

Gatcombe Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116204
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	379214
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Thomas
Headteacher	Carole Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons, and visited one other part-lesson. A total of seven teachers were seen. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and held meetings with members of the governing body, pupils and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. The school's development plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governing body documentation and school policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the health and safety and safeguarding of pupils, were scrutinised. Inspectors also looked at 70 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by staff and pupils.

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

- What is the impact of the school's actions to improve attainment in mathematics and for boys in English?
- How well are pupils attaining in information and communication technology (ICT) and is the subject being used well enough across all subjects of the curriculum?
- What is the quality of leadership and management at all levels, particularly with regard to the depth of monitoring and accuracy of self-evaluation?
- How well are teachers using assessment information to develop appropriately challenging work in lessons for all pupils?

Information about the school

Pupils in this average-sized primary school come from a predominantly White British background. The largest minority ethnic group is of pupils from Black African heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is currently below average. The main group consists of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. Currently, the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided through the Reception class. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

A breakfast and an after-school club, managed by the governing body, are situated on the school site and both were visited by inspectors.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils, including those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has outstanding features. The very high commitment level of the headteacher and deputy is shared by all adults and this is reflected in the very positive outcomes for pupils. Very successful work by the school has resulted in the pupils having a high attendance record. All pupils benefit from some excellent and effective partnerships. For example, the pupils' knowledge of healthy eating and modern technology has been very well developed through links with local businesses.

Attainment is above average. Pupils, by the end of Year 6, in 2011 attained above average levels. This constitutes good progress for the large majority of pupils and includes those known to be eligible for free school meals. Boys attained less well than girls in writing but were still above the national average.

The good curriculum is being very well developed. It is being built around projects which are being chosen to motivate boys and give them more opportunities to write.

Teaching is good. There is an increasing number of outstanding lessons in which pupils, including those from a Black African heritage, progress extremely well because teachers plan challenging work for pupils of different abilities. There remains some inconsistency in teaching. For example, when marking, not all teachers make clear to pupils the next steps in their learning. Marking, on occasions, also fails to make clear to pupils the level of their work in subjects other than English and mathematics. Computers are used in lessons; for example, an outstanding lesson was observed with pupils using laptops to work on texts, and interactive white boards are used by teachers. However, the school has identified that not all teachers use their ICT subject knowledge well enough to maximise the learning opportunities for pupils as a part of everyday classroom practice. On occasions, opportunities are also missed during lessons to assess pupils' level of understanding, and to identify to pupils how they can further improve their work in ICT.

The experienced headteacher has successfully used a strategy involving a wide number of stakeholders, including the governing body, to identify strengths and areas for development. The effective development plan for the school is clearly centred on improving outcomes for pupils, in terms of both their personal and academic development. Leadership and management responsibilities have been well distributed and self-evaluation is embedded in the school. Current priorities include

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improving mathematics through introducing more investigative approaches. Such accurate self-assessment, together with the good progress the pupils make, their above average attainment and the school's outstanding features, reflects a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and progress levels through removing the inconsistencies in teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use ongoing assessment in lessons to establish pupils' level of understanding and to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work
 - make clear in marking the next steps pupils need to take in their learning
 - ensure that pupils have knowledge of the level of their work in subjects other than mathematics and English.
- Raise attainment and progress in ICT through ensuring that:
 - teachers maximise the learning opportunities for the use of ICT in lessons
 - teachers give pupils a clear idea about their levels of attainment in ICT.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and show an enjoyment for learning. This was seen in an English lesson based on their understanding of a text. The pupils became excited and motivated when asked to share their ideas with their 'talk partners' and to edit and improve the quality of the text. The pupils were developing good levels of independence, for example, in seeking out dictionaries to check their own work and in spelling in an English lesson for older pupils. Pupils in a mathematics lesson remained on task for a prolonged period and worked independently.

All pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress. As a consequence of good pupil reviews and early intervention, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well. Children enter Reception with the skills and knowledge expected of their age. In recent years, at the end of Year 2, there has been a pattern of above average attainment, with well above average levels in the 2011 assessments. Reading is the strongest subject. Current work shows the trend continuing of above average attainment and good progress across the school.

Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to approach if they have an issue they wish to discuss. Behaviour is good. Pupils' knowledge of how to stay healthy is good and this reflects the impact of the work done to secure the national award. The trim

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trail and playground equipment provide pupils with a good focus for activity during breaks. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to act as ambassadors and actively promote healthy lifestyles. The school council is increasingly discussing and making meaningful decisions about school life, such as those involving playground activities and the development of the school grounds. This is one example of the good contribution that pupils make to the school and local community. They raise funds for charity, distribute harvest products and sing for older citizens. The good levels of basic skills together with increasing opportunities for pupils to initiate what they are learning during projects reflect a good preparation for their future lives.

Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The curriculum provides numerous opportunities for the development of spiritual and cultural aspects. Pupils reflect upon their work, and their knowledge of other faiths is very well developed through their religious education programme and the visit, for example, to a synagogue. A particular strength is the social development of pupils who adapt exceptionally well when participating in different social situations.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

There are examples of outstanding teaching. These reflect the impact of the very good guidance given to teachers as a consequence of monitoring activities. An English lesson for younger pupils was marked by the teacher’s very high expectations

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

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of pupils’ work as they increasingly used speech marks in writing. In a mathematics lesson, younger pupils looked at subtraction using two-digit numbers, and the teacher built upon pupils’ previous knowledge very well. Here, there was good use of the interactive whiteboard to model subtraction techniques. There are, however, inconsistencies between teachers regarding the regular use of modern technology, such as computers and interactive whiteboards in lessons. Examples of very good oral feedback to pupils exist. An English lesson for younger pupils saw them assessing their own work and improving their vocabulary to ensure that it had a better impact on its audience. Pupils know their targets in literacy and numeracy but are not consistently made aware, orally or in marking, about how to improve their work or what the level is of their work in other subjects. Relationships are very positive and, consequently, pupils are willing to engage and give their views. Teachers are making better use of school-held data to plan activities matched to pupils’ needs. They use good questioning techniques to gauge pupils’ levels of knowledge and understanding.

The good curriculum provides well for pupils’ needs and abilities in literacy and numeracy and enables them to make good progress. Pupils tell of really enjoying the imaginative projects which have been successfully developed to create cross-curricular links and make learning more meaningful for them. The topics always begin with a question, such as ‘Water; Friend or Foe?’ This challenges pupils and promotes deeper thinking very well. The curriculum plans show clearly the key skills to be developed and levels of work are identified to ensure that age-related expectations are met. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors. Partnerships are used extremely well to support the curriculum; a visit to a local school adds to the pupils’ knowledge of art printing. The ICT curriculum is underdeveloped because it is not fully meeting the needs of the new school curriculum on a daily basis. Good developments include the drawing up of a plan showing where and when ICT skills can be enhanced and the purchase of new equipment.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. A very high level of care and concern exists for pupils’ well-being and especially for those in vulnerable circumstances. Good links with external agencies exist and the school adopts a tenacious approach to ensuring that pupils benefit from such bodies. Intervention to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and takes place within lessons. Currently, there is insufficient tracking of the impact of such interventions on pupils’ academic progress and attainment. Strategies to promote high attendance are very effective and the school can point to numerous examples of significant improvement for individual pupils. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide good levels of care, with pupils showing enjoyment of the activities on offer.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are passionate about the continuing drive to improve pupils’ outcomes; they are clear in their aim that the school will become outstanding. This vision has been very effectively shared with staff. For example, in literacy, research was used very effectively to drive improvement. It revealed to the subject leader that there was a need for a writing initiative and this was then complemented by an approach which encourages pupils to talk to adults and among themselves prior to writing; this has been successful in developing pupils’ knowledge of what constitutes better writing. Staff are accountable for the progress of pupils through the effective tracking of pupils’ performance and regular progress reviews. The close monitoring of teaching is bringing improvement in the quality of learning in the classroom. Information from the tracking of pupils’ progress shows that there are no major gaps between groups of pupils in key subjects. However, there is an insufficiently clear idea about attainment and progress in a few subject areas. A few inconsistencies in leadership and management remain. Pupils’ different learning styles are very well met through the curriculum approach which adopts the investigative approach. Pupils have good opportunities to showcase their skills and knowledge; equality of opportunity is good.

