

Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116233
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290465
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Lily Evans

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	178
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Coles
Headteacher	Mrs Philippa Durance
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
School address	Gloucester Road Aldershot GU11 3SL
Telephone number	01252 324159
Fax number	01252 341727

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school situated in an area of socio-economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average. A third of pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times. There is a smaller than average number of pupils whose first language is English. The school has gained Enhanced Healthy Schools Award and the ICT Mark. It participates in the 'Twelve Communities' project which helps families support their children's education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school that 'puts the child first' says one parent. 'We cannot express our gratitude enough to the staff for their understanding and patience'. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils and has made sound improvement since the last inspection. From low starting points on entry to the school, achievement remains satisfactory overall by Year 6. Standards and provision in Foundation Stage are now good compared to the last inspection. Standards in English and science have risen. They are now below average rather than well below average and improving, as growing proportions of pupils now reach higher levels. At the last inspection higher attainers reached average standards. Reading standards have improved and the school is working hard to improve the quality of writing. Although mathematics remains well below average, end of year tests now show clear signs of improvement. Overall, there has been a modest improvement in standards with fluctuations over the last three years. This is due to small cohorts with a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, high pupil mobility and staffing difficulties that have hampered the school's aim to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers are making better use of assessment to plan in core subjects, though this is not yet consistent, and are beginning to involve pupils in assessing their progress towards their next goals.

The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior management team are satisfactory. They are highly committed to improving the school's performance and have good monitoring and evaluation procedures in place. They are now tracking pupils thoroughly and have taken effective action to consolidate good attitudes and behaviour, improve reading skills, science, information and communication technology (ICT), and religious education since the last inspection. In an effort to help parents better support their children, the school now offers courses, for example, in adult literacy, cooking healthy meals and practical mathematics. The school has good links with, and support from, outside professionals and the local authority. Recently, it has received good support for improving attendance which is broadly satisfactory. There is good improvement in governance which supports and challenges the school in many ways. The school has a sound basis for improvement.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well, in and out of class. Staff set a good example and relationships with pupils are good. Pupils enjoy their lessons. School strategies to reward and encourage good behaviour and work have a good impact on encouraging the many pupils who lack self-assurance. Pupils take responsibility seriously and are proud of the roles they play as prefects and school council. Pupils know how to be healthy and recognise and enjoy physical activities.

The recently reviewed curriculum includes a wider range of opportunities in the arts. The school is currently reviewing how they can usefully extend themed weeks to introduce topic work across subjects of the curriculum and promote basic skills. The planning of the transition curriculum for pupils in Year 1 is at an early stage of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of use of assessment in planning teaching and learning throughout the school in order to accelerate pupils' rates of progress.
- Raise standards in mathematics by promoting pupils' grasp of mental calculations.
- Raise standards in English by focusing on the development of writing skills.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory overall. In the Foundation Stage, from low starting points progress is good. However, on entry to Year 1 most pupils barely reach the expected levels for their age and are especially low in communication, language, literacy and writing. Progress throughout the rest of the school is satisfactory. The school has successfully raised reading standards, and is working to further improve these and writing skills. Since the last inspection, more pupils are reaching the higher levels in reading and writing but in every class there is a long 'tail' of low attainers. Standards in mathematics remain well below average. The recently introduced daily mental calculation sessions provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their number skills, although the school acknowledges that there is still work to be done in this area. Assessment data for the current year show that standards in mathematics by Year 2 have improved and are set to improve slightly in Year 6, although still weak. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and it enables a significant proportion to make good progress. Accurate pin-pointing of pupils' needs to target learning is having a good impact on the progress of school action and school action plus pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Children make good progress in their personal and social skills in the Foundation Stage. Pupils are friendly, are growing in confidence and self-esteem and show a respect for the feelings of others. They co-operate well together within group work but sometimes find it difficult to work well independently because of insecure levels of skills in reading and writing.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. This is in response to the good relationships between adults and pupils and because the school makes its high expectations clear. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respond well to opportunities for reflection in assembly and in lessons such as 'circle time'. They eat fruit at break-times and say that school meals are nutritious. The school has enhanced 'Healthy Schools' status in recognition of its good work in promoting pupils' good attitudes to healthy living. Pupils enjoy taking part in physical exercise and participate enthusiastically in after school activities such as rounders, football, multi-skills and dance.

