



Park Wood Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118472
Local Authority Medway
Inspection number 291143
Inspection date 21 February 2007
Reporting inspector Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Deanwood Drive
School category	Community		Rainham
Age range of pupils	4-7		Gillingham ME8 9LP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 234625
Number on roll (school)	265	Fax number	01634 364257
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	Lindsay Mackenzie
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4-7	21 February 2007	291143

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Park Wood is larger than average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school has received a number of awards in the recent past, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Healthy Schools 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. Parents are very supportive because their children are happy and make good progress. Pupils love coming to school and say it is 'marvellous, wonderful and fun!' The headteacher, staff and governors are fully committed to include all pupils and the determination that everyone has the right to 'safety, respect and learn' is evident in all aspects of the school's work. Care, guidance and support are good. As a result, pupils feel very safe and secure, knowing that any problems will be sorted out by a member of staff. Relationships are outstanding, as is pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Behaviour around school and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils lead healthy lives and appreciate the great variety and quality of food available at lunchtime. Pupils understand the importance of exercise and how to keep themselves safe. They respect each other and their work on recycling, for example, develops good respect for the environment. The curriculum is good. It is considerably enriched through a wealth of additional activities that provides great enjoyment for all pupils. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lively lessons with lots of practical activities. This motivates pupils to learn new skills and knowledge in a relevant and interesting way. Pupils are becoming more involved in assessing how well they are doing and now have individual targets to help them to improve. Although there is some good practice, marking does not consistently refer to these targets. Children are given a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. Effective emphasis on developing children's independence results in children successfully planning and selecting their own learning activities. Children make good progress and, by the time they enter Year 1, almost all attain and many exceed the levels expected for their age. Good progress continues and, by the end of Year 2, standards are typically above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. Achievement is good. However, the school has identified that, throughout the school, boys are not achieving as well as girls in writing. In response, a variety of initiatives have been implemented. These include a review of the curriculum to ensure that topics motivate boys as well as girls, encouraging them to want to record their ideas. A variety of strategies is used to develop pupils' language skills, with an emphasis on speaking and drama activities. Additional support is given to boys who are not progressing as well as they should. Some of these actions are quite new and have not had time to raise the standard of boys' writing. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives the school a clear direction, which is securely focused on raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. She is ably supported by staff and governors. The school knows itself well and its good self-evaluation is based upon careful monitoring procedures. The strong track record of improvement since the previous inspection shows there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' attainment in writing by embedding the strategies that encourage boys to want to record their ideas and develop their language skills.
- Involve pupils more in knowing how well they are learning by consistently providing pupils with information about how well they are succeeding with their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children start Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly average. They make good progress and, by the time they enter Year 1, almost all reach and many exceed the early learning goals expected for children of their ages. However, boys do not attain as well as girls – notably in communication, language and literacy. In Years 1 and 2, good progress continues and, by the end of Year 2, pupils typically attain standards that are above average in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing have generally been weaker than in reading and boys did not attain as well as girls in both reading or writing in 2006. School leaders identified that this was in part related to the higher number of boys with learning difficulties and disabilities but also recognised that aspects of provision needed improvement. More attention has now been given to planning activities that engage the interest of boys. In the current group of Year 2 pupils, the gender difference is not as significant in reading but it is still very evident in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they benefit from good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school very much and have very positive attitudes. 'School is fun, it helps you learn and looks after you,' is a typical comment. Attendance is good. A strong emphasis on developing independence and self-confidence in the Foundation Stage is continued throughout the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are very clear about how they are expected to behave and behaviour is exemplary. Relationships are excellent and pupils are very caring towards each other. They work well, both independently and with each other. Ideas are shared very willingly in collaborative activities, such as discussing the setting for a story or carrying out investigations in science. Pupils lead a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep safe. Parents are very appreciative of this. As one parent explained, 'My daughter has a love of porridge, after making it in class and understanding its healthy properties'. Through collecting for charities, performing in the choir at local events and collecting food parcels during harvest time, for example, pupils gain a good understanding of their role in the wider community. Opportunities to influence the school community, however, are less extensive. Pupils' good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, and their outstanding personal skills, prepare them thoroughly for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Strong and supportive relationships form a secure foundation for teaching throughout the school. This gives pupils increasing confidence to try their best in lessons. Recent curriculum improvements placing greater emphasis on practical and relevant experiences are motivating pupils to learn. Good questioning skills successfully develop pupils' language skills. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging work that is well matched to pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants are used well to ensure pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are fully included in lessons. The school's recent focus on involving pupils more in their learning is beginning to have an effect. Teachers increasingly identify what pupils need to learn, making sure they understand how to succeed by sharing with them the criteria for success. Pupils now have individual targets and some teachers refer to these clearly when marking pupils' work. However, this is a new initiative which has not had the time to be consistently good throughout the school

