

INSPECTION REPORT

THE PARKS SCHOOL

OAKHAM

LEA area: Rutland

Unique reference number: 120355

Head teacher: Mrs B Marchant

Reporting inspector: Mr M Whitaker
1424

Dates of inspection: 7 – 8 March 2000

Inspection number: 189194

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 – 6
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Barleythorpe Road Oakham Rutland
Postcode:	LE15 6NR
Telephone number:	01572 756747
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Sawyer
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Parks School provides early education and assessment for boys and girls with a wide range of special educational needs. Generally provision is for children of pre-school age ranging from 2 years to 5 years but exceptionally a group of children have remained in the school for an extra year pending suitable placements being found for them. There are currently 37 children and pupils on the roll of the school, of whom ten are of nursery age. All nursery-aged children attending on a part-time basis. Eight pupils attend full-time. When children enter the school their attainment is very low in all areas of development because of their special educational needs. They come from a wide surrounding area, many from a neighbouring local authority, and represent a range of social and economical background. There is currently one pupil eligible for free school meals and one child from an ethnic minority background. Most pupils and children are placed for assessment purposes but 10 have statements of special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Parks School is a very effective school. Children and pupils achieve well and often very well in all areas given their wide range of special educational needs. They are well prepared to move to the next appropriate provision. This is as a direct result of the very good teaching and the broad, balanced and relevant curriculum they receive. This is very well matched to their individual needs because of the extensive assessment and recording procedures used. The school is very well led and managed by the head teacher who has established excellent relationships throughout the school and where teamwork is a very strong feature. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good teaching and extensive use of assessment and recording enables all pupils and children to make good and often very good progress and achieve well, in all areas of their development.
- A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is particularly well matched to the needs of pupils and children is in place for both pre-school children and those in Key Stage 1.
- Excellent relationships have been established between all staff, staff and children and with parents. This has a very positive effect on learning.
- The head teacher, supported by governors, has created a very effective and purposeful learning environment where there is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment.

What could be improved

- The governing body has only recently received full delegated powers and systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not yet established.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has continued to improve since it was last inspected in June 1996. It is a very good school. Both key issues identified in the previous report have been fully addressed. The high quality planning, assessment and recording procedures recognised in the last report have been brought into line with the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children under five. They are being further reviewed in line with the Early Learning Goals. In addition the curriculum has been further developed to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met for pupils over the age of five. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully introduced and the National Numeracy Strategy is being appropriately developed. The provision for spiritual and cultural development has improved as a result of staff training and planning. The school has also developed its role in supporting families with children with special educational needs through the opening of a Family Centre and new Toy Library.

STANDARDS

The table summarises the inspection judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual tasks by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 6	<i>Key</i>	
speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
Reading	B	A	good	B
Writing	B	A	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	A	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

Children of pre-school age achieve very well in relation to their individual targets. They make very good progress and are well prepared for moving to the next stage of education. Particularly good progress is made in relation to speaking and listening skills, where many children have poorly developed language and communication skills when entering the school. Good progress is made in developing pre-number, writing and reading skills by young children whilst those pupils who have remained into Reception and Year 1 make rapid gains in these areas and achieve very good progress in relation to their earlier attainment. These pupils continue to make very good progress and achieve very well given their special educational needs in all areas of the curriculum. All children and pupils develop very well in relation to their personal and social needs.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children and pupils have very positive attitudes to the school. They enjoy coming and try hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in classes and around the school. Pupils and children respond well to the strategies used by the school to manage their behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	All pupils and children make very good progress in personal and social development. Relationships at all levels are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

Pupils and children have very positive attitudes to school. They co-operate well with teaching and non-teaching staff whose detailed knowledge of their attainment and needs ensure that they are actively involved in lessons and learning. The high quality of teaching means that children and pupils enjoy school and try hard in lessons. They increasingly co-operate with staff, and as they develop, with each other. Some children occasionally behave inappropriately because of their special educational needs but these situations are very effectively managed and children improve because of this and the excellent relationships. Attendance is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Very Good	Very Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is very good for pre-school children and those in Key Stage 1. During the inspection teaching was good or better in every lesson with 72 per cent being very good. Planning is very thorough and work is well matched to the needs of all children and pupils. Assessment and recording procedures are very thorough and these ensure that pupils and children can build on their earlier learning and make, often, very good progress. Teamwork is a very strong feature of the teaching with all adults being fully involved enabling all children and pupils to be actively engaged in learning all of the time in every lesson. Resources are very well prepared for every lesson and they are well chosen to meet individual needs. The pace of lessons is very brisk with regular changes of activity to maintain interest and enjoyment. Communication skills, including literacy and numeracy, are developed in all lessons with separate lessons for literacy and numeracy also being in place. Learning is particularly effective in speaking and listening and in personal and social development as a result of the very good teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for children under five is broad and balanced and well matched to their needs. Pupils of statutory school age have access to a broad and balanced curriculum including the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not applicable.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils and children's personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural is good. It has improved since the last inspection in relation to spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Thorough procedures are in place for child protection and ensuring pupils and children's welfare.

