

The Park Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112682
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310982
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr M Stockdale
Headteacher	Mr S Hewitt-Richards
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Orchard Close Shirebrook Nottinghamshire NG20 8JX
Telephone number	01623 742663
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school serving a community in the former Derbyshire coalfield which faces high levels of socio-economic disadvantage and unemployment. Attainment on entry is generally below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is nearly double the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the average, although the numbers with a statement of special educational need is double the average. Over 18% of the current pupils joined the school at a time other than the normal starting time. Many transferred from other schools where they had experienced learning or behaviour problems. In recognition of its efforts the school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Active Mark, The Health Promoting School Award, the Anti-Bullying Commitment Award, and was the first school in the authority to be awarded the recently developed Derbyshire Personalised Learning Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own assessment that the school is providing a good quality of education. Pupils make good progress and by the time they leave the school in Year 6, standards are average. The results in national tests of those who have been at the school throughout Key Stage 2 show numbers reaching the expected levels to be above the national average. A considerable number of pupils join the school in each year group, many having experienced failure in their previous schools. Often these pupils start from a low baseline and, while the effect is to lower overall standards, these pupils too are making good progress relative to their starting points. The school's use of data is effective. Inspection findings concur with the school's analysis that shows underachievement of boys in some groups.

Pupils' personal development is good. The exceptional element of life at The Park is the responsibility given to pupils, which they accept gladly and respond to positively. For example, in addition to the effective school council, the headteacher has a management team of pupils who he consults before making changes. They run a weekly assembly at which no adults other than the headteacher are present. Pupils also put forward proposals for clubs, which they then run, work in curriculum teams alongside teachers and governors and undertake a variety of responsible tasks. Their voice is genuinely heard and this is a major element contributing to a high level of maturity. Behaviour overall is good but by the time pupils reach the upper part of the school much of it is outstanding.

Parents appreciate the success enjoyed by their children. One wrote, 'My child says, 'I don't like our school, I absolutely love it'. She enjoys being rewarded for her achievement, and the exciting learning environment'. The standards in spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are outstanding, as is the commitment to supporting healthy lifestyles. This is demonstrated in a wide variety of ways from the establishment of a vegetable garden, to the sport provision that sees professional coaches working alongside teachers and trained lunchtime supervisors in maximising the use of the splendidly laid out grounds. Pupils certainly enjoy their education and, as a result, successfully acquire skills for future enjoyment and economic well-being. They contribute very effectively to their community.

Leadership and management overall are good. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational and he is well supported by his deputy headteacher. The quality of teaching and learning are good, reinforcing and developing pupils' knowledge so they learn effectively. That said, the level of academic challenge to the academically gifted is not as good as it could be. There is very effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants, resulting in all pupils having equal access to the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants plan together and when pupils have an individual education plan, it is used to good effect. However, there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of marking in the school. The curriculum is good overall. Because the normal curriculum is well supplemented through projects, visits and themed weeks pupils find their work enjoyable and they respond very positively. They are rewarded effectively: in the immediate through recognitions such as a 'super student', and in the longer term through a graduation ceremony at the University of Derby. In such a positive atmosphere they feel cared for, guided and supported in an outstanding manner.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attainment of boys and those who join the school other than at the normal time who are not fulfilling their potential.

- Ensure even greater consistency in marking so that all pupils receive the very best supportive guidance on the next steps to take to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress due to effective teaching and exemplary care. In the main, pupils enter the school performing below the national average, but by the time they leave, standards are average. Performance of pupils who have been at the school throughout Key Stage 2 is good, enabling them to reach standards slightly better than the national average. Those joining during Key Stage 2 make good progress, but often from a low starting point, so their final attainment is often below average. Because of the stress placed on improving the general level of attainment for all pupils, the school does not always do all that it could to challenge its most able pupils. There is also a need to address the under achievement of some boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress overall, while their personal development is outstanding. Standards in science are higher than in English and mathematics. The school has implemented fitting strategies to raise standards in English. The recently appointed mathematics coordinator is developing appropriate plans for raising standards in this subject. Pupils with English as an additional language make excellent progress in their acquisition of English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Elements of personal development and well-being are outstanding, for example their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They embody the school's motto, 'PRIDE' and develop an exceptional sense of responsibility, which is strongly encouraged. They lead assemblies, help staff make spending decisions, run their own clubs, work with governors and teachers to review the curriculum and carry out a very wide range of duties. They have even given an extensive presentation about the school to headteachers of other schools. However, attendance is only satisfactory. It is improving gradually because of the efforts of staff to reward good attendance. Pupils express enjoyment of what the school offers, and they know the range of activities is excellent, such as at break times. Behaviour is good overall, improving as pupils grow older and become more self-motivated, a key aim of the school. Pupils make good contributions to the wider community. They love their school grounds and support projects with enthusiasm. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of diet, exercise and sport. They are very proud of the 'Active Mark' the school has just gained. Pupils have a good awareness of matters relating to safety. They know that members of staff, and responsible older pupils, are ready to listen to any concerns they have. Pupils join their secondary schools well prepare academically and personally for the challenges ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers meet pupils' needs effectively in English and mathematics, where groups of pupils with similar attainment and ability work together. This is allowing them to make increasingly good progress. They equally enjoy learning in other subjects, where they work in mixed ability groups. Classrooms are dynamic places and teachers value pupils' work. Relationships are

