



The Parks School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120355
LEA RUTLAND LEA
Inspection number 280792
Inspection dates 12 December 2005 to 12 December 2005
Reporting inspector Ms. Sue Aldridge LI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Barleythorpe Road
School category	Community special		LE15 6NR
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01572 756747
Number on roll	22	Fax number	01572 722369
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Lin Machin
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2000	Headteacher	Ms. Pia Kerridge

Age group 3 to 7	Inspection dates 12 December 2005 - 12 December 2005	Inspection number 280792
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Parks is a small mixed community special school that caters for 22 children from 2 to 6 years. Currently, all children are in the Foundation Stage. Ten of the children have statements of special educational needs; others are being assessed for one. Children have a wide range of learning difficulties including autism, moderate learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties, visual impairment and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are similar numbers of boys and girls. Nearly all children are White and they come from a range of family and socio-economic circumstances. Almost two thirds of the children come from the neighbouring local authority of Leicestershire. As an extended school, The Parks offers a range of support services to children and their families. A Family Centre, established in the school using community funds, provides a wide range of services for youngsters with special educational needs from birth to 19 in the local community. The school has a wide range of links with its community and is working with the local authority to develop its outreach role. Numbers have fallen in recent years. The future of the school is currently under consideration and its role is likely to change.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Parks is a good school. Children flourish in its family atmosphere, and achieve well in all areas of learning. Their personal development is good. The staff are skilled and teamwork is very well developed. Teaching is good. There is a wealth of assessment information, but this makes it time consuming to track children's progress. The school provides outstanding support for children and their families. Its work extends well beyond the school gate, into the community and primary schools. It is well regarded by other professionals and parental satisfaction is very high. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has extended the school's role most effectively. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Governors now have suitable ways of checking the school's work and self-evaluation is established. This enables staff to identify ways of improving the school. The inspection confirms that the school's evaluation is accurate. However, the school makes too little use of measurement as a way of showing how well it is doing. There is good capacity for further improvement and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Streamline recording systems to make it easier to track pupils' progress.
- Make greater use of the information that the school has to measure improvements and satisfaction with its services.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with a variety of learning difficulties and delayed development as a result of this. They soon settle and start to make good progress in all areas of learning, and parents are very pleased with their progress. However, pupils do not reach levels expected for children of their age by the time they leave because of the nature and extent of their learning difficulties. The information that the school has, shows good gains in Pre-National Curriculum Level 1 (P levels) in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development, although it is not presented in a form that makes it easy to see the progress children make during their time in the school. Although the school feels that children with autism make particularly good progress it is not able to demonstrate this, as it does not analyse the assessment information that it has. Following initial assessment, children are set challenging individual learning targets, and samples of completed individual education plans show that they achieve most of these targets in the timescale set. However, the school does not analyse this information to show what percentage of targets are met or partly achieved. This would provide the school with an additional indicator of its success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Parents say that children enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good and children's behaviour is very good. Gains in personal development are assessed through P levels, but the school does not analyse this information, and this is an area for improvement. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children develop greater self-awareness. Their confidence and self-esteem grows as their smallest achievements are recognised and celebrated. They develop a sense of right and wrong, such as recognising that it is unkind to say certain things. They begin to recognise and relate to adults and other children, to share and play together. Children learn to recognise and express their feelings; they also develop their independence skills. Through creative activities and celebrations of festivals such as Diwali, children develop an understanding of other cultures. Children with autism make great strides in their personal development. Many develop from anxious individuals with a narrow range of interests into children who are relaxed, and happy to take part in a range of activities, including messy ones. They have strategies to cope with changes in routine, and make choices spontaneously using their schedules. Their social development accelerates as they become skilled at using a system of pictures and symbols to communicate. Children learn to make healthy choices when fruit is offered at snack times. They learn to keep safe when they are in school and out in the community. Children willingly take small responsibilities, such as wiping the table after snack time. When there are visitors, such as the firemen, children find out about people who work in the community, and role play in the 'shop' gives them an early insight into the world of commerce.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good. When children enter they are carefully assessed over a six week period and a suitable individual education plan devised. The good staffing levels and very effective teamwork in the classroom mean that children are well supported and encouraged in lessons. As a result, they are attentive and well focused. Teaching assistants make detailed notes about children's responses, and staff are alert to the smallest achievements, which are recorded and celebrated. A good dialogue with parents is maintained through home-to-school books; this helps in the consistent management of children and makes learning continuous. There is a wealth of assessment information, but no simple system of tracking the progress that children make, such as a summary of milestones reached during the child's time at the school, and this is an area for improvement. Staff know children very well, and they take good account of their different abilities and needs in planning work for them. For instance, they use more complex language and ask more challenging questions when interacting with more able children. Staff are skilled in teaching children with autism. They use a very good range of different strategies and manage these children well. Visual timetables are used well to support children in making transitions from one activity

