



Gatcombe Park Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116204
LEA Portsmouth LEA
Inspection number 279770
Inspection dates 10 July 2006 to 11 July 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Grove AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Barbara Way
School category	Community		Hilsea
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Portsmouth PO2 0UR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02392694412
Number on roll	220	Fax number	02392667134
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Malcolm King
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Carole Roberts

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in north Portsmouth and is about the same size as most primary schools. It was formerly an infant school and has progressively become a primary school from September 2000. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly below average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than average, and none is at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that its overall effectiveness is good. Children make a reasonable start in Reception, where quality and standards are satisfactory. They continue to make satisfactory progress and sometimes good progress in Years 1 and 2. Good overall progress is made in Year 3, but the pace then slackens although it remains satisfactory. However, progress accelerates in Year 6. In mathematics, pupils attain above average standards, and in science standards are slightly above average. This is true of English also. Nearly half the pupils reach above average standards in reading, though only a few attain the same standards in writing.

Pupils achieve well, as a consequence of teaching which is effective overall. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The quality of care and support for pupils is good. The tracking of pupils' academic development is satisfactory because information to predict and then monitor their progress is not yet being well enough used. Pupils' good relationships with staff contribute to their enjoyment of school. They behave well and display positive attitudes. Most parents think well of the school.

The curriculum is satisfactory, and is enhanced well by visits and visitors. Provision for pupils' personal development is good, including the good range of extra-curricular activities, in which pupils participate well. The headteacher provides good leadership, and ensures that all pupils feel included. She enjoys the effective support of the deputy headteacher and chair of governors. Subject managers provide good leadership in science and information and communication technology (ICT). The headteacher and deputy headteacher have also acted to provide effective leadership or support in English and mathematics to the extent that standards in these subjects improved in 2006. The leadership roles of managers of these subjects, however, are not yet fully developed. The school's processes for evaluating itself are effective. It shows a good capacity to improve further, as it has already demonstrated through improved achievement and standards; weaknesses identified at the last inspection have also been addressed well. The school works in effective partnership with parents and others, including the local secondary schools and the Anglican Church. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

andmiddot; Raise the standards of writing across the school, including those of the most capable pupils, through higher expectations and more challenging teaching.

andmiddot; Improve the consistency of teaching, assessment and tracking to ensure more even progress by pupils from year to year.

andmiddot; Improve the effectiveness of some subject leaders by better use of monitoring and review procedures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Children enter the Reception class with standards that are about average. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. However, there are not sufficient opportunities for children to make use of their own ideas and imagination. In Years 1 and 2, also, progress is satisfactory and is sometimes good. Pupils reached about average standards in their reading and writing in national tests in 2006 at the end of Year 2, though few of the more capable pupils attained the higher level in writing. In mathematics, however, pupils reached above average standards. Standards were broadly similar to those which were attained in the previous year. Thereafter, progress is good overall, but is not consistent between year groups. In Year 3, progress is generally good and it is satisfactory in Years 4 and 5 where pupils are not always offered sufficient challenge. However, very effective teaching ensures that pupils make very good progress in Year 6. The outcome is that in 2006 pupils reached above average standards in the national tests in mathematics, which were an improvement on the previous year's results, notably in the attainment of more capable pupils. In English, results show a similar overall trend in improvement. But whereas a high proportion of able pupils reached the high Level 5 in reading, few attained a similar standard in writing. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive effective support, and achieve as well as other pupils. For the most part, pupils meet the challenging targets which are set.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school, behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Attendance is above average and children are happy to come to school. There have been a small number of exclusions in the last two years, and for valid reasons; those pupils have been very effectively re-integrated. Pupils know the importance of a healthy lifestyle and of the safe use of tools and equipment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about different cultures, for example through celebrating the Chinese New Year, and from visitors talking to them about Indian customs and music. They are clear about the school's expectations with regard to behaviour and co-operate well in lessons. They get good opportunities in assemblies to talk about subjects such as truth and honesty. The school council plays a very effective role in improving provision within the school, for example, through the purchase of playground equipment, including the Buddy Bench. The council contributes well to the community through charity work such as raising money for the Salvation Army. Combined with pupils' good basic skills, this also effectively supports their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but is not sufficiently consistent across the school. In the best lessons, pupils show considerable enjoyment of their learning and achieve well. A good example was in an outstanding English lesson where the pupils showed a high degree of interest and involvement; the teacher gave them a range of speaking and listening tasks in preparation for use of a well-chosen ICT program to plan a description of an alien. Common features in effective teaching are good planning, a good lesson pace, good management and organisation, and effective sequencing of tasks which are well matched to pupils' differing abilities, so that everyone is challenged. Where teaching has less impact, the pace of work is less engaging. In addition, some teachers are not always precise enough in their instructions for setting tasks or in questioning their pupils. At the Foundation Stage, some learning is too controlled by adults. This does not sufficiently encourage children to think and act for themselves. Some marking of pupils' work, especially in English, does not focus as much as it could on how pupils might improve the quality of their writing. Teachers do not always make consistently good use of assessment information in their planning of work for all groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Secure planning covers all areas, including personal, social and health education. The Foundation Stage curriculum is thoroughly planned to provide a balance between activities, but sometimes work is more suited to older children. Provision for reading and mathematics is good and ensures that pupils achieve well. There have been good improvements in ICT provision, and all pupils now have regular access. However, the curriculum is not well enough planned to help higher-attaining pupils, in particular, to make good progress in their writing, and links between subjects do not provide as many opportunities for writing as they could. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have clear education plans and are supported well in class by teaching assistants. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and activities such as the Mathematics Challenge and the Talented Writers Group help to meet their needs. The school's involvement in the Healthy Schools initiative ensures that pupils understand the importance of exercise and healthy eating. Pupils have good opportunities to develop enterprise skills. For example, the school council organised a refreshment stall on parents' evening to raise money for play equipment.

