

Parsons Heath Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115088
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311824
Inspection dates	9–10 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	187
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amanda Wright
Headteacher	Mrs Sheena Clover
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Templewood Road Colchester Essex CO4 3EZ
Telephone number	01206 860612
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. A Reception class provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is broadly average, although pupils come from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds. Only a few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or or disabilities is broadly average, although the percentage having a statement of special educational need is higher than usually found. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parsons Heath is a good school in which the well-being and progress of each pupil are at the heart of its work. Some aspects of provision are outstanding. Provision for children in the EYFS is good. Pupils, including those who sometimes have trouble with learning, and those with particular talents, achieve well. Standards by the time they leave are above average. This is because teaching and learning are good and the school benefits greatly from the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher. The school works very effectively to ensure that pupils from different backgrounds and cultures get along well together and achieve well. One parent, reflecting the views of many said, 'This is a shining example of how a school should be run.'

Whilst teaching and progress are good overall, there are occasions when the rate of progress during lessons diminishes slightly and the pace of learning slackens. This tends to occur when planning does not fully consider the learning needs of the whole range of abilities in each class. Even so, the majority of teaching captures pupils' enthusiasm and the rate of progress is often outstanding. At such times, the focus on pupils' individual learning needs is excellent. This is partly due to the exceptionally supportive relationships that exist between adults and pupils. In turn, this helps to ensure that personal development and well-being, including pupils' behaviour are outstanding. Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. They feel safe and secure and one pupil was exactly right when he said, 'Everyone's really friendly, including the teachers and no one's a bully'. An interesting and stimulating curriculum, which includes the teaching of Spanish to all pupils, contributes well to their enthusiasm for learning. Pupils also speak glowingly about the enjoyable range of additional activities provided for them.

Parents hold the school in high regard and are supportive of its work and of their children's learning. The school has worked effectively to address the issues for improvement from the last inspection, especially the challenge to improve standards in science. Its capacity for continued improvement is good. The headteacher, staff and governors all make a positive contribution to the school's good leadership and management, which is the key feature on which the school's current success is based.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From a starting point broadly in line with the level expected for their age, children in the reception class make generally good progress. They enter with a range of experiences and skills and are eager to start school with their friends. The welfare of the children is a clear priority, particularly at the beginning of the school year. The majority settle well because of the high level of personal care and guidance shown by the staff. There are excellent opportunities to get to know and become friends with older pupils. These features enable children to feel secure, including at play during busy lunchtimes. They rapidly grow in confidence and make good progress in their personal development. Children often have good social skills and chat happily to their friends using a vocabulary that is typical of their age. Teaching and learning are effective. Leadership and management are good. Newly appointed staff have worked hard to plan an appropriate curriculum based on new EYFS guidance. Even so, at times, children move around activities without benefiting from sufficient adult guidance to make the most of what is available.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson planning fully recognises the learning needs of the whole range of abilities in each class.
- Share the existing outstanding practice to ensure that all teaching matches the quality of the best and eliminate times when the rate of progress in lessons diminishes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils in some years are making exceptional progress, especially those currently in Year 6. Overall progress in years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, becoming increasingly rapid towards the end of the Key Stage. The most recently available data for the end of Year 2 show pupils attaining broadly average standards in reading and mathematics. However, because teachers have focused very successfully on developing pupils' writing and especially that of boys, standards are above average. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress, which accelerates in years 5 and 6. A strong emphasis has been placed on raising standards in science. These have improved significantly in recent years and are now broadly average. The most recent national assessment information, whilst still unvalidated, shows that standards in English and mathematics are above average. As with Key Stage 1, improvements in English have also been significant, a trend which the school is on course to maintain in the future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy their time at school and several say there is little or nothing that they would change. They are enthusiastic learners. They listen well in lessons and try hard with their work. Behaviour is usually excellent and pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe, including during very active playtimes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. This reflects the headteacher's total commitment to encouraging pupils to be part of the world community. This is seen in numerous activities, including persuasive writing about which charities to support. Such activities extend the opportunities for pupils to take on roles and responsibilities within the school and wider community. They particularly benefit from being part of a 'Buddy Group', where a pupil from each year works with others on a range of projects throughout their time in school. This feeds into the School Council which decides how to spend a budget to benefit the whole school community, which in turn helps them prepare well for their future. Pupils understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle, although packed lunches do not always reflect such awareness. Attendance is above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Some outstanding practice was seen in several classes. Here, expectations of what the pupils can achieve are particularly high. Teachers are enthusiastic and make activities interesting. Consequently, pupils invariably try hard with their work. For example, during a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were inspired by the work of the poet Penelope Shuttle and produced some excellent poems reflecting her style. Teaching and support assistants, including mid-day staff, have excellent relationships with pupils. Staff manage behaviour well,