Safeguarding is good. Close attention is paid by the governing body to monitoring health and safety, child protection and safeguarding policies. Training needs relating to safeguarding and safer recruitment are identified and appropriate training put in place. The governing body has a programme of visits which helps to ensure that they have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. Parents and carers praise the ‘open-door’ policy of the school, stressing that they can talk to teachers and school leaders whenever they wish. Partnerships with other schools have resulted in exceptional gains for pupils in areas such as sport, the raising of pupils’ aspirations, ICT and music. The school does good work to promote community cohesion. The school does not shy away from challenging the pupils, for example when they visit a local hospice. The school recognises there is more to do to ensure that pupils have a more secure understanding of life in a contrasting area of the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	2

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school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the past, children have entered Reception with the expected levels of skills and knowledge for their age. However, more recent cohorts are varying with occasional examples of above the expected levels and also children entering with below expected levels in areas of literacy and numeracy, particularly writing. The children progress well as a result of consistently good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching and the majority reach or exceed their early learning goals. In one outstanding lesson on phonics (linking letters and sounds), the interactive white board was used very effectively to motivate and reinforce learning. Learning sessions show the very strong personal development of the children; they are well motivated, share resources well and show perseverance and application. This was seen in one session when children were on task for prolonged periods as they developed their understanding about how to write words such as ‘mummy’. High-attaining children wrote recognisable words and letters and realised the need to use finger spacing to aid presentation.

Adults have very positive relationships with the children who are eager to be involved. A very good range of activities allow for enjoyment and meet the different learning styles of children. This was witnessed in the group dance during the ‘ball’ organised as part of the Cinderella focus. On occasions, the adults miss some opportunities to revisit and challenge further the understanding of children.

Leadership and management are good. The new leader has already carried out an accurate self-evaluation and identified a need to change the way reading skills are developed. Very appropriate attention is paid to recording and assessing children’s development and, consequently, there are good pictorial and written records of the children’s achievements. The external area provides some good activities for learning, but opportunities are sometimes missed to integrate such things as writing and number work into the outside activities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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

The number of questionnaires returned is broadly that expected for a school of this size. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are happy with their children’s experience at the school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded feel their children enjoy school. A few express some concerns about their children’s progress and pupils’ behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour during the inspection to be good. A very small minority of parents and carers raised some concern about whether their suggestions and concerns were addressed sufficiently. Inspectors judged the school’s links with parents and carers to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gatcombe Park 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	50	34	49	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	49	36	51	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	21	30	42	60	6	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	40	38	54	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	30	43	35	50	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	33	43	61	3	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	43	39	56	1	1	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)	22	31	38	54	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	30	43	35	50	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	23	40	57	9	13	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	29	41	59	7	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	23	33	41	59	2	3	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	31	44	36	51	2	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<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.



28 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gatcombe Park Primary School, Portsmouth, PO2 0UR

You may remember our recent visit. You were eager to tell us about your school and we listened carefully to what you told us. We believe yours is a good school. Two things we believe are excellent. First, your attendance is very high. Well done and keep this up because the more you attend school the better you learn! Second, the partnerships or links with people outside of the school are excellent and help you to learn really well. Your visit to an Italian restaurant obviously helped you plan your own project.

You told us how safe you feel in school and your knowledge of how to stay healthy is good. We also believe that the way you get involved with the running of your school and the local area is good. Well done! You also told us that you really enjoy the projects that you are set, such as the Year 6 topic of 'Water, Friend or Foe?'

You progress well and this is the result of the good teaching you receive. We saw ourselves that teachers give you lots of different activities to do in lessons. We have asked that the teachers during lessons check how well you understand what you are learning. You could all help by telling them when you are uncertain or when you find things too easy. We have also asked that you are shown more clearly how to improve your work in the teachers' marking and that you all have a better idea about how well you are doing in subjects like ICT and history.

Your headteacher leads the school well and, like the other adults, wants things to improve even more. The school makes good plans for the future. We have asked that the school does more to involve you all in using computers, the internet and other modern technology during lessons.

Thank you again and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye
Lead inspector

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