

Parkgate Infants' and Nursery School

Northfield Gardens, Watford, WD24 7RL

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have taken decisive action to eliminate weaker teaching and ensure that teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils achieve well and attainment in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has been significantly above national averages for two years.
- Children in the early years make good progress. This is because there is a good range of practical and challenging activities. This progress is sustained across Years 1 and 2 for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning, so teaching proceeds with little or no interruption. Pupils look forward to coming to school and say they enjoy learning.
- Governance has improved. Governors hold the school to account rigorously for pupils' attainment. Together with leaders they share a clear focus on raising standards for pupils and closing gaps in achievement.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They show kindness and respect towards each other, and enjoy learning about each other's religion or cultural background. Pupils say they feel safe and that they are well looked after.
- The large majority of parents agree that this is a warm and friendly school. A strong set of shared values which promotes respect contributes strongly to the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Boys, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs attain less well in writing than their peers.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding as teachers with additional responsibilities have not always been effective in checking on learning to support more rapid progress, particularly in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in eight lessons or part-lessons. Seven observations were with the headteacher or other leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, and looked at written work from each year group, much of this with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, behaviour, safety and attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the governing body. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and monitoring records of teaching.
- Inspectors met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the school's surveys and the 74 responses to the on-line Parent View survey. Eleven parents also submitted written comments to the inspection team. Written comments from 13 members of staff were considered.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Parkgate Infants' and Nursery School is similar in size to the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are organised into a Nursery class during the morning, and two Reception classes.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average. They come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest group is of Pakistani heritage. A high proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The pupil premium provides support to just over a tenth of pupils, just below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average (less than one in ten pupils). The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- The school uses 'Chessbrook Education Support Centre' to support a small number of pupils through alternative provision.
- Since the previous inspection, over half the teaching staff have changed, including all the teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in April 2012. Over half of the governors have also changed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing so that gaps are closed for boys, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs by:
 - giving more attention to these groups of children when planning early mark making and writing activities in the Nursery and Reception classes
 - providing pupils with a wider range of ways to engage them in using different writing styles
 - giving pupils clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve their writing
 - helping pupils to increase their vocabulary and write sentences which are more varied.
- Improve the effectiveness of teachers with additional responsibilities to carry out their role so they contribute to improvements in teaching, in particular in writing.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, all staff and governors work with a common purpose to ensure good behaviour. Teamwork is effective so that high standards have been maintained. Teaching has improved as weaknesses in teaching have been effectively dealt with.
- All teachers willingly take on additional responsibilities. Many are new to this and their actions to improve the quality of teaching have not yet had time to promote more consistently outstanding teaching, particularly in writing. Robust systems are in place though through performance management to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils.
- The curriculum offers pupils opportunities to learn about different cultures and faiths. Pupils maintain e-mail contact with a school in New Zealand, and have learnt about how pupils of their age dealt with the aftermath of an earthquake. Learning about Remembrance Day helped pupils appreciate values shared by people across the United Kingdom. Together with regular visits and stimulating activities this helps to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding so that additional staff are deployed to support pupils in small groups. Attainment for these pupils is, as a consequence, above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school uses the sports premium effectively to enable pupils to experience a wider range of sports. All pupils benefit from expert teaching, for example, of dance and games. This promotes positive attitudes towards healthy lifestyles.
- Links with the partner junior school helps teachers to ensure that pupils' work is accurately assessed. Teachers meet regularly to compare their assessments of pupils. This gives them an accurate view of pupils' progress.
- The school works hard to involve parents in its daily life. A small number who responded to the Parent View survey expressed concerns about how the school communicates with them. However, the vast majority are supportive of the school.
- The school chooses to buy support from the local authority. Support is well targeted and ensures that leaders have an accurate estimation of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. This also supports the school in meeting all statutory requirements including those relating to safeguarding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although there have been big changes in membership in recent years, the governing body has provided good support and challenge to the school.
 - Governors are suitably trained, offer good support and induction to new members, and are kept well informed by regular communications from the headteacher.
 - Regular visits and specific responsibilities, such as for safeguarding and special educational needs, ensure that they have first hand knowledge of the school. They know how well pupils achieve compared to other pupils both locally and nationally.
 - Governors have supported the school in eliminating weaker teaching, and in strengthening the staff, such as through the appointments of the deputy headteacher and a special educational needs coordinator. They maintain an effective oversight of pay awards through performance management.
 - They help to ensure that all statutory documents are thorough, and that all duties are carried out efficiently, including those relating to safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Key Stage 1 classes are taught in open plan areas and pupils show consideration for each other so as not to disturb the class next to them. They quickly develop good concentration and listening skills.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and have very positive attitudes. They come to school ready to learn, and enjoy responding to questions and learning new things.
- Pupils behave sensibly around the school and at break times. There have been no exclusions for many years and bullying is rare. Pupils understand why different types of bullying are wrong, and know that incidents will be dealt with firmly by the staff.
- Pupils mix well across different religious and cultural backgrounds. This contributes strongly to a harmonious community. Pupils are taught to show respect and tolerance towards any differences. This is a feature of the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- On occasions some pupils lose concentration, especially when teaching has not engaged their interests, and their progress slows as a result.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they are well looked after and trust adults to help resolve minor differences. They are fully aware of how to keep safe, for example on roads or when using the internet. As one pupil said, 'We know that we should hold hands when we go on trips so we can look after each other'.
- Careful checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Parents agree that the school places a high value on keeping their children safe. Those who are at risk of falling behind are well looked after.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is around the national average. The school places a high value on attending every day and works closely with parents to ensure that this happens.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers know the needs of the pupils well. Lessons are generally planned so that basic skills are effectively supported for most groups of pupils. Relationships are strong and well established routines help learning to proceed without interruption.
- Writing is taught well in Years 1 and 2, though there are too few opportunities to develop writing in the early years. The focus has been on improving basic grammar and punctuation, as well as handwriting skills. Teachers provide lots of opportunities for pupils to check their writing and help them with corrections.
- Teachers engage pupils' interests by providing stimulating activities, and expert questioning helps to deepen their understanding. Year 2 pupils retold the story of the Gunpowder Plot, recalling key events and characters. They were helped to put these events into the right chronological order due to effective questioning, and a good choice of relevant vocabulary.
- Calculation skills are taught effectively. Teachers question pupils so that their thinking skills are well developed. This helps them develop their mathematical language with confidence. Year 2 pupils for example grew in confidence in solving problems so were able to decide correctly when to use addition or subtraction.
- Additional adults make a strong contribution to learning. Activities are planned to provide a good level of

