

Parks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120088
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	291624
Inspection date	19 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Barter

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernie Walker
Headteacher	Caroline (Cas) Evans
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001
School address	New Parks Crescent Leicester LE3 9NZ
Telephone number	0116 2872414
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated in one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas of the city of Leicester. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although there are small groups from other minority ethnic backgrounds, a few of whom are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above the national average, as is the number entitled to claim free school meals. Children join the Foundation Stage at the age of three with skills and abilities which are well below those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parks Primary School provides its pupils with a good education. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are the school's most outstanding feature. The supportive and inclusive atmosphere is second to none and is seen in pupils' happy faces, good behaviour and developing confidence as they grow up into young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Parents appreciate the hard work of all staff, typically saying that they 'couldn't wish for a better school'. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Although lower than the national average, their attendance is improving because the school does everything in its power to ensure that pupils attend. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, describing it as 'fantastic' and 'the best school ever'. They are proud of the responsibilities they have and the opportunities to help others in their community, such as developing a sensory garden and raising money to fund wheelchairs for disabled children. From their starting points to when they leave, pupils achieve well. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. The development of their personal and social skills rightly takes a high priority and helps them to develop positive attitudes to learning and good relationships with others. The introduction of a new method to teach the links between letters and sounds has met with resounding success. Considerably more children meet the early learning goal in this area of their communication, language and literacy development than in the national picture. Standards on entry to Year 1 are below average but rising. The youngest pupils make good progress but the school recognises the need to help them build more systematically on the good literacy and numeracy skills learned in the Foundation Stage if yearly fluctuations in standards at the end of Year 2 are to be ironed out. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average and have improved significantly in the last two years. Pupils who sat tests in 2006 made exceptionally good progress from their starting points. The higher number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities means that test results will be slightly lower this year although pupils have made good progress and are on course to meet the targets set for them. Good quality teaching, a good curriculum which inspires pupils' interest in learning, and improved academic guidance all have a significant impact on raising pupils' achievement. Pupils greatly appreciate the help they are given with their work, with Year 6 pupils saying, 'we just flew through our tests because of all the support we've had'. Teachers use detailed information about pupils' progress well to plan lessons which meet their wide-ranging needs and abilities. With teaching assistants, they are particularly adept at supporting the large number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, although sometimes opportunities are missed to develop the more able pupils' independent thinking skills through challenging questions. The school is well led and managed. Through the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the school has improved well in all areas of its work since the last inspection and has established high expectations of what pupils can achieve in their academic standards and personal lives. Other staff are developing their leadership roles well and have a good understanding of the need to use information about pupils' progress to further improve the quality of education provided. In this caring happy and successful school, there is good capacity to build on the existing strengths and to carry out the plans for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the transition of pupils into Year 1, and build systematically on their early learning, to achieve greater consistency in the standards reached at the end of Year 2.
- Ensure that teachers always use questions which challenge pupils, especially the more able, to use and develop their independent thinking skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although few children exceed the goals expected of them by the end of the Foundation Stage, children make good progress overall in the first two years of school because activities are carefully planned to help them to develop early literacy, numeracy and personal skills. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make generally good progress, although standards fluctuate because the transition from the Foundation Stage has not always helped pupils to consistently build on their early learning. The rigorous tracking of pupils' progress has been the key factor in driving up achievement for pupils of all abilities. Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved significantly in the past two years as a result. The broadly average standards reached by pupils in English, mathematics and science are a considerable achievement, given their modest speaking, listening and language skills when they start school, and the high proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities. Good work to engage boys' interest in learning, for example through film-making to support work in literacy, is helping to iron out the difference in their attainment from that of the girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good because very good provision is made for their personal, social and health education. They grow in confidence and most know how to behave well, even though a number need additional help with their difficulties. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are respectful towards others and those whose needs are different to their own. Pupils are very clear about the unacceptability of racism and discrimination. Others nodded vigorously when one pupil said, 'this school helps us to accept all different kinds of people from every background and so you soon make friends'. Pupils acknowledge that bullying sometimes happens but say, 'it's not a big problem and teachers help you with it, even when it happens outside school'. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and the importance of eating healthily and exercising their bodies through swimming and physical education. They participate enthusiastically in all the activities on offer, citing their favourite residential trip as helping them to learn how to get on with others. Pupils' smiles and cheery greetings to the headteacher and staff in the morning are testimony to their pleasure in coming to school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Consistently good teaching based on meticulous analysis of pupils' progress helps pupils to achieve well. Expectations for work and behaviour are good and enjoyment of learning is shared between pupils and staff. Teachers know that pupils learn best through creative activities which link subjects together, such as using persuasive writing skills and geographical and scientific knowledge to design posters about caring for the environment. Pupils know what they are aiming to achieve because the purpose of lessons is always made clear. Classroom displays are firmly focused on supporting learning and pupils know where to look to get help with key words, number lines and strategies for checking their work. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully support pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities to ensure they make good

progress. They pay equal attention to ensuring more able pupils do well, although teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop these pupils' thinking skills further through more challenging questions in whole-class sessions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The creative curriculum brings learning alive for pupils and contributes significantly to their achievement and personal development. It is carefully planned to meet pupils' needs and has a strong emphasis on developing their speaking and listening skills as a basis for all their learning. Throughout the school, there is a focus on developing enjoyment in learning and the skills needed for life ahead. This is achieved not only through everyday lessons, but also through a varied range of activities after school, during visits and through learning new skills, such as Indian dance with the local Creative Partnerships team. In the Foundation Stage, the outdoor area requires further development to give children more opportunities to learn independently. However, in the classroom, they are provided with stimulating and imaginative activities, such as role-playing as pirates and deep sea divers, which help them to develop well in all the areas of learning, particularly in their literacy skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support results in pupils achieving well both academically and personally and having excellent attitudes to school. Procedures for safeguarding their welfare and ensuring their health and safety have high priority. Every pupil is valued and cared for as an individual. This gives them confidence, helps them to feel safe and results in them saying such things as, 'adults are always there to help us and listen to our problems and they won't ever walk away'. The work of the learning mentor in helping parents to improve their children's attendance and the free breakfast club are just two examples in a school which strives to nurture pupils and support their considerable needs. Pupils really value the help they receive to improve their work saying, 'teachers give us boosters because they want us to succeed and do well when we go to secondary school'. Marking of pupils' work is very good in the feedback it gives. Pupils are helped to understand how to improve their work through individual targets in their books and good guidance on how to achieve them on the 'learning walls' in the classrooms.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides a highly effective and clear educational direction for the school and is well supported by hardworking staff. The implementation of a rigorous system to track each pupil's progress has been the most significant factor in moving the school forward and is helping the school to better evaluate where it needs to improve next, particularly with regard to the transition of pupils into Year 1. Priorities for improving standards in the Raising Attainment Plan are sharply focused and rigorously monitored by senior leaders. Less experienced subject leaders are helped to develop their monitoring and evaluation skills by working alongside senior leaders. Governance is satisfactory. It is supportive of the school's strengths and is beginning to develop its skills in challenging plans and decisions being made in the best interests of pupils. Partnerships with parents and other agencies are good and there is a strong commitment to

developing these further through the new arrangements for an extended service with a group of local schools.

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Annex A

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	3
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?	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	1
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

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?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 June 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Parks Primary School, Leicester, LE3 9NZ What an enjoyable day I had when I came to visit your school! Thank you for making me very welcome and for being so helpful when I talked with you. You told me that you go to a 'great' school, and I certainly agree with you! Yours is a good school and lots of things help to make it a success. All the teachers work very hard to check how well you are doing and then make sure that you are taught the right things in lessons so that you do as well as you can. They understand how to help you overcome any problems that you might have and do all they can to support you with your learning and with anything that worries you. Because of this, all of you do well at school and are getting better results in your tests than you used to do. Well done! You are growing up to be confident, happy and caring young people. Most of you behave very well indeed. I was very impressed with the way in which you help each other and understand that some children need a bit of extra care and attention. Your school council does a good job in listening to what you think about the school and improving things for everyone. I wish you the best of luck with your plans for a sensory garden and I'm sure all the children will enjoy using it. The school is good at making sure you learn lots of interesting things alongside teaching you all you need to know in literacy and numeracy. I am pleased that you care so much about your environment and hope you keep on persuading everyone to do the same. It was great to see you learning Indian dancing in the hall and being so careful when knocking the sticks together – that isn't easy, is it? Your school already has a good idea about how to improve. To help them, I have asked them to do two things. Firstly, help children in Years 1 and 2 to build on the really good learning started in the Foundation Stage so that they do as well as they can; and secondly, make sure that teachers always ask you lots of challenging questions in lessons so that all of you, especially those who find work easy, have to think really hard. You can help by working hard and making sure that you always come to school as much as you can. It was a pleasure to meet you and I wish everyone all the very best for the future. Helen Barter Lead Inspector