harmonious, although pupils' understanding of others with contrasting backgrounds or beliefs is weaker.

Senior leaders recognise that since the last inspection, they were not effective enough in tackling a decline in national test results. Subject leaders' monitoring includes looking at pupils' work, but direct observation of teaching is not widespread or systematic. The school's teaching and learning policy gives basic guidance to teachers, but is not very helpful or innovative in describing how teaching can increase pupils' learning more rapidly.

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In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good care and guidance for pupils and links with parents and the community are notable strengths. The school's self-evaluation routines provide a realistic measure of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have recently reviewed their part in self-evaluation, but the resulting changes are comparatively new and so their impact is limited. Given some early signs of improvement and senior leaders' success in maintaining other positive aspects, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. ♦♦

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment and rate of progress in English and mathematics, particularly in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for pupils to use their writing at length within different subjects
 - giving pupils more guidance on how they can spell consistently well and in using a wider vocabulary in their written work
 - ensuring pupils can apply their mathematical skills in regular investigational and practical 'real-life' tasks where possible.
- Ensure that more teaching is consistently good in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - making sure that higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently in their learning
 - ensuring that explanations are short and sharp so pupils can get down to work more quickly
 - developing the school's teaching and learning policy more fully.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for senior leaders to monitor the work of others in all classes
 - ensuring that governors play a full part in challenging the school to improve further
 - reviewing the school's provision for widening the pupils' understanding of others with differing backgrounds.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' academic skills develop well initially, although in Years 3 to 6 pupils' progress is slower. Pupils are not fully confident in writing with accurate spelling or in using a wide vocabulary, although their work is often presented neatly. Teachers' assessment indicates that children in the Reception class make good progress, given their average starting points on entry to school. In Years 1 and 2, pupils build on this good start so their attainment is often above average in Year 2. However, in Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress has slowed recently as pupils are not always fully stretched in their thinking. For example,

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in a lesson about decimals, all pupils started from a similar point despite some getting the idea quite quickly. In another lesson, the teaching of simple spelling rules, while accurate, was not very motivating or memorable to help pupils remember the principles. In contrast, in a well-taught English lesson, pupils were enthusiastic about developing different questions so they could ask their teacher, acting as Anne Boleyn, how she felt about her life. Most groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities because of the close supervision they have. Those who are higher attainers are not always fully stretched, but the school is increasing the focus upon them to extend their learning further. Pupils enjoy their opportunities to use computers. Pupils' past work indicates that they make satisfactory progress in science, although some activities do not always seem that stimulating. The progress of groups, such as boys who did less well than girls last year, is analysed carefully. Modification of lesson activities for boys is reducing any gaps and, in their current work, few gender differences in attainment were apparent.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures pupils' well-being. The happy relationships that exist extend to lessons, around the school, lunchtimes and playtimes. Pupils behave well, although some of them believe it can still be better. Pupils are sensitive to their surroundings. The upkeep of allotments and hatching chickens and butterflies reflects their good awareness of natural things. Pupils speak highly of their roles such as peer mediators and lunch monitors, and enjoy the invitations to have lunch with the headteacher once a week prior to discussing their progress in the afternoon. Pupils say they feel very safe as the school usually listens to their views and concerns. This year's school council has a track record of getting involved in the local community and in shaping the direction of school initiatives. Pupils' good awareness of staying healthy and their awareness of their surroundings through the 'High Weald Heroes' initiative give them a good knowledge of local cultures. Their awareness of other cultures represented more widely in the United Kingdom is a weaker aspect of their understanding.

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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	2
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?

Although the quality of teaching varies, some good teaching is developing pupils' skills, particularly in art, music, design and technology and information and communication technology. However, variations between classes and subjects mean that not enough pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6. Teachers generally plan carefully, although those pupils who are more able or have particular gifts or talents are, in reality, not always challenged to do their best. Some activities such as the art workshops held during the inspection give pupils a wider range of experiences and, along with trips out of school, broaden the curriculum effectively. Pupils say they enjoy the good range of extra-curricular clubs. Teaching develops pupils' basic skills to an average level, although teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend or apply the pupils' writing or number skills in other subjects. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well across the school to enhance pupils' learning, although sometimes they overlook simple opportunities to use video cameras for pupils to capture classmates' efforts. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from appropriate in-class support and one-to-one booster tuition benefits individual pupils' learning. Teachers mark work regularly and recent new initiatives in target setting are appreciated by pupils, particularly the oldest pupils in the school who know how to move to a higher level. ♦♦

Good levels of care, guidance and support benefit pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Good contact with parents and carers, outside professionals and the local

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secondary college enable pupils to be confident and mature in their outlook. Most parents and carers say their children are well cared for and happy.