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and has a good impact on the progress pupils make. The school is carefully revising the curriculum to improve the progress of boys and this is supported by good moves to make lessons more practical and relevant to pupils. From Foundation Stage to Year 2, strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' confidence, which helps them to take full advantage of the experiences provided. Well-planned, regular additional activities, particularly in reading and writing, assist those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to reach personal goals. Pupils enjoy an outstanding variety of extra-curricular activities that successfully promote their enjoyment of school and enhance their personal development. The acquisition of the Healthy Schools Award reflects the very good provision for personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a good level of care guidance and support for all pupils. Effective systems ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being. There are good levels of adult supervision and the behaviour and bullying policies are well understood by pupils. As a result, pupils are made to feel safe, with parents wholeheartedly agreeing. Foundation Stage children are helped to settle quickly and securely into the school and those pupils who need additional help are supported well in classes. Academic guidance is good and the new system of tracking pupils' progress is proving valuable in identifying groups of pupils who are achieving well and those who would most benefit from extra support. For example, since January, the difference between some boys' and girls' writing

attainment has been recognised and action taken, with these boys now receiving additional 'catchup' support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads with a clear and purposeful vision that is firmly focused on continual improvement. A good partnership has been established with all staff with management responsibilities, so that there is a shared commitment to take the school forward. Leadership is further enhanced by governors, who are supportive but who also challenge the school. Subject leaders have a good understanding of the areas of development through their regular and thorough monitoring. Monitoring and evaluation is effective, as seen by the improved standards in mathematics in 2006, which followed action taken to improve number skills. Although the school has been working hard to improve writing standards and has already had some success with pupils attaining the higher level, there is not yet evidence from test scores to confirm that the boys attain as well as the girls in writing. The school successfully includes pupils from all backgrounds and this contributes to its warm, family atmosphere. The views of all members of the community are welcomed and parents are very supportive of the school. One parent wrote: 'The school is like one big family that works together in total harmony!'

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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

What a lovely time I had when I came to visit your school! Thank you for being so friendly. The children I spoke to did a really good job in helping me to find out about all the things you do at school. I agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. It was good to hear that you think that learning is fun and that is because teaching is good. When I saw the Year 1 pupils acting out how to move different objects in a science lesson, I could see why you enjoy yourselves so much. Your behaviour is excellent and your teachers should be very proud of the way that you trust them and feel safe in school. It was good to know that you keep healthy and safe and some of you could tell me that it was important to eat fruit and vegetables every day. You also warned me not to eat too much chocolate! I think your dining room is lovely and the flowers on the table and the music makes lunch a real family time. Your schools meals are yummy - I know, as I had a really tasty lamb dinner! The children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and some children are getting really good at writing the letters of the alphabet. Throughout the school I think you are good at reading and mathematics but I think that some of you could do better with writing. Many of the boys are not yet writing as well as the girls, but I know that your teachers are making changes that will help the boys to write better. The curriculum is good and the school makes sure you have lots of visits, visitors and clubs to make learning really exciting. You do lots of interesting topic work. Your teachers are checking now that these topics interest you all and make you want to write down your ideas. I saw a very good example of this when Year 2 boys and girls were writing down some very good words to describe the setting to their story. I thought to myself that you were all certainly very interested in your work about different pets and animals. I think you have a good headteacher who knows what needs to be done to help you become even better at your learning. I know that recently you have been given targets to help you improve your work. I have asked the teachers to remember to regularly let you know when you are achieving your targets. Thank you again for your help and remember that safety, respect and learning are your right at Park Wood Infant School!