

# Parkgate Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111126
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	288868
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6-7 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gordon Alston

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	170
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Emma Stothard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Downey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Brookland Road Parkgate Neston Cheshire CH64 6SW
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 3361609
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 3531216

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average sized school serves mainly White British pupils alongside a very small number of pupils from other minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of pupils live in the local village where there is little sign of social or economic disadvantage. The entitlement to free school meals is below average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved Sport England ActiveMark, Investors in People, Healthy School's Partnership and Healthy School awards and is currently on course to gain an ArtsMark award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, providing good value for money, which serves its pupils and the local community well. Parents strongly support this view, demonstrated by the following comment, 'Parkgate is a good school, with a committed, hardworking staff, providing a caring, interesting environment for learning. I feel my child is challenged, fulfilled and very happy.' Most pupils enjoy school, their behaviour is outstanding and they get on very well with each other and their teachers. They are very keen to learn because good teaching provides them with interesting tasks and activities to challenge them. Pupils have the confidence to ask and answer questions because teachers are skilled both in managing pupils' behaviour and in encouraging them to participate fully in lessons. They eagerly find out things for themselves and work well in groups developing important independent learning skills. However, the clarity of pupils' targets and teachers' comments after marking pupils' work vary, and, as a result, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

Nevertheless, pupils achieve well. Most children enter school with average levels of knowledge and skills for their age. They get off to a successful start in Reception, through carefully planned learning, with most children reaching the expected levels by the end of their first year and well prepared for life in school. They continue to make good progress through both key stages to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2 and significantly above average standards by the end of Year 6. However, not enough pupils attain the higher levels in writing. Managers are aware that there is inconsistency in the amount of writing done in other subjects. This restricts the progress pupils, particularly the more able, make especially in their ability to write in different styles.

The curriculum supports pupils' learning well. They understand how to live healthy lives and know how to stay safe. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education because of the school's successful concentration on developing their basic skills. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched by a good range of visitors and visits. The quality of care is strong and the school is developing good procedures to monitor learners' achievements. The good links with parents, the local community and outside agencies provide very good support for learners. The school goes out of its way to implement ideas suggested by pupils and parents. For example, there have been improvements to homework, a safe area for football has been created and ideas such as the 'Day A Week' project have been introduced to encourage gifted pupils to share and develop their talents with pupils from other schools.

Leadership and management are good and central in creating a well focused team approach leading to effective self-evaluation of its performance. The clear vision of a conscientious headteacher promotes good academic and personal development for all pupils. The fact that the school has judged itself to be satisfactory rather than good reflects the mindset of everyone – that improvement is an ongoing process with no room for complacency. Together, staff are driving through some major initiatives which clearly demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. For example, newly introduced comprehensive tracking of pupils' progress and well targeted intervention programmes have an increasingly beneficial effect on raising standards. All issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with and strengths have been maintained. Governors support the school well. They know its strengths and are developing their role as 'critical friends'.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for more able pupils.
- Spread good practice in marking and the setting and use of personal targets to ensure all pupils know how they can improve their work.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

On entry to Reception, children's skills and knowledge are mostly at the average level expected for four-year-olds, although a minority are at higher levels. They make good progress, reaching expected levels in all areas of learning, especially in personal and social education, because their learning is thoughtfully organised and carefully tailored to develop their basic skills. In Key Stage 1, pupils build well on their earlier attainment. Standards in tests are above average in reading, writing and mathematics, but few pupils reach the higher level in writing. For a number of years, progress during Key Stage 2 has been good, resulting in consistently significantly above average Year 6 test results in English and in mathematics. However, quite a number of pupils who achieve the higher level in reading do not do so in writing. Results in 2006 followed this pattern, with boys and girls achieving equally well. New comprehensive arrangements for tracking pupils' progress enable strengths and weaknesses to be identified early. Appropriate intervention strategies are effective and are helping ensure that pupils are achieving well across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress, due to effective support from staff.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Most pupils are keen to learn and eagerly participate fully and confidently in lessons. Their enjoyment of school is reflected not only in their good attendance but also in their behaviour, which is excellent, both in lessons and at break time. Pupils relate very well to each other and to staff. This is because there is a strong bond of mutual respect that is reflected in pupils' courteous and cooperative attitudes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They feel very secure in school, are well aware of how to stay safe and know how to seek help if needed. The impact of a school council, and pupil elections to appoint councillors, help pupils to gain a clear understanding of citizenship. Many pupils are knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles and participate enthusiastically in sporting activities. The good opportunities they have to work independently and collaboratively in lessons and in projects such as charity fundraising cement relationships and prepare them well for transition to secondary school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers' very caring relationships with pupils generate very positive attitudes to learning. Their strong subject knowledge, conscientious planning and sensitive questioning ensure that pupils clearly understand tasks. Very good class management and stimulating environments contribute really well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Teachers and classroom assistants work well together to support pupils in their learning. In the best lessons, work is well matched to the needs of all pupils and pupils