The curriculum has been developed well since the last inspection for pre-school children. It is well-matched to the needs of individual children and covers all areas of learning for children under five. The curriculum for the pupils who have remained in school for an additional year has been very well developed. It is matched to the needs of pupils and to National Curriculum requirements. The literacy strategy has been effectively introduced and numeracy is being introduced well. Good provision is made for pupils and children's personal development and spiritual and cultural provision has improved since the last inspection. The school cares very well for its pupils. Very good procedures are in place for child protection and for monitoring progress across all areas of development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are good. The head teacher leads and manages teachers and support staff very effectively. Teamwork is a strong feature of the management of the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very active in its support of the school. An appropriate structure to meet its responsibilities is in place. However, it has only recently received full delegated powers and clear systems for monitoring and evaluating curriculum development and teaching are not yet in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The head teacher and staff have clear systems for evaluating the school's performance and progress of individual children. The governing body is developing this role in relation to its new powers.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively. Teaching and non-teaching staff are particularly well deployed to meet the diverse range of special needs in the school. Accommodation is effectively used.

The head teacher, supported by all staff and governors, provides very good leadership and management for the school. A shared commitment and sense of purpose has been established and maintained leading to very good achievements and teaching. The governing body is actively involved in school and very supportive. It does not yet have clear systems or procedures for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school having only recently received full delegated powers. Best value principles are being adopted by the school in line with its new powers and responsibilities. The school provides very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership and management of the school. • The partnership with parents. • The good quality of teaching. • The approachability of the staff. • The quality of information they receive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear identification of the provision to be made when children leave.

The inspection team agrees with the very positive views expressed by the parents. They are justifiably proud of the school. The inspection team agree with the concern that it is necessary for parents to have an early understanding and involvement in determining future provision for their children.

PART B: COMMENTRY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good teaching and extensive use of assessment and recording enable all pupils and children to make good, and often very good, progress and achieve well in all areas of their development.

1 The quality of teaching is very good and never less than good. Teachers and support staff know the children and pupils very well and have a very good knowledge of the curriculum for under fives and Key Stage 1. They use this knowledge very effectively in planning lessons to ensure that pupils and children can build on their previous level of attainment. As a result they make very good progress and effective learning takes place.

2 In the literacy hour, for example older pupils are very interested in the group reading from the Big Book. The teacher develops the pupils' ability to sequence a story by skilled questioning about the animals in the story and who stole which fruit from a basket. Questions to different pupils are carefully re-phrased in relation to their special educational needs in order to enable all to take an active part in the lesson. In all lessons children and pupils' responses are very carefully recorded, often by support staff. This information is then effectively used to plan future lessons and, in the longer term, to devise increasingly challenging targets in individual education plans.

3 In other lessons teachers use their extensive knowledge of children's special educational needs to enable them to make very good progress in relation to personal and social development. For example, children and pupils with features related to autism are progressively encouraged to work alongside, and later with, others when working on the computer. They develop their ability to tolerate each other and to take turns and share. This represents considerable achievement for many.

4 The roles and responsibilities of all staff are very clear within lessons and all play a significant part in the learning of pupils and children. Support staff have very clear tasks. They work very productively with individuals as part of an effective key worker system, using the detailed assessment information to plan tasks which challenge and motivate children and pupils enabling very good learning to take place. For example, when a support assistant works very effectively with an individual on number work using the detailed information firstly to create an effective working relationship before challenging the child to identify missing numbers in a sequence. The adults knowledge of the child ensures that good methods are used to maintain interest when she becomes distracted.

5 A great deal of time outside teaching is used to ensure that all resources are well prepared, readily available and appropriate for tasks. Teachers and support staff prepare resource boxes at the end and beginning of each day. Carefully considering the range of resources necessary to ensure that all children and pupils are thoroughly involved in all lessons. This enables lessons to move at a brisk pace with regular changes of activity in response to children's and pupils' needs. Good use is made of signing to support communication skills and singing also encourages involvement. Expectations are very high and the level of staffing and detailed assessment means that all pupils and children are fully involved in all lessons at a challenging level. This enables achievement and progress to be high in all areas.

6 Overall teaching and assessment are very effective in promoting learning.

A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is particularly well matched to the needs of pupils and children is in place for both pre-school children and those in Key Stage 1.