to another, and the picture exchange system is used effectively with children who have limited verbal communication. There are separate booths, which limit distractions, where children work individually with staff, and children are very well engaged during these sessions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a broad and well balanced range of learning experiences across all areas of learning. Planning is good; a two year cycle ensures that children do not miss topics or repeat them unnecessarily. The flexible organisation of children into three classes, each one consisting of children with similar needs, helps teachers to plan suitable work. Although the accommodation has too little storage space, it is well suited to the children's ages and abilities. The outdoor environment offers good opportunities for play and physical activities. There is a good sized hydrotherapy pool, a sensory area and a soft play area in the hall. A small cookery room enables children to develop independence skills. The classrooms and corridors have stimulating displays of children's work; these are made meaningful to children by the use of digital photographs, signs and symbols. Each child has a personal curriculum based on an individual education plan, and there are specialised programmes for those children that need them, such as musical interaction or therapies. All children have targets that they work towards at lunchtimes, which add breadth to the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched well through visits, visitors and close partnership with parents. Parents are encouraged and supported to continue the school's work at home, and they greatly appreciate this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Children are cared for well. Child protection procedures are secure, risks are carefully assessed and suitable action is taken to assure children's safety. Staff are vigilant and children are well supervised at all times. The school is currently working towards healthy schools status, and liaising with the caterers that prepare school meals, with a view to improving the range and quality of school lunches. A full time health care worker administers medicines and tube feeds, and medicines are securely kept as required. There is excellent support for children and their families. When children leave to take up their placements in primary or special schools there is very good support for transition. The key worker system for children with autism is very successful. These staff provide continuous support for children and their families. They work individually with children in the classroom and build very positive relationships with them. They also go into the home and support parents in managing the children's behaviour and extending their learning. The Family Centre provides a very good range of services in the community. In the centre itself, parents meet socially, they borrow from a toy library and children have the use of a sensory room and a tactile wall. The co-ordinator arranges for the school's accommodation to be used for a wide range of activities including a pre-school playgroup, counselling and holiday drop-in activities. Services

are evaluated using a questionnaire, and customers are certainly satisfied. However, the results are not analysed to measure the strength of customer satisfaction.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good leadership. She has a very clear vision of how the school should develop in the light of local and national initiatives. As the school's roll has fallen, she has seized the opportunity to develop the school as a centre of expertise that offers high quality support for children and their families. There is a very good partnership with parents and other agencies, and outreach work is valued by schools. The headteacher is well respected, and has recently given part-time support to a primary school where governors were unable to make a headteacher appointment. Governance is satisfactory. Many of the governors are relatively new so the school has bought in the support of the local authority to develop their skills. They have a suitable committee structure through which they keep the school's work under review. They visit classrooms, and know what the school does well and what needs to be improved. Governors work effectively in partnership with the headteacher as well as asking pertinent questions about aspects of the school's work. Self-evaluation is established in the school and involves all those that it should. However, the school does not make the most effective use of the information that it already has, particularly in analysing data to measure the value that the school adds or the strength of satisfaction of stakeholders. It makes effective use of feedback to identify areas for improvement, and builds well on its strengths.

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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	4	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	2	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	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	NA
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
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

I came to your school to see how well you are doing and to find out if there are any things that could be done better. There are lots of good things. The main ones are: - you do well in your lessons - you are happy and safe in school - the playground is big and there are plenty of things to do outside - your school is like a happy family - the grown ups do lots of things to help you and your families - your parents think the school is great - the headteacher does a very good job - the school helps lots of other children and families. There are two things that could be done better. These are: - teachers should make it easier for people to see what you could do when you started at the school and where you have got to now - showing how well the school is doing by measuring things like how many parents think the school is great. I hope that you all keep up the good work!