strain to reach their targets. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school. For example, targets are not always written in ways which all pupils can understand. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately and generally use the information well to plan suitable work. However, the usefulness of individual target-setting and written comments in marking vary, and, consequently, pupils do not always get enough guidance on how to improve their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum promotes pupils' academic and personal development effectively and is well matched to their abilities. It has been adapted successfully to meet the demands of split year classes. The needs of pupils who have learning difficulties are met effectively through a well planned programme of interventions. Gifted pupils have good opportunities to extend their skills through 'Day A Week' project, allowing them to meet regularly with similar pupils from other schools. The curriculum is well designed to ensure that pupils learn how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. A good range of visitors to school and visits to places of interest help to make the curriculum interesting and enjoyable. The curriculum is enhanced by the inclusion of French. However, opportunities for pupils to write within all subjects is inconsistent and restricts the progress pupils make in developing their writing skills in different styles, particularly for more able pupils. The range of activities outside normal school hours is good particularly promoting fitness and health. In Reception, children's outdoor experiences are limited because it is not easy to access the space set aside for related activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Well thought out systems to promote the personal development of pupils are key strengths of the school. A parental comment, 'The school always goes the extra mile', is a fine summary of the school's approach. For example, the school promotes the safety of pupils through several initiatives such as the 'Walking Train' and safety awareness training, and it promotes their emotional development through teaching specific programmes. The tracking of pupils' academic progress is good. It identifies pupils in need of additional support and as a result, all groups of pupils achieve to their potential. Although parents and pupils have a clear understanding of how well the pupils are doing, because of inconsistencies in setting and using targets, they are not always sure of what they need to do to improve. All aspects of child protection, safe recruitment of staff, risk assessment and health and safety are in place.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership and set a clear direction for the school. They have high expectations for standards and the quality of provision, ensuring that the school is steadily improving. The headteacher has successfully steered the school since its last inspection and has maintained good teaching, achievement and care. Staff, governors and parents share the vision of the senior leaders and contribute fully to the school's continuing success. The school's inclusivity increases its profile in the community. Self-evaluation is rigorous, though too modest in several of its judgments, given what has already been achieved. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent in the drive for further improvement. Governors

understand the school's strengths well and are equally clear about where improvements are to be made. They carry out their responsibilities well and offer a satisfactory level of challenge.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

After spending two days in your school, I want to thank you all so much for making the experience a very enjoyable one. I came to see how well your school is performing and you have a very important role in this, just as your teachers have. Your excellent behaviour and very good relationships are a credit to you all.

Well, what did I think after my visit? I know your teachers were worried about an inspector coming, but I hope my report will help them feel all their hard work is worthwhile, because my judgement is that Parkgate is a good school. I always ask children for their views of the school and one boy said, 'It's great at Parkgate - it's like one big happy family.' I agree; your school is a very caring place. You have a committed headteacher who leads the school successfully and places your well-being at the centre of all that happens. All the staff make teaching interesting and also make you work hard. As a result, you are learning lots in lessons. They try to make school enjoyable and exciting with the many visits you go on and lots of visitors to school. I was pleased to see how hard you work, but equally important is how well you all get on. I saw lots of pupils who have responsibilities and do them very well. I was also very pleased to see all the clubs you have. You take regular exercise, and sport is important to you.

I'm sure your teachers always say 'This is good but you could make it even better if you.' Well, this is what I am telling your school. To be even better, it needs to further improve your writing skills, particularly for more able pupils. Giving you lots of opportunities to use your writing skills across all the subjects you study would help with this. I have also asked the school to make sure that you understand the targets that you are set and that they are used to help you to get to know how you can improve your work. I know you like to have targets to try and achieve them. You may have some ideas of your own on how best targets can be shared and used with you and your parents.

Finally, I would like to thank you again and wish you and your teachers every success for the future.