

Parley First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113682
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311334
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cindy Lalani
Headteacher	J Vincent
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Glenmoor Road Ferndown BH22 8QE
Telephone number	01202 874400
Fax number	01202 872036

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and, in doing so, investigated the following issues: the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation; the impact of initiatives to improve pupils' performance in mathematics and reading; and aspects of personal development. Discussions took place with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own views, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average first school. It takes pupils from an area wider than its immediate catchment. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher is in her last term before retirement.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which takes excellent care of its pupils. Pupils and staff are very happy to attend! As well as making outstanding progress, pupils reach standards which are well above average. Staff very successfully encourage pupils' personal as well as academic development and ensure that work is interesting.

Standards continue the five-year trend of being well above average in reading, writing and mathematics in end of Year 2 and Year 4 assessments. Higher attainers, whose performance was criticised in the last report, now do particularly well. A measure of the school's commitment to pursuing excellence is in how staff approach slight variations year on year. For example in 2007, despite the school's performance remaining significantly above average, a very small 'decline' in results of girls in mathematics and boys in reading, triggered substantial analysis and the introduction of initiatives to improve the situation. Although it is too soon to see the full effect of interventions, there are very positive signs. Improvements included more one-to-one and small group work, better resources, and modifications to teaching styles.

For pupils of all abilities, achievement is outstanding. Particularly good progress builds on the excellent start children make in Reception. Throughout the school, pupils lay down a very good foundation for future study. Well above average basic literacy and numeracy skills, coupled with high quality independent learning strategies, mean that pupils are especially well prepared for the next phase of education and life in general. Parents clearly appreciate how well their children are doing. Comments such as, 'We are very pleased with our daughter's confidence and learning skills' are typical, with many parents congratulating the school on their sons' and daughters' progress.

Teaching and support for pupils of all abilities are outstanding and are fundamental to the excellent quality of pupils' learning and outstanding personal development. Planning takes into account what pupils know and can already do, and the curriculum on offer is tailored to challenge all pupils at their appropriate level. Excellent questioning, use of teaching assistants, and classroom management are all features of very successful teaching. Assessment information is used very effectively to produce improvements. The newly-introduced system, designed to show pupils the steps they are making against the learning objectives for each lesson, is helping pupils to gauge how well they are doing. Extending this to make pupils more aware of their individual targets already features in the school development plan as part of a programme known as 'assessment for learning'. Pupils are being given more responsibility for monitoring their own performance and being shown what they can aspire to, but this is not fully embedded in all classes.

Excellent relationships mean that pupils know whom to turn to if they have a problem. A small minority of parents have concerns about the possibility of bullying. The school has very good procedures to deal with any incidences and has introduced a selection of initiatives in its personal, social and health education to reassure pupils. School councillors, who obviously take their responsibilities very seriously, told the inspector problems were 'very quickly sorted out'. Notwithstanding a very few pupils who could, and sometimes do, misbehave, behaviour of the vast majority is outstanding. This is a prime example of pupils' outstanding personal development and excellent response to what is on offer at the school. Pupils are acutely aware of right and wrong and show considerable maturity in being prepared to work with those they might not normally have chosen. Spiritual and cultural development is good. Moral and social development

is one of the school's great strengths and pupils' awareness of how to stay safe, keep fit and develop healthy lifestyles is central to the school's very positive ethos. The Healthy School and Activemark awards are testaments to Parley's success. 'Wake and shake', involving staff as well as pupils, was a real treat to watch!

The school's success is underpinned by good links with parents and the community, and the high quality of leadership and management. The headteacher leads an enthusiastic team of staff and governors and ensures that the school has clear educational direction. There is plenty of evidence that all decisions taken are evaluated in terms of the impact they have on pupils' learning. Governance is outstanding. Governors make sure they are fully informed and are not afraid to take the initiative, as well as challenge the headteacher and teachers as 'critical friends'. The headteacher is particularly well supported by the senior leadership team who are in an excellent position to ensure stability and continuity during the changeover to a new headteacher. Staff play a full part in creating and monitoring the school development and improvement plan. Their contribution to school management is very good. School self-evaluation is effective in establishing strengths and areas for further development. Orally, and in the body of the school's self-evaluation form, headteacher, staff and governors are adamant that this is an outstanding school. (A view which both the local authority and the school's improvement partner support.) However, the school has been too cautious in grading its own performance. This does not appear to be a case of false modesty, rather it reinforces the school's high level of commitment to being even better. It shows a misinterpretation of the judgement of 'outstanding' as being 'perfect'. Rather than being a fault, this gives weight to the school's excellent capacity for further improvement

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make a particularly good start in Reception because they are very well cared for and supported. Provision is outstanding. Relationships are excellent and children respond extremely positively, behaving very well, and being prepared to 'have a go'. Outstanding teaching from teachers and their assistants makes sure that children of all abilities fulfil their potential. There is a very strong commitment to all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum, learning through play and first-hand experience. Children lap this up in and out of the classroom, and have fun in doing so. By the end of Reception, children reach, and frequently exceed, what is expected, especially in knowledge and understanding of the world and mathematical development.

Although some lack communication, language and literacy skills when they first join the school, all are emerging as readers and writers by the time they enter Year 1. Children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Turn-taking, being considerate, sharing, and showing independence are very strong features. These lay an excellent basis for future study and underpin the school's excellent ethos.

What the school should do to improve further

Extend the good individual target-setting model, which is already being successfully trialled as part of the school's 'assessment for learning' programme, to help show pupils how they can do even better.

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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?	1
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
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	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parley First School, Ferndown BH22 8QE

Thank you for making my visit so enjoyable. I was especially impressed by the way the school councillors represented Parley First and the way children throughout the school were eager to answer my questions. Yours is what is known as an outstanding school. This means it 'stands out' as better than most others and gives you an excellent start to school life. I am not at all surprised that you like school! There are many things to be proud of.

Here are some of the highlights.

- ?
- You reach standards which are much higher than in most schools and make outstanding progress. ?
- Despite a few children who sometimes misbehave, your behaviour is still good enough to be judged as excellent. The way you are being helped to grow up as such caring and sensible young people is a credit to the school. ?
- You are particularly well taught. Teachers and their assistants take excellent care of you. They set work which is just right for you and do their best to make it enjoyable.

The headteacher, staff and governors run the school especially well. They make an excellent team and are always thinking of ways to make this very successful school even more successful. You have all seen their latest idea which shows you what the 'Steps for success' are. This system is working very well and I have asked teachers to extend it by making your own targets even clearer. This will help you to see what you can do to make your work even better.

I wish you all the best for the future!

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart Lead inspector

24 April 2008



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