

Parkgate Junior School

Southwold Road, Watford, WD24 7DN

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and other leaders continually and successfully strive for ways to improve teaching and the pupils' achievement. Teaching is increasingly good and outstanding and is leading to consistently good learning, more rapid progress and rising attainment.
- The headteacher is supported by a strong, effective and well-led governing body. Governors are fully involved in shaping the school's direction and checking the impact on teaching and pupils' achievement of action taken.
- Pupils are motivated and push themselves to do well. They rise to the challenges provided by their teachers. They respond thoughtfully to the highly effective guidance they are given through their teachers' marking and so improve their work.
- Pupils are taught to treat each other with respect and consideration. As a result they enjoy school and feel very safe.
- Pupils are polite, well-mannered and behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. Very effective procedures have been developed for managing pupils with behavioural needs so they get the most out of all the school has to offer.
- The rich and exciting way subjects are organised and the wide range of visits and visitors to school greatly broaden the pupils' experiences and promote well their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- When teaching is less successful it is generally because the length of the lesson introduction is too much for pupils to take in all they are expected to. Teachers do not always question pupils to check their understanding.
- Sessions to develop reading skills such as comprehension are not consistent in meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Staff have not been sufficiently trained to move the pupils' learning of phonics (the sounds that letters make) forward rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, seven of which were seen together with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff and members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils from families of Pakistani heritage make up the largest group.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average but few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for an average proportion of the pupils. This is extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. Their needs are varied but include several pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding by making sure that:
 - teachers use questioning to check the pupils' understanding:
 - lesson introductions do not become too long for pupils to take in all they are being taught
 - activities to develop reading skills are pitched closely at the next steps in each pupil's learning.
- Provide training for teachers and support staff in phonics so they are better able to move the pupils' skills forward more rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in all subjects. Year 6 test results are rising and were above average in writing in 2013 and broadly average in reading and mathematics. Pupils are prepared well for secondary school as most reach expected levels by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. More able pupils are challenged with the result that increasing numbers are reaching higher levels.
- Progress has increased in writing because the contexts for the pupils' writing are exciting. These are often based on their work in topics or experiences gained from trips or visitors to school. Opportunities to plan and discuss their writing enable pupils to refine and improve their work.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved considerably since the last inspection. Teachers now use assessment information to set work accurately pitched to the needs of individual pupils and to challenge the more able. They provide increasing opportunities for problem-solving to deepen the pupils' understanding and to enable them to apply their accurate number skills.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They read widely and their skills develop rapidly when guided carefully by their teacher. At times, activities where pupils develop skills by themselves are not pitched precisely enough at their needs and so do not move their learning forward as rapidly. Progress in developing an understanding of phonics for those who have not mastered the skills is variable. This is because it has not been a focus of recent training for staff.
- The school uses the pupil premium well to increase the progress of eligible pupils and close the attainment gap with others. Amongst other activities, individual tuition and an Easter revision school led to a very small gap in 2013 Year 6 test results in mathematics, reading and writing. More able pupils among this group did better than other pupils in reading and writing and much the same in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has improved since the last inspection and is now good. This is because of much closer checking on the impact of the support they receive.
- Progress is also good for pupils speaking English as an additional language and those of Pakistani heritage. This is because of the continual emphasis on speaking and listening in all classes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils become engrossed in their lessons because typically teaching is interesting and delivered with calm authority in well-managed classrooms. Teachers match their teaching and activities closely to the identified next steps in each pupil's learning, including a high degree of challenge for the more able. Displays support learning well particularly where they show pupils the steps they should be taking to be successful in the work they are undertaking.
- Talk and discussion play a major role in most lessons. Pupils learn much from sharing their ideas with each other before answering to the whole class. This ensures that they stay fully focused on the work being learnt. Teachers make clear to them how they can be successful in their learning and expect them to assess their work and identify how it can be improved.

