

# Park Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	115539
<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379094
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Rob Crompton

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anna Creed
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Gasser
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28–29 April 2009
<b>School address</b>	Elm Road Stonehouse G10 2NP
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Rob Crompton

Additional inspector

Marianne Phillips

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 23 lessons or part-lessons led by 11 teachers over 12 hours. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and school leaders, and talked with pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. The inspectors analysed questionnaires from 96 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

Park Junior School is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is situated in Stonehouse on the outskirts of Stroud. The school shares its access and site with the infant school and there is a children's centre adjacent to the site. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected by the government.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because the quality of teaching, although consistently good, is not generally outstanding.
- Pupils achieve well, reaching above-average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. They make particularly good progress in reading and mathematics. Although closing quite quickly, there is a wider gap between pupils' reading and writing than that found nationally.
- In the most effective lessons, pupils make rapid progress because they know exactly what is expected of them. They are frequently reminded of the criteria for success and apply them when reviewing their own work and that of their classmates. Teachers establish a brisk pace and sustain pupils' interest by alternating their input with independent tasks as lessons progress, so pupils do not have too much to take in at once. However these effective strategies are not used consistently in every lesson.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. There is a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere with pupils and staff showing mutual respect. Pupils are well looked after and feel safe. They work hard, are eager to succeed and willingly take on additional responsibilities.
- Leadership and management are good. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Their comments included: 'A wonderful school with brilliant staff', 'My daughter has blossomed' and 'I would recommend this school to anyone'. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has generated a strong team spirit and common sense of purpose. The quality of teaching is carefully monitored and this provides a well-informed basis for sharing successful methods and providing further training opportunities.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing so that, by July 2013, it more closely matches that in reading by:
  - sustaining the current emphasis on developing pupils' confidence in structuring sentences well and using imaginative vocabulary through oral storytelling
  - encouraging more pupils to incorporate into their writing the vocabulary and literary devices they come across in their reading.
  
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is consistently outstanding by:
  - making the success criteria tasks clear and frequently referring to them throughout lessons
  - promoting consistently pupils' skills and confidence in reviewing their own work and that of their peers
  - ensuring that all teachers use a variety of approaches to maintain a brisk pace and an appropriate balance between input and response.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter Year 3 with at least a secure grounding in English and mathematics. They progress well through the school, reaching above-average levels of attainment. Their skills in reading and mathematics are very well developed by the end of Year 6. Although pupils' attainment in writing is generally above average, the difference between their performance in reading and writing was wider than the national trend last year. As a result of several effective initiatives, this variance has been reduced but narrowing the gap further is, rightly, a remaining school priority.

Pupils quickly acquire the skills that enable them to self-correct as they read. They offer thoughtful reasons for selecting books by specific authors and use their reading skills widely in subjects such as science and history. Pupils develop a keen interest in writing and are aware of the characteristics of different genres. Pupils are well versed in the criteria used to assess writing, taking care to include simile, metaphor and other stratagems in their written work. Those most confident in writing draw on their extensive reading and show particular flair in engaging the reader. For example, using short sentences, rhetorical questions and descriptive vocabulary, and purposeful mixing of tenses to create suspense, one pupil wrote: 'My heart started beating quicker, quicker and quicker. Where could I run? Somewhere safe, somewhere no-one, no-one would go. The cliff. Vexed, I started to run. Twigs snapped behind me, bushes rustling, mysterious shadows, scratches on the bark of a tree. An unexpected light makes the shadows longer. They are coming to get me...'

However, some pupils are not yet as adept at incorporating such vocabulary and literacy devices in their written work.

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Pupils' secure grasp of essential numeracy skills, for example the quick recall of number bonds and tables, means that most tackle mathematical problems confidently. For example, when exploring scales and ratios, Year 4 pupils used short division to calculate values quickly and accurately. By Year 6, pupils rise to the challenge of increasingly demanding work, for example, when learning about algebraic equations or when interpreting continuous variable graphs. 'I used the inverse operation to solve the equation', one pupil explained.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is particularly evident in the rapid progress many make in reading. Over the last two years, for example, almost all pupils receiving additional support increased their reading levels significantly and so are more able to access the whole curriculum.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teachers are highly skilled in engaging pupils and motivating them to try hard. Underpinned by teachers' secure subject knowledge and their considerable expertise in explaining ideas, most lessons move at a brisk pace. In all the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was at least good. The consistency of pupils' progress through each year, evident from the school's assessment information and from the range and quality of work in pupils' books, indicates that good teaching is typical and embedded across the school.

In around a quarter of the lessons observed, the teaching was outstanding. The difference between these and the good lessons was subtle but telling. Teachers routinely ensure that pupils are aware of the specific success criteria, for example, the use of the first person and the past tense when writing diaries. Learning was most effective when teachers reiterated these criteria as the lesson progressed, drawing on pupils' ongoing work to provide examples. They made a point of reviewing them specifically at the end of lessons, rather than simply asking pupils to comment on how difficult pupils found the tasks with a 'smiley face' or 'thumbs up'.

In each year group, the two classes are split into ability groups for mathematics. This works well and enables teachers to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for different groups. During a lesson where the quality of teaching was outstanding with the lower set in Year 6, for example, pupils looked at a graph created from data collected by sound sensors placed around the school. The questions and tasks were pitched at a good level of challenge, enabling pupils to make rapid progress, with most working at the expected levels.