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has fostered a positive ethos for pupils' well-being over past years. However, senior leaders recognise that a high number of staff changes have made it difficult to galvanise the support and enthusiasm of all staff in driving improvement and maintaining pupils' rates of progress. Staff, particularly subject leaders, are not always sufficiently involved in activities to evaluate and influence ways of accelerating progress and improve teaching and learning still further. However, senior leaders are supportive of change and, for example, have been involved in pilots for national assessment. Staff work well with parents and carers and in developing partnerships to deliver sporting, musical and artistic aspects. However, while the school identifies weaker areas to remedy through the school development plan, this is not yet linked strongly enough to involving all. The staff review their teaching and learning policy each year, but it is relatively basic and is not an innovative document to guide staff in improving teaching more rapidly. This and the resulting drop in pupils' academic performance are key aspects as to why the school's effectiveness is not better. Governors are supportive and knowledgeable and ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities. Their recent changes in personnel and routines are starting to equip them to challenge school leaders more effectively, but these changes are not yet fully in place. ♦♦

The protection of children is a high priority for staff, but inspectors have pointed to aspects which can be strengthened to improve upon the satisfactory levels. The vetting of staff is thorough and meets all current recommendations. The school's success in promoting equal opportunities and eradicating discrimination is evident in the everyday life of the school. Pupils achieve at least satisfactorily and, over time, there is little evidence of any groups of pupils achieving consistently better or worse than others. Any gaps between boys' and girls' attainment are closing quickly. The school makes a very strong contribution to community cohesion at the school and local levels as it promotes pupils' moral, social and cultural development well, but it recognises that at the national level this is a weak aspect of its provision. Links with charities and celebrations of events such as Chinese New Year help to develop pupils' global perspective appropriately.

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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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with a secure grounding in skills and understanding. Very productive relationships are established with parents and carers, and several commented favourably. This positive environment enables children to become confident and eager learners. There is a good and effective emphasis on activities led by adults to develop children's early literacy and numeracy skills in particular. 'Duncan the Dragon' hand puppet is a firm favourite with children who know he helps with their learning. At the same time, opportunities for the children to explore the world around them and to play together around themes such as the 'Gruffalo' enable them to develop curiosity and social skills. In an outstanding lesson, the children were captivated as the class teacher outlined more work based upon the 'Gruffalo's adventures. The staff work closely together to plan to meet the needs of the children in all areas of their learning. Activities are led well, although occasionally children are left for too long before an adult helps them to move their learning on. The teachers recognise that the relatively small outdoor area, although planned for expansion soon, is not enabling children to gain their full potential in developing all areas of their learning, particularly their physical aspects. Detailed notes are made of children's progress and these are used to plan the next steps in their learning. Relationships between children and staff are very warm and supportive and behaviour is often excellent. As a result, children make good progress and their attainment is often above the levels expected when they move to Year 1, particularly in the communication, language, number and social aspects. Staff work effectively as a team and quickly identify weaker areas of provision.

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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

There was a good response rate to the questionnaire. Those that included comments contained an equal mix of positive views and some suggestions about how the school could improve. Children's confidence, happiness and the friendly approach of staff were running themes. There were suggestions or concerns of an individual nature, but there were also some common themes. These included lack of challenge for the higher attainers, concerns over behaviour, and a few parents and carers who felt that suggestions were not always followed up and who perceived reductions in budgets to be affecting the choices the school makes. The inspectors agree that the school is a friendly, welcoming place which children like attending. They also recognised that progress for pupils could be quicker and although behaviour occasionally dips, it is usually good and occasionally outstanding. The school appears to have the normal range of opportunities for parents and carers to express views and suggestions. For example, the school did respond to some parents' and carers' concerns about the location of the residential trip for the oldest pupils in the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	64	28	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	56	31	40	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	35	47	61	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	40	38	49	6	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	31	40	41	53	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	32	47	61	4	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	29	52	68	3	4	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)	28	36	43	56	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	45	34	44	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	36	41	53	5	6	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	27	46	60	9	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	31	46	60	6	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	48	39	51	1	1	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 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 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.

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:	<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.



17 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parkside Community Primary School, Heathfield, TN21 8QQ

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. Most of your parents and carers think you are very happy at school and that it provides a satisfactory education for you. We agree.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- The youngest children settle in the Reception class happily and enjoy all of the activities that take place. They learn well.
- You behave well and try hard in lessons which helps you to make satisfactory progress.
- You reach average levels in English and mathematics when you leave and you achieve satisfactorily in your work.
- You do well in subjects like ICT, design, music, arts and sports.
- You are good at keeping active at playtimes and know lots about eating healthily.
- The range of things you do sounds exciting, such as designing your kit car, learning about 'High Weald Heroes', and your art workshop.
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult to keep up with classmates.
- Teaching is satisfactory and getting better. I bet Year 5 loved interviewing Anne Boleyn when she appeared in class. Ask them!

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further.

- Give all of you, but particularly those in Years 3 to 6, more guidance and opportunities to improve your writing and mathematics work.
- Help your teachers to make lessons even more fun and increase the pace of your learning by letting you get down to work more quickly.
- For the headteacher, staff and governors to keep an extra close eye on how they can help the school become even better.

You can all help your teachers by keeping up your good behaviour and tending your allotments!

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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