



Inspection report

Park Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 116233
LEA Hampshire

Inspection number 275319
Inspection dates 6 and 7 June 2005
Reporting inspector Mr A Olive HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Gloucester Road
School category	Community		Aldershot
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Hampshire
			GU11 3SL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01252 324159
Number on roll	178	Fax number	01252 321727
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr N Coles
Date of previous inspection	September 2003	Headteacher	Mrs P Durance

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	15 July 2005	275319

Introduction

When Park Primary School was inspected in September 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2005.

Description of the school

Park Primary School is smaller than average with 178 pupils on roll. Most of the pupils live in the immediate locality, an area that includes some significant social and economic disadvantage. At 37 per cent, an above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Nearly half of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, including two pupils who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds has increased over the last few years; it is currently 13 per cent, with five pupils speaking a language other than English at home. On entry to the school, the pupils' attainment is below average.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

The headteacher has brought a sense of purpose and direction to the work of the school, that has channelled the industry and willingness of the staff to bring about improvement. The school now provides a sound education for its pupils. Standards are below national expectations but rising as a consequence of teaching that is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In national tests last year, the proportion of Year 2 pupils who attained the expected Level 2b in reading and writing was well below average; the results in mathematics were similar to the average. At the end of Key Stage 2, there is an improving trend in national test results, though standards in all subjects in 2004 were well below average. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good; they respond with interest and enthusiasm to effective teaching. The curriculum is suitably broad, with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is good. The school is well led and managed and the headteacher, staff and governors have a strong vision for the future.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of September 2003 required the school to address areas for improvement concerned with: the pupils' standards in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education; the quality of teaching; the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs; the school's leadership and management; the governance of the school; and the pupils' cultural development. There has been good improvement in improving the leadership and management of the school, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the pupils' cultural development, and reasonable progress in the other areas.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to build on the improvements already made. The headteacher has shown determination in tackling areas of weakness and the senior staff share her resolve and desire to do the best for the pupils. There are systematic arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the provision, and a greater rigour and consistency to evaluating the school's performance and identifying the next steps of development. However, the quality of subject leadership is uneven and the management roles of the subject leaders are relatively underdeveloped. The local education authority (LEA) has supported the school well and monitored its progress effectively. Since the last inspection, the governors have improved their role in holding the school to account. All parties share a determination that the school should continue to build on what it has achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- raise standards, focusing on literacy and numeracy;
- improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- strengthen the effectiveness of subject leadership.

Achievement and standards

Standards are rising. The pupils in the reception class make a satisfactory start. Attainment on entry is below average and most of the pupils only reach the nationally set early learning goals in physical and creative development by the end of the Foundation Stage. The results from the 2004 national assessments for Year 2 pupils in reading and mathematics were much improved; the results were in line with the average for mathematics, though below average for reading. The pupils' attainment in these subjects compared favourably with those of pupils in schools in similar circumstances. Standards in writing have shown little improvement and remain well below average; however, the predicted figures for 2005 show a significant rise. In the statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2004, standards improved in English, mathematics and science, continuing the trend of the last four years. Nevertheless, the results in all three subjects were well below the average for schools nationally, though when compared to schools with pupils of similar prior attainment they were average.

The pupils in all classes, including those who have special education needs, make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons. Overall, standards in lessons were below national expectations, with only the higher attaining pupils reaching the level expected for their age. The school's focus on reading has proved successful with many pupils making good progress. The school is well aware that, despite recent improvements, standards are still low and is working systematically to boost attainment.

Personal development

The pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good; the need to use exclusion as a sanction has fallen significantly this year. There are good relationships between the staff and pupils, and clear expectations and guidance of how the pupils should behave. The pupils are confident that staff will deal with undesirable behaviour effectively, helping them to resolve disputes amicably. Most of the pupils like their school and are enthusiastic learners. They work well in pairs and in co-operative groups. The opportunities for the pupils to discuss ideas, strategies and experiences during lessons have improved attitudes and participation. However, the pupils are not always confident in their ability to work independently and sometimes lack the basic skills required to do so successfully.

The attendance figure for this year, at 93.9 per cent, is below the national average. The school has introduced a satisfactory range of strategies to follow up absence, though these strategies have been ineffective for a minority of pupils. The support to the school from external services has sometimes lacked rigour.