There is a good range of visits and visitors, and events such as Creativity Week enrich the curriculum. Pupils in Year 4 enjoy the residential visit to Little Canada where they develop team building skills and in Years 5 and 6, pupils have a 3-day visit to London where they learn about the city. Pupils participate well in the wide range of after-school clubs which include many sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory overall. The school is a happy, friendly place where all staff take good care of pupils and help them to reach challenging targets. Pupils say that they enjoy school and feel safe.

Child protection procedures, risk assessments and anti-bullying measures are effective and ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Good use is made of outside agencies to provide support and advice. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well through the good care they receive from teaching and support staff. The school provides very well for the minority of pupils with behaviour problems, which leads to positive responses from them. The behaviour support assistant ensures a calm and friendly atmosphere at playtimes, and pupils feel confident to share any concerns with her. Pupils say that there is little bullying and that it is dealt with well. Through physical education, the trim trail at playtimes and after-school sports clubs, the school provides for healthy lifestyles. This makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development

The school assesses pupils' progress year by year and uses the information to identify any pupils who are underachieving. However, data is not yet being used consistently to predict pupils' academic development accurately and then to track their progress effectively over time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inspection evidence shows that overall leadership and management are good. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. Together they have set a clear direction which has led to the improvement of pupils' standards, achievement and personal development through their monitoring and review. The school's self-evaluation is effective, leading to good improvement planning. The school largely met its challenging targets in 2005. Its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities is good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have maintained a good focus on improvement in English and mathematics during a period of staffing difficulties, involving illness and absence from school. The leadership of science and ICT are effective. The senior leadership team are fully aware of the need to develop further the role of other subject leaders to include the observation of teaching, the analysis of pupils' work and the effective use of data to set appropriate targets for pupils and to track their progress. Strategic planning for future development is good and has rightly identified as an issue the shortcomings in pupils' performance in writing. The weaknesses in the use of ICT, in basic skills in Years 1 and 2, and in pupils' appreciation of non-western cultures, which were identified at the previous inspection, have all been successfully addressed. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve further.

The chair of governors is highly experienced in the role, and offers challenge as well as support for school leaders. He has a very good insight into the present strengths

and weaknesses of the school, and is clear about what is needed to improve the school further. The governing body effectively discharges its legal responsibilities.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

Following our visit to your school, Mrs Sinclair and I would like to thank all of you, and your teachers, for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you at work in your classrooms and talking to you playtimes and lunchtimes. We think Gatcombe Park is a good school.

These are the things we most liked: • Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are giving your school good leadership. • Your behaviour is good, and you enjoy your lessons and playtimes. • You have good relationships with your teachers and teaching assistants. • The adults give you good care so that you feel very safe at school. • Most of you are achieving well, especially in reading and mathematics by Year 6. • The teaching at your school is good. • Many of you take part in the good range of after-school activities. • Most of your parents are pleased with the school. • You know it is important to have lots of exercise and eat the right sorts of food.

We have asked your teachers to: • Help all of you, especially the more able pupils, to improve your writing, by expecting more from you and giving you some harder work. • Do more to make sure all of you make good progress in every year group. • Help some teachers who are in charge of subjects to find out more about how well you are learning in those subjects, and what could be made better. Thank you again.

Yours sincerely

Chris Grove

Lead Inspector