Pupils take their responsibilities around the school seriously. Prefects enjoy helping around school such as in the school office. School council members play a leading role in caring for the school environment by encouraging pupils to recycle waste. Pupils contribute to the wider community by raising money for charity and by singing at a local home for the elderly. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next school because of their sound basic skills, positive attitudes and good behaviour.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with examples of good practice. Relationships in all lessons are good. Teachers are sometimes creative in their planning, such as using video clips to give pupils writing inspiration. Pupils find practical lessons enjoyable and they cooperate well. In many lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to express their views and to discuss their ideas in pairs and groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are effectively supported by well prepared teaching assistants. Teachers plan work for different levels of ability within the class but the challenge is not always well matched to the wide range of learners' needs. Although teachers plan clear aims for their lessons, they are inconsistent in reviewing these aims at the end of lessons and in involving pupils in this process. In the good practice seen, at the end of the lesson, each pupil was involved in reviewing the work of another.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with good features. The curriculum at Foundation Stage is good because it is well planned to promote opportunities in all areas of learning. Throughout the rest of the school, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills within other subjects are now more effectively planned. Teachers make interesting links between subjects to make learning more relevant and interesting for pupils. Pupils enjoyed the 'Outdoor Learning Week' when they used their literacy, numeracy, art and design skills in a project linked to the environment. ICT is used well as a teaching tool and to support pupils' work in other subjects. Pupils learn about healthy living and how to be safe through an effective personal, social and health education programme. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, visitors and themed events such as 'art week' and 'design and technology week'. These support pupils' learning well and contribute to pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils also participate enthusiastically in the wide range of clubs and other activities. These add to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Provision for care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Pastoral care is very good. Adults work well together to make the school a safe, welcoming place in which every child is valued. Pupils feel safe because there is always an adult to go to if they are in difficulty. As one pupil commented, 'Adults will put 100% into helping you if you have a problem.' Procedures for child protection are robust and all adults in school are fully aware of their responsibilities. Systems for assessing and minimising risks are in place and rigorously followed by staff. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given good support to help them achieve the challenging targets in their individual education plans. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of assessment data, but this is not yet used consistently in planning for what pupils need to learn next. The targets some teachers set in literacy and numeracy are not specific enough for pupils to know what exactly they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher gives strong, determined leadership to this school which is a nurturing environment with a good ethos for learning. She is well supported by her senior management and staff. Subject leader roles are now well developed. Whole school systems of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are good. Staff share a vision to take this school forward and are working hard to succeed.

Since the last inspection in 2005 the school has maintained the good improvement in several areas. This is notably in pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching, both of which had been poor. The required improvements in literacy have been partly addressed in speaking and listening, reading and spelling, but writing remains weak. Managers are aware of next steps to improve the quality of writing. Steps to raise standards in numeracy had been unsuccessful. Effective monitoring and auditing have highlighted weaknesses. Staff training, peer monitoring, extra mental mathematics sessions, and booster groups now appear to be having a positive impact.

Staffing instability has held back attempts to improve the quality of teaching. There is good support for the two newly qualified teachers and the trainee teacher. New staff include an advanced skills teacher. Strategies, such as using assessment in planning lessons and identifying and checking learning goals in lessons, have been introduced in order improve teaching and learning. Governors now give good support and challenge and play a full and active part in many aspects of the school including contributing to the school newsletter and residential visits.

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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>	School Overall
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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
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

5 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Primary School, Aldershot, GU11 3SL

Mr Davis and I would like to thank all of you for helping us and making us feel welcome when we visited your school. We agree with you that everyone is kind and helpful in your school and works hard to help you enjoy your lessons. We think this is a satisfactory and improving school.

- We saw that you do neat work in your books and that you are especially enjoying reading, computer work and physical education.
- We think that you behave well in school, work well together, understand right and wrong and are thoughtful about other people.
- We have asked your teachers to make your lessons even better so that you can make faster progress in learning new work.
- We have asked your teachers to help you to improve your story writing.
- We have also asked your teachers to help you to get better at mental mathematics.

We would like you to do your best work always and always do your homework if you possibly can.

With best wishes

Lily Evans (Mrs)

Lead inspector