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good; cultural provision is satisfactory. Assemblies provide good opportunities for the pupils to extend their spiritual and social awareness. The headteacher provides a good model for the staff in developing the pupils' self-knowledge; for instance, she uses questions well to help the pupils think more deeply about how their behaviour affects others. The school council allows the pupils to participate in the school's development; for example, by agreeing the playground rules which are on display. The older pupils enjoy helping the younger pupils, for instance in paired reading activities. The school has improved the multicultural links across the curriculum and the resources available to support learning in this area.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; it was at least satisfactory in all the lessons and was good in a quarter. The overall profile of teaching is stronger than in 2003, when it was poor. The teachers have responded positively to advice and training. The improvements in teaching have resulted in the pupils making better progress; nevertheless, not all the pupils are learning as quickly as they might and there is scope for improvement in the teaching and learning across the school.

The teaching was most effective when the planning identified clear learning objectives that were explained to the pupils. The activities and resources were well chosen; they motivated the pupils and catered for the range of ability and learning styles successfully. The teachers used mid-lesson and closing plenary sessions effectively to assess the pupils' understanding and enable them to reflect on their own progress. There were examples of good questioning, encouraging the pupils to deepen and expand their responses. Key vocabulary was highlighted in the teachers' planning, though not consistently reinforced enough in all lessons. In the foundation subjects, the teachers' lesson planning was often too limited; consequently activities were not always sufficiently well matched to the pupils' needs.

The support assistants made effective contributions to the pupils' learning, leading group work, supporting individuals during whole-class sessions and making observations and assessments of the pupils' responses. The quality of the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is good. The headteacher is well supported by a teaching assistant and together they ensure that the resources to support these pupils are appropriately targeted. There are rigorous systems in place to track and monitor the progress made by the pupils who have special educational needs.

The school has established good systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. The data is used judiciously to inform planning, set targets for improvement and identify the pupils in need of extra help. The pupils have individual targets for reading, writing and mathematics set at appropriate National Curriculum levels; the teachers link these targets with the objectives for lessons when relevant, and they work hard to ensure the pupils'

targets are regularly reviewed. The marking of the pupils' books varied in quality. Most was thorough and related to the learning objectives; the best made clear what the pupils should do to improve their work. There is little opportunity, however, for the pupils to respond to the marking.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, with a strong emphasis on developing basic skills in numeracy and literacy. The staff have recently reviewed and updated the curriculum promoting greater cross-curricular links, though there are missed opportunities for maximising the pupils' learning of English within other subjects. An interesting range of extracurricular activities and visits enriches the curriculum.

The headteacher and staff know and understand the pupils well. Relationships are warm and the pupils know they can approach the staff for well-informed guidance, advice and support when needed.

The school has worked hard to improve its links with the parents; these were unsatisfactory at the inspection in 2003. There is very good attendance at meetings for the parents and teachers to discuss the pupils' progress, and other social and educational events are organised to encourage parents into the school. The school enjoys beneficial links with the community, including a primary strategy network and a sports partnership with the local secondary school.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher's determined and sensitive leadership has given a clear steer to the work of the school and created a positive ethos for learning. She has been well supported by the senior staff. The deputy headteacher is a good role model as a lead teacher. Morale has risen and teaching and support staff are working well together. There are systematic arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school, through first-hand observations and through the analysis of performance data. The teachers are taking increasing responsibility for raising standards and the progress of the pupils in their classes. There is an accurate and shared understanding of the priority areas the school needs to improve.

The co-ordinators are developing their roles and beginning to lead their subjects more effectively. However, the quality of subject leadership is variable and the role of the middle managers in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility is underdeveloped.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities and has played an increasingly effective part in monitoring the school's progress, as its members have grown in their understanding of their role as critical friends.

The LEA has provided the school with good support. This has helped the school to improve teaching, to develop and strengthen leadership at all levels and to establish sound systems for monitoring and evaluating the success of initiatives. In addition, regular inspections to check on progress have provided the school with valuable feedback.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Park Primary School was inspected by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in September 2003 under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in February, May and November 2004 and in February 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

In June 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

During the visit 17 part lessons and an assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, key staff, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and areas for improvement in the inspection report of September 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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