challenge. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as disadvantaged pupils, are taught effectively and make good progress.

- Marking and feedback are thorough and detailed. Pupils are given good advice on what they do well. Some marking provides insufficient guidance on how the writing can be improved using more appropriate vocabulary, more complex sentences, and making better use of adjectives and adverbs.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection but is not yet consistently outstanding. This is because it has not been as successful in promoting writing skills for particular groups of pupils in a way that mathematical skills have been developed. Sometimes not enough is done to engage particular groups of pupils in improving their writing skills.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are provided with good support, so quickly acquire new vocabulary and pick up grammar and punctuation rules, and so achieve well.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has been significantly above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics for the last two years. Progress across the school is good for all groups of pupils.
- Although in 2014 Year 1 pupils achieved just below the expected standard in the phonics, (letters and the sounds they make), screening check, these pupils have caught up quickly with their peers. Teachers and other adults offer effective help to pupils in recognising common phonemes, and as a result progress in reading has improved for all groups of pupils.
- Girls' attainment is higher than boys, particularly in writing. More able girls' attainment was particularly strong in 2014. This is because they make the most of the help provided, and develop skills more quickly by themselves. This enables them to write with confidence using varied sentences and vocabulary.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in all subjects. Their attainment is above that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, when compared to their peers, the gap in writing in 2014 was eight months. Gaps in reading and mathematics were small. Across the school these gaps in attainment are closing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well when compared to national averages for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good progress across the school due to highly effective support from additional adults. However, there is a gap in attainment particularly in writing, when compared to their peers, due to their often lower starting points.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from Pakistani heritage and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and other adults provide effective support, especially for their language skills, so they do not fall behind.
- The most-able pupils are given challenging work and achieve well, particularly in writing. In 2014 a higher proportion reached the higher Level 3 in the national tests and assessments.

The early years provision is good

- Children join the Nursery with abilities typical for their age. They mix well with the older children in the Reception classes, benefitting from learning together. Routines are well established and all pupils in the early years make good progress. Good teaching means that most children reach a good level of development so are well prepared for Year 1.
- Relationships with parents are strong, and many get involved in classroom activities. This helps children to settle quickly.

- A rich and stimulating indoor environment is supported by an exciting and varied outdoors where children's physical development is particularly well supported. Activities are practical and planned with the right amount of challenge.
- Children are kept safe and are well looked after. Adults show them how they are expected to behave, and children learn and play well together. As one parent said, 'Parkgate Infants is a small friendly school that puts the needs of its children first. There is a very caring, nurturing atmosphere'.
- Children know how to keep themselves. This was evident in the road safety rules they use when riding small vehicles. Similarly, safety was paramount when children used climbing equipment and organised an activity moving around without touching the ground.
- Children are able to concentrate on tasks for extended periods, although there is sometimes insufficient guidance on what the purpose of the activity is, particularly when this requires them to write or recognise letters and words.
- The deputy headteacher who also teaches in the early years has strengthened leadership and helped to ensure greater consistency in planning.

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	117163
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	448478

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Taylor
Headteacher	Ann E Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2009
Telephone number	01923 221984
Fax number	01923 244515
Email address	admin@parkgateinfants.herts.sch.uk

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