even for the small minority of pupils who occasionally struggle to maintain this. The planning of activities is generally good. Most teachers plan linked activities for pupils of different abilities which enable them to learn well. However, at times, the planning of activities for younger pupils is not as effective in identifying exactly what they are to learn. The pace of most lessons is good, although, where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, pupils remain inactive for too long, resulting in a loss of concentration or in approaching activities without sufficient purpose.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and there are particular strengths in how the school enriches pupils' cultural development. A wide range of activities is successful in stimulating interest in the arts and the world beyond the local environment. This includes pupils' working with artists in residence, resulting in some outstanding work widely displayed around the school. Staff have recently worked hard to address weaknesses in writing and science. Improvements made to planning and the use of resources, particularly to motivate boys have led this year to a rise in standards. There are after-school sports clubs for older pupils, which support the physical education curriculum. There is also a club, operating before the start of school, which helps to improve the co-ordination of pupils who have additional needs. A recent focus on linking pupils' work in different subjects has improved the curriculum. It provides pupils with good opportunities to apply skills acquired in subjects such as English and information and communication technology to other aspects of their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is outstanding. All pupils are valued for what they can do, resulting in their liking school and feeling happy and safe. Pupils who have additional learning needs are supported exceptionally well. The 'Buddy Group' system is particularly effective in enabling younger pupils to get to know a group of older ones and helps them to feel that their ideas are listened to. All staff support pupils very well, which is particularly effective for the youngest children at lunchtimes when they start school full time. The school has good systems to check the adults who work and help in school and staff act promptly to update such information. Child protection procedures are effective. Careful attention is paid to the management of the school site, which is very attractive, well maintained and secure. Assessment systems are good. Targets for improvement, including those for writing and mathematics are displayed in classrooms and in each pupil's book to remind them of where they need to improve. Staff check and track progress carefully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. An experienced and skilful senior leadership team, all of whose members fulfil their duties well, supports her vision for the development of the school. Subject leaders also play an effective part in supporting their colleagues in the continued effort to raise standards and improve progress. For example, they have successfully led the rise in standards in English and science. Arrangements for the school to evaluate its performance, respond to any shortcomings and set challenging targets are also good and always have what is best for pupils at their heart. In addition to the staff, governors

play a full part in the life of the school and in planning for improvement. The headteacher correctly describes them and especially the chair and vice-chair, as 'dynamic'. For example, governors have undertaken a 'pupils' voice' session when they discussed with pupils the impact on their learning of newly introduced assessment arrangements. Another governor has played a central role in promoting a new approach to evaluating the success of the priorities listed in the school improvement plan. Governors are also regular visitors to school. They manage the available resources wisely and help to ensure that the school is an effective partner in the community it serves.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 September 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Parsons Heath Primary School

When my colleague and I visited your school, we were delighted to hear how much you enjoy your education. We heard from you and your parents and carers that you think your school is a good one. We totally agree with you.

Your headteacher does an excellent job in making sure that all the adults can work to the best of their ability and, in turn, help you to do the same. For your part, we were very impressed by how hard you work and some of you are making remarkable progress. We were very impressed with the way in which pupils of different ages work together so well and the way in which older pupils care for the younger ones. It was also good to hear that you feel safe in school and that you appreciate all the hard work that the adults do on your behalf.

The members of your governing body also work very hard to make sure your school is successful. To help with further improvements we are asking the adults to work on a couple of things that we feel will make your school even better. Some of the teaching we saw was outstanding. We are asking teachers to share that practice to make sure the pace of your learning is always as fast as it needs to be in every class. We are also asking your teachers to look very closely at how they plan their lessons to make sure you always have work that is exactly right for you.

Thank you for all your help during the inspection. I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector