



Parkgate Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117162
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280001
Inspection dates 26 April 2006 to 27 April 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Francis LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Southwold Road
School category	Community		WD24 7DN
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 243905
Number on roll	214	Fax number	01923 443660
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr.Richard Southern
Date of previous inspection	17 May 2004	Headteacher	Miss. Rachel Preston

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school. A third of the pupils come from minority ethnic families, the largest groups being of Pakistani and African-Caribbean heritage. A higher than average proportion of pupils has English as an additional language but none are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils moving in and out of the school is below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Attainment on entry is average. There has been a large turnover of staff in the last two years. The headteacher was appointed to the post in February 2006 after a period as deputy headteacher and acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Parkgate provides a sound education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. However, this is a school that is moving ahead rapidly. There has been good progress since the last inspection and through accurate self-evaluation the school continues to build well on these foundations and has the capacity to improve further. Parents report significant improvements to the school over the last three years and visitors are impressed by its calmness and the welcome they receive. Parents are also very positive about the care provided and the quality of the learning. Indeed, they rate many aspects of the school more highly than the school does itself. Pupils point out how much they enjoy school, the interesting range of lessons and what the teachers do for them. This is reflected in their positive attitudes and good behaviour. They report that bullying is rare and when it happens it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school council has an important role in offering suggestions and making decisions that will affect pupils and is proud of the improvements it has been involved in. The headteacher gives a strong lead in encouraging a positive climate for improvement. Senior managers support this continuing improvement through the systems they have put in place and the example they set as teachers. Because the conditions for learning are good, pupils apply themselves well. Teaching, like standards and achievement, is satisfactory overall, but is improving and has many good elements that the school's leadership is building on. The achievement of the more able pupils is a strong feature of the school's work. Marking is not used effectively enough to identify gap in pupils' knowledge. Lesson planning does not always meet the needs of different groups of pupils, especially in mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement levels through improving teachers' planning, and in particular the provision in mathematics. - Use marking more effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge so these can be tackled more readily. - Ensure that planning meets the needs of pupils of different abilities and from different ethnic groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From average levels of attainment when they come into the school, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve average standards by the end of Year 6. There has been a steady improvement in test scores in mathematics over the last two years while those for English and science have remained fairly constant. There is generally little difference between the overall progress and attainment of most groups of pupils in the school; however, test results show that higher attaining pupils did better than expected in English and mathematics. They also show that while the school provided well for higher attaining pupils, particularly in English and mathematics, it was less effective in raising the standards of some lower attainers in mathematics. Since the school's evaluation of this, the strategies put in place to address the areas of weakness

are proving successful and there is clear evidence of improved progress across the school. An important element in this is the contribution made by the teaching assistants. However, the impact has not yet been seen in all groups and rates of progress are not yet consistent for all ethnic groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Attendance levels are good. Pupils enjoy their time at school and speak fondly of their teachers. As one boy commented 'I come to school for my lovely friends and my lovely teachers'. As a result, behaviour is good and it is rare for learning to be disrupted. Pupils know right from wrong and discuss moral and spiritual issues sensibly. Empathy for the less fortunate is well established. Social development is very good and pupils have a strong voice in how the school is run. Pupils respond well to the school's promotion of cultural understanding and appreciate the chance to share in the celebrations of a range of faiths and ways of life. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are quick to alert an adult if they are at all worried about bullying. They also have a sound understanding of how to lead a healthy life through diet and exercise, an area for further development as they become involved in the Healthy Schools programme. Pupils make a very good contribution to the community and willingly take on jobs and responsibilities around school. School councillors take their role very seriously and make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school, but there is still further opportunity for their role to be extended. Pupils' increasing independence in learning and their improving literacy and numeracy skills are preparing them soundly for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, there are examples of consistently good teaching across the school. The leadership has a clear view on the quality of teaching and has put into place strategies aimed at raising it all to a good level. Pupils are clear about what they are to learn and the teachers make frequent reference to the targets they are working towards. This means teachers and pupils can check on progress towards these. The features that stop some of the satisfactory teaching from being good are to do with aspects of lesson planning and marking. Not all of the planning has the sharp detail needed about the provision for different groups of pupils. Good provision for the average and more able pupils ensures they make good progress, often through the opportunities they have for investigative work. However, in some instances the work for lower attainers is less well matched, for example in mathematics, and not as effective in moving them on fast enough. This is also seen where the regular errors in pupils' work are not always picked up on and dealt with quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

From what was an over-concentration on the core subjects of English and mathematics previously, pupils now experience a wide range of exciting subjects and activities. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to all subjects. Pupils appreciate being able to participate in investigations and practical activities and now list subjects such as art and design and technology amongst their favourites. Opportunities for pupils to take charge of their own learning are improving, allowing them to develop and extend their own ideas. These are being developed still further as senior managers work to build stronger links between subjects. Information and communication technology plays an important part in many subjects and teachers are using the interactive white boards with increasing skill to extend learning. The school offers a good range of extracurricular activities, with a strong emphasis on sport. This has a positive impact on the way the pupils feel about school and promotes the school well in the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Methodically organised systems and close communication between school and home underpin the very good attention to health and safety, first aid, child protection and medical needs. Parents are very happy with the way their children are cared for and they also feel they are valued members of the school community. Many are particularly pleased with the smooth transfer from infant to junior school. The school works effectively to improve the attendance of pupils who are frequently absent. Pupils feel safe, secure and happy at school and know their concerns are dealt with effectively. Teachers give good academic support and guidance. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked to check how well they are doing and extra support is quickly put into place should the need arise. Work on target setting that also involves pupils in their own assessment is strengthening this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has taken a rigorous approach to improving progress and raising expectations at all levels. This commitment is seen through the quality of the monitoring, the detailed analysis of data, and the strategies put in place to address identified weaknesses. She is well supported by an active and knowledgeable governing body. Through monitoring and subject reviews, senior managers have set up good systems clearly aimed at raising standards. However, with the relatively short time they have been in place, the full impact of some of these initiatives has yet to be seen. Parents' views are sought regularly and they report very positively about the improvements to the school over recent years. The school knows itself well and responds well to the views of others. Financial management is sound and, while there is currently a high budget surplus, this has come about for a number of reasons, most significantly

through staff changes. However, this has been clearly targeted for the future within a good strategic development plan and the school gives satisfactory value for money. The good improvements the school has made since the last inspection show that it is well placed to continue improving.

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	3	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	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Mrs McDermott and I enjoyed meeting you and were pleased with the way you told us about your school. We think that your school is getting better all the time. We enjoyed our visit and particularly the welcome we received from everyone. Your good manners and friendly attitudes show that everyone in the school cares for each other. Because of this, new children settle quickly when they come into your school, something your parents were very pleased with. Your behaviour in and around school is good and you listen carefully to your teachers and do all that is asked of you. We think your teachers make your work interesting, particularly some of the investigations they plan for you to do. We also like the way you settle to your work and try your hardest. We think that the school does well to make up for the lack of sporting facilities on site by providing opportunities to play sports against other schools. We know your headteacher and the staff are working hard to make the school even better. To help in this we have asked them to do a number of things. Firstly, to make sure the work teachers plan for you is at the right level for everyone, particularly in mathematics. Secondly, we have asked that they look carefully when marking your work to see where you are making the same mistakes again and again and find ways of helping you to correct these. I am sure that if you keep up your good attitudes to school and continue to enjoy all you do your school will become even better.