- Additional adults are deployed carefully by teachers and briefed well. This enables them to support closely and effectively individuals and groups either in class or when leading small groups on a particular catch-up programme. Their contribution to the learning of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is considerable.
- Teachers' marking not only shows pupils clearly what they have done well but also gives clear indications about how their work can be improved. They are expected to respond by rewriting short extracts or answering further challenges posed by the teacher. This works well in encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for improving their work and meeting their targets.
- The most effective teachers use their questioning well to draw out ideas from the pupils and carefully check their understanding. However, there are occasions when teachers too readily accept a short answer and move on before making sure understanding is secure. Furthermore, at times teachers spend so long on lesson introductions that some pupils do not take in everything they are being told.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils work hard and collaborate well with each other whether this is discussing ideas or undertaking activities. They show that they enjoy learning by their good attitudes to their work; this contributes to their good achievement. Pupils' concentration can slip when lessons lose momentum, but they respond very quickly to their teachers and usually return immediately to the task in hand.
- Pupils enjoy school and are proud of the part they play in it, whether this is as school council representatives, running a school shop or as buddies for Year 3 pupils. Their attendance is rising and is above average. Pupils are punctual because of the headteacher's presence on the gate at the start of the day to monitor those who arrive late.
- Pupils are courteous and considerate towards others. Pupils understand why behaving properly is important as the school's expectations are continually emphasised. A reflective assembly on how to treat each other was a sign of the school's ethos and how it is shared by pupils and staff.
- The school knows its pupils well and seeks outside expertise if necessary for guidance and strategies to support pupils with behavioural and emotional needs. This enables these pupils to be included fully in lessons so that their learning and that of others is not disturbed.
- Pupils are quite clear through their work in 'Anti-bullying fortnight' of what constitutes bullying and the action they should take if they see it happening. They say bullying is rare and know there is someone to turn to, such as the learning mentor, if they feel anxious.

The leadership and management are good

- It is through the headteacher's determined leadership that the school has improved significantly since its last inspection. The united staff team, including well-trained senior and subject leaders, fully support her ambitions for the school. Accurate self-evaluation based on rigorous monitoring enables focused action to be taken, particularly to improve teaching and learning. The school is well-placed to improve further.
- By regularly checking on the impact of teaching on the pupils' progress, school leaders tailor

training to an individual teacher's needs. Subject leaders are playing a more effective role in driving forward improvement. This is because of well-planned training since the last inspection, including in understanding assessment data. This enables these leaders to have a clear view of teaching in their areas so they can support their colleagues and check on the impact of actions taken.

- Close local authority engagement has focused effectively on supporting teaching and learning through consultant support as well as giving challenge to the headteacher.
- The success of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity is seen by there being minimal gaps in the achievement of different groups. This is because the school quickly identifies each pupil's particular needs and provides support for challenging targets to be achieved, such as through thoughtfully allocated pupil premium funding. The needs of parents are also taken into account through workshops and individual support so they can help their children at home.
- Subjects are organised to focus sharply on basic skills and to add interest through the topics pupils study. These provide interesting opportunities for writing such as when Year 3 pupils wrote postcards home as invading Vikings, describing the attractions of the land in which they were settling. A visit to Ashridge Forest by the whole school stimulated much work on and a greater understanding of the natural world. Pupils have undertaken various projects with disabled adults during 'Art Week' which culminated in an exhibition of their work. They have met with elderly people to discuss their Second World War experiences as part of their topic. Pupils develop a good awareness of other faiths and share in the celebration of their festivals.
- Sports premium funding is being used well to build on the extensive range of activities available and to provide training to improve teaching skills. This has led to increased numbers of pupils participating in school sports clubs, but it is too early to see tangible improvements in teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Following a review of their performance governors have changed their meeting structure to increase efficiency and sharpen their focus. Visits to school help governors to corroborate information they receive including when subject leaders attend meetings to provide briefings on progress in their areas. Working with school leaders during the annual 'Vision Day', governors evaluate the school's performance and set future goals and priorities. They are continually updating their expertise through training including in assessment data. This enables them to ask pertinent questions and challenge the headteacher over the quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' progress. They have a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching and the action being taken to bring more to an outstanding quality. This includes how financial rewards are being used as an incentive. They keep a sharp eye on financial matters. Governors are quite aware where the pupil premium is most effective. They ensure safeguarding the pupils' well-being is a top priority.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117162
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425248

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Horastead
Headteacher	Sarah Pipe
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2012
Telephone number	01923 243905
Fax number	01923 443660
Email address	admin@parkgatejm.herts.sch.uk

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