Setting targets for individual pupils is well established. In all classes, pupils have proformas in their books and sometimes targets are prominently displayed on their desks. Where teaching is strongest, pupils are asked to suggest and justify their own success criteria and are encouraged to regularly review their own work and that of their classmates.

Occasionally, even where the teaching is good overall, introductions are a little too

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long. In the most effective lessons, teachers introduce new ideas gradually and raise the level of challenge progressively. This keeps pupils on their toes and builds very well on their prior learning and their emerging knowledge and understanding. A good example of this approach was seen during a Year 4 lesson when pupils were writing diaries as the First Officer of the Titanic. The lesson was split into several small sections, including an excerpt from a film which held pupils spellbound. Pupils' interest was sustained throughout and they were justifiably proud of their efforts. This lesson also provided an example of the opportunities taken to promote pupils' spiritual development, as they reflected on the plight of the crew and passengers.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from well-focused support during lessons and in small withdrawal groups. Teachers organise and manage daily reading sessions, supporting less confident pupils with the help of well-briefed and effective support staff. Teaching assistants also make an important contribution during whole-class discussions, often acting as scribe to record pupils' ideas, leaving the teacher free to sustain the pace and deepen pupils' understanding through skilful questioning.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave consistently well in class and display very positive attitudes to learning. They cooperate well in group settings and generally show care and consideration for their peers and adults. Teachers are skilled in managing behaviour and, through praise, team points and other rewards, establish a harmonious and productive atmosphere in classrooms. Attendance levels are high. Pupils enjoy school and willingly take on responsibilities, for example as members of the eco committee and school councillors. Pupil librarians made mature and insightful comments as they explained the extensive facilities and their roles, clearly taking their responsibilities seriously.

Pupils have a keen awareness of how to keep safe and avoid potential hazards, for example when using the internet. The vast majority of parents and carers are confident that their children are safe and well looked after, although a few raised concerns about how bullying is dealt with. Discussions with pupils showed that they understand the difference between bullying and minor squabbles. They said that bullying of any kind is very rare and, although there was occasional name-calling, this was done in the heat of the moment rather than with any malicious intent. They are confident that when incidents do occur staff deal with them appropriately.

### **Leadership and management**

Senior leaders use their diverse experience and expertise to good effect. All leaders provide strong role models in their own teaching and are quick to identify and promote good practice. Staff morale is very high. Everyone feels valued and shares a common determination to ensure the best possible provision for all groups of pupils. A constant drive to ensure equal opportunities for all and eliminate any discrimination is apparent in the way staff go the extra mile to support individuals. This is evident, for example, in the determined and rigorous way leaders and class teachers are making every effort

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to narrow the gap between pupils' achievement in reading and writing.

The quality of teaching is carefully monitored and pupils' progress is meticulously tracked. This enables senior leaders to identify and share strengths, spot any anomalies in the achievement of different groups, and arrange appropriate training. The positive impact of this is exemplified in the new and successful approaches to the teaching of writing, which include a strong emphasis on verbal narrative (known as talk for writing), story structure and drama. Joint training with the adjacent infant school undertaken earlier this year is already reaping benefits and the school is, rightly, committed to embedding successful strategies. This serves to illustrate the school's strong capacity to move further forward.

The curriculum includes a wide range of activities that enrich pupils' learning and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, as reflected in the range of national awards the school has received. The extensive grounds include a purpose-built outdoor classroom, a garden area looked after by pupils and a wild area. These facilities are used for much practical work across the curriculum, for example investigations in science and planting 'dig for victory' vegetable plots linked to studies in history. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the wide range of clubs on offer, including opportunities for sport and the performing arts.

Members of the governing body play an active role in self-evaluation. Individual members are assigned to subjects. For example, following a recent review of science and mathematics with the respective subject leaders, more emphasis was placed on developing pupils' confidence in applying skills in different contexts. Such involvement, together with detailed assessment information, contributes to well-founded strategic planning. Safeguarding procedures are very well established, effective and fully meet requirements.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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](http://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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.**



15 June 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Park Junior School, Stonehouse, Stroud, GL10 2NP**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and seeing how well you were getting on in lessons. From discussions and the questionnaire survey, we found that you agree with our judgement that Park Junior is a good school.

The school has many strengths, and it will come as no surprise that one of them is the teaching. All of the lessons we observed were good and some were outstanding. The teachers are so good at discussing things with you that we became just as interested as you! As you will know, the levels you reach in reading, writing and mathematics are above average but lately there has been quite a difference between how well you do in reading and writing. It was great to see how keen you are to improve your writing and we saw how you are growing in confidence by narrating stories orally and identifying how authors sustain their readers' interest. We agree that teachers should keep on including such activities in lessons. We have suggested that, because most of you are really good readers, you might also try to use some of the ways that authors use to engage their readers in your own writing. Although we focused on writing we also saw some really good work in mathematics.

You told us that you feel safe and well looked after and we were impressed by your good behaviour, positive attitudes and high levels of attendance. It was good to see some of you marking your own work and we have suggested that you could do more of this, to keep the success criteria or 'WILF' constantly in mind.

Your headteacher and others responsible for running your school are doing a good job at making things even better for you. You can help by continuing to try your best. Keep reading as widely as you can and this should help your writing to improve.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton  
Lead inspector

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