7 The school has a very thorough process of curriculum planning which has improved and extended since the last inspection. The curriculum is successfully taught through a mixture of topics covering a wide range of areas for under five and subjects in Key Stage 1 and separate subjects or areas for literacy, numeracy, gross motor skill development and personal and social development. This planning is closely related to the Desirable Learning Outcomes and more recently the Early Learning Goals for under fives and the National Curriculum for older pupils and ensures a broad and balanced experience. The very detailed assessment of children and pupils together with the adults' knowledge of their special educational needs ensures that all have access to the curriculum at an appropriate but challenging level. As a result good or very good learning takes place, progress is made and achievement is high in relation to the special educational needs of the children and pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by the wide range of specialists adding to the multi-disciplinary approach, for example speech therapists, nursery nurses and support assistants.

8 The retention of a small number of pupils into Key Stage 1 has meant that the school needed to develop the curriculum to meet the statutory requirements for Key Stage 1. It has succeeded in this without disruption because of the quality of the systems already in place and the commitment of all staff.

9 The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively introduced since the last inspection and has had a positive impact on learning. Although less embedded the National Numeracy Strategy is also beginning to have a positive impact on pupils learning.

Excellent relationships have been established between all staff, staff and children and with parents. This has a positive effect on learning.

10 Relationships throughout the school and with parents are excellent. All staff work co-operatively with a common sense of purpose and shared vision. They work tirelessly in support of each other in ensuring that planning reflects the needs of all children and pupils. They willingly share tasks, such as preparing materials, working with groups or individuals or recording and assessing the contributions made by pupils and children and their progress.

11 All staff contribute equally to whole staff meeting or review meetings when discussing individuals in preparation for formal reviews of individual education plans with parents and other agencies. Because all staff work with all pupils or children some of the time everyone is involved in providing information about progress and what does or does not work with different children. This is a real strength and supports the concept of the key worker who takes a lead responsibility for individual children.

12 Relationships with children are excellent and promote very positive attitudes to learning. These relationships are used very effectively to involve sometimes reluctant children to take an active part in lessons. For example, for carefully targeted support using the person with the closest relationship ensures that a girl joins in singing and partnership work to "... rows the boat ashore". The effective use of these relationships to promote involvement and learning was remarked upon very positively by a visiting Educational Psychologist and a support worker for a child with autistic characteristics. Both knew the respective children very well and were delighted by the progress made.

13 Parents are very enthusiastic about the high quality of the school's provision. They are fully involved in the education of their child and rightly feel that an effective partnership has been created which benefits all concerned. They receive good quality information which enables them to support the work of the school.

The head teacher, supported by governors, has created a very effective and purposeful learning environment where there is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment.

14 The head teacher has established a very effective and purposeful learning environment in which pupils and children have positive attitudes, behave well and learn effectively. The school has had a clear sense of purpose over a number of years which is shared by all staff and governors. The temporary addition of a number of pupils remaining in school for an extra year has been very effectively managed and this has not affected the ethos of the school.

15 All staff are fully involved in determining the priorities for the development of the school and a number of initiatives have been successfully introduced including those for literacy and numeracy. Priorities in the development plan are appropriate and cover a wide range of school activities. The role of the school in the wider community, through the work of the leadership and management, is also having a positive effect. The advent of the Family Centre and new Toy Library to support parents of children with special education needs has added to the learning environment provided by the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

16 The governing body has only recently received full delegated powers and in consequence systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not yet established.

17 The governing body is very supportive of the school and is involved in a variety of ways. They are closely involved in financial matters and in supporting the head in the recent development of children staying for an extra year. Until recently they had only limited delegated powers with the Local Authority retaining much control and responsibility. As the school has developed the governors have received full powers of delegation. They have not yet established clear systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's procedures or provision although they do receive detailed reports from the head.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

18 In order to improve further the head, and governors should:

- Improve the overall leadership and management of the school by ensuring that the governing body develops clear systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school in line with its full powers of delegation. (Paragraphs 16 and 17)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	72	28	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y1
Number of pupils on the school's roll	10	27
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y1
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10	27

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7	School data	0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	6
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y1

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9
Average class size	9

Education support staff: YR – Y1

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	83

Number of pupils per FTE adult	2
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998 - 1999
	£
Total income	213,481
Total expenditure	216,163
Expenditure per pupil	7,206
Balance brought forward from previous year	17,881
Balance carried forward to next year	15,199

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	36
Number of questionnaires returned	32

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	16	0	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	52	48	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	47	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	46	4	0	21
The teaching is good.	88	12	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	78	22	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	97	3	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	21	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	97	3	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	28	0	0	14
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	27	0	0	10