excellent and pupils are enthusiastic because teachers make work interesting. It is clear to pupils what they are to learn and they are rewarded positively for working hard. Pupils enjoy this approach, working even harder as a result. As they get older they gain maturity and their behaviour is often outstanding. Teachers encourage pupils' enthusiasm by asking questions and pushing them to answer at greater depth. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution and are fully involved in the work of each class. They work particularly effectively with less able groups. Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' progress and standards of work over time. Not enough emphasis is given, however, to the marking of pupils' work so that they know how to improve it from day to day.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The overall quality of the curriculum is good, placing a high emphasis on developing skills in literacy and numeracy, reinforced through regular basic skills lessons. In addition to the normal curriculum the school undertakes projects, visits and theme weeks, adding interest and enjoyment. Computers are used effectively to support teaching and learning across the curriculum, so pupils develop good technical and life skills. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support enabling them to have effective access to the curriculum. An example of excellent practice is the development with the infant school of a single register of gifted and talented pupils. However, currently this has not resulted in consistently high levels of academic challenge for these pupils. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding, with a wide range of sports and clubs, many of which are run by the pupils themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school works very closely with many other agencies, such as social services, which helps pupils make very good progress in social and emotional, as well as academic ways. It helps support the needs of families as well as those of the pupils. The school provides a good nurturing social and learning environment where all pupils' needs are regarded as important. Pupils grow in self-esteem because of the strong relationships between all members of the school. Pupils enjoy the many rewards that the school offers for good behaviour and deeds. The ways in which pupils participate actively in the running of their school is exceptional. They also support and guide each other with maturity. Many become 'super students', which is a valued reward for always doing the right things. Pupils who find learning difficult for a variety of reasons, such as limited concentration in lessons, receive effective individual support from teachers and teaching assistants. The work in the nurture room is excellent. The learning mentor ensures that pupils grow as young people extremely well from their starting points. Pupils have a good range of individual targets to meet. The school has good arrangements for ensuring that pupils are always safe.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership provided by the headteacher and his very effective deputy headteacher is outstanding. They lead the school with vision and dynamism and as a consequence staff and pupils alike can see the continuing development of a good school. Leaders and managers set

a particularly clear direction for the school. Effective delegation of responsibilities allows staff to develop their skills. This is outstanding practice and produces the highest levels of commitment to the school. Recent changes to middle management personnel have seen the introduction of an action plan for mathematics that is already starting to produce positive benefits. This strengthening of leadership and management is addressing what had been identified as an area for development and has started to provide a further strengthening of whole school leadership and management. Governors are well informed and play a full part in the school. Their practice of meeting at lunchtime enables them to work closely alongside staff and pupils. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and most, but not quite all pupils achieve as well as they can. The school provides good value for money.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Park Junior School, Shirebrook, NG20 8JX

I am writing to thank you all for the great help that you gave to Mr Fry, Mr Summers and myself when we visited you recently. We really enjoyed our time with you and you made us feel very welcome. We were very impressed by the extremely good behaviour and politeness shown to us by most of you. You obviously enjoy your school a lot and you like your teachers. It was nice to be in the company of people who get on so well together.

We think that you have an excellent headteacher in Mr Hewitt-Richards, and all your teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to help you do your best work. However, the thing that impressed us most was the way in which you take responsibility and make things happen in school. You think carefully about your responsibilities and those of others. This came through in the assembly that some pupils led while we were at your school. We were very impressed. You are also lucky to have such a good range of sports and clubs, and you make very good use of your lovely grounds.

We are pleased to see how hard you work in lessons. However, there are one or two things that the staff and governors could do to help you do even better work.

- We would like them to work hard to ensure that those of you who join later than Year 3 are able to do just as well in tests as those who start in Year 3 and stay until Year 6.
- We have also asked the school to give the boys who find it hard to do their best all the time some extra support.
- We have asked your teachers to try to make sure that when they mark your work, they help you to know how you could have made it even better.

It is important that you realise how hard the adults in your school are working to help you to succeed. I think most of you do know this, because in return you work hard, produce your best work and show a sensible and mature approach to learning. Well done!

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt Lead inspector