

Park Gate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116033
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312154
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Beryl Richmond

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jonathan Rainger
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Kingsland
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2004
School address	Northmore Road Park Gate Southampton SO31 6LX
Telephone number	01489 575444
Fax number	01489 573811

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Park Gate is a large oversubscribed school. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Their needs include dyslexia, significant delay, moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs, speech, language and communication difficulties and physical disabilities. A deputy headteacher has been appointed to start in September 2008 to fill the current vacancy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Park Gate is a good and improving school. The Foundation Stage, curriculum provision, personal development and well-being of pupils and their care are outstanding. An excellent shared ethos for pupils to develop as well rounded individuals who take responsibility for their learning and behaviour, known as the 'Park Gate Way' permeates the school's work. Pupils enjoy their education. Their understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and their behaviour are outstanding. Attendance is excellent. Parents value the school's work and the staff's friendly and open approach. Exceptional links with a wide range of organisations have an important impact on pupils' personal development and well-being.

The headteacher is very well respected by pupils, parents, staff and governors and has correctly identified the strengths and areas for improvement. Her strong vision and excellent leadership, ably supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff team and an effective governing body, is driving the school forward by focusing robustly on raising achievement and standards whilst also promoting excellent personal development. Parents appreciate that the headteacher knows pupils well and typically say that she is 'an excellent Head and is always very approachable and fair'. The school is improving rapidly. Although monitoring is generally good, middle managers do not have enough opportunities to observe teaching and learning in lessons to give them a complete picture of strengths and weaknesses in their area of responsibility.

Children get off to a flying start, from expected starting points, in Reception and their progress is excellent in Year 1 because the curriculum has been revised to make it more challenging. These improved rates of progress mean further revision of the curriculum in other year groups to raise expectations further.

By the end of Year 2 in 2007, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average. Standards have improved this year, particularly in reading and mathematics, where they are above average, and overall pupils have made good progress. By the end of Year 6, in 2007, standards overall were above average and progress was good in English and science. Achievement and standards have improved this year. Mathematics achievement and standards are in line with English because of a strong focus on practical problem solving and investigation and opportunities to practise skills in other subjects. Pupils have achieved particularly well in science, where three quarters of the year group are achieving at the higher level because science is made real for them with good links to other subjects.

Tracking of pupils' progress is rigorous and pupils who need help with their work are identified promptly. Good targeted support by well trained staff, ensures that pupils who need help with their learning or dealing with their emotions and behaviour, are fully included in school life. Although some pupils have good opportunities to evaluate their work, this practice is not consistent throughout the school.

The curriculum provides exciting opportunities for collaborative learning and decision making. Linking subjects together in themes makes learning stimulating, appealing and practical. Learning about rights, respect and responsibility is integral to the school's work and adults are good role models. For example, older pupils are given challenging questions like 'Was it fair that Henry VIII divorced Catherine of Aragon?' as part of their history work. There is an orchestra, supported by pupils from the secondary school and the choir recently performed with other schools at a local theatre.

The school is not complacent, has plans in hand to remedy any relative weaknesses and has improved since the previous inspection because of a commitment to rigorous self-evaluation and a relentless drive for improvement. This track record indicates a good capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an excellent start to school and achieve very well, in spite of the physical limitations of their small classrooms, from starting points in line with those expected for children of this age. They settle happily because of effective links with pre-schools and parents and because of a strong nurturing environment. Good parental relationships are maintained through school visits and workshops. The Foundation Stage is managed very well. Adults work together as an effective team, provide good routines and have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Consequently children make excellent progress, particularly as independent learners and in language and mathematical development, where standards are above average. Excellent use is made of assessment to provide children with further support if necessary. Good use is made of the outdoor area but opportunities are limited to extend their learning outside, as there is no external cover.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all pupils have regular opportunities to evaluate their learning.
- Develop the lesson observation skills of middle managers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously so that any underachievement is identified and addressed promptly. Pupils are on track to exceed their challenging targets in Year 6 this year and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement in science is exceptional. Pupils in Year 1 have built very effectively on their excellent start in Reception and consequently standards are above average, particularly in reading. Pupils have made good progress in Year 2 and standards have improved but writing standards are still broadly average, whilst reading and mathematics standards are above average. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils because appropriate resources and support are provided and work is usually planned well to meet pupils' needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Through carefully thought out assemblies and specific projects such as the one based on Chris Ofili's work 'No Woman No Cry' for 'Take One Picture Week', pupils are developing a deeper understanding of feelings and emotions and how to deal with them. Relationships are excellent; pupils are kind, courteous and self confident. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to the well-ordered lessons and the general atmosphere of the school. The school has worked hard to maintain the excellent attendance rate. Pupils are very active, contribute to the life of the school and the local community by being play leaders, and older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils. The school council has initiated changes to the lunchtime arrangements, introduced fruit at break times and kept parents informed by letter. Pupils are involved in fund

raising for charities, have links with children from Chernobyl and take part in local initiatives such as the Southampton Civic Awards. The school participates in a local university programme to raise pupils' aspirations. Their good achievement in basic skills together with their excellent interpersonal skills prepare them exceptionally well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Work is usually matched well to pupils' needs so that they make good progress. Most teaching is lively and effective use of interactive white boards makes learning exciting. This was seen in mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2, where pupils were solving problems using algebra and also where they were entering their own data from an investigation into whether people with larger feet can jump further. Pupils make good progress because teachers have good subject knowledge. Marking often provides good help to pupils in reaching the next steps in their learning, but this is not consistent. There are some missed opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning to evaluate their work. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to ensure that pupils who need extra help quickly receive it. As one parent commented, 'My son needed help with his reading and (his assistant) has been fantastic and very supportive.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There is an exceptionally interesting and enjoyable range of activities, for example, visits to Hampton Court, visits from theatre groups and African drummers and a wide range of well attended extra-curricular activities including sport. An outstanding personal development and social skills programme leads to excellent outcomes. Subjects are linked together creatively in themes like Victorian Seaside and Ancient Greece, to make learning real. Independent learning skills are prioritised. Strong links with the local secondary school enhance the curriculum, particularly in French and music. Provision for and the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and more able pupils is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Excellent pastoral care results in pupils feeling safe and happy at school. Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Specific projects like 'Confident Parents, Confident Kids' involve parents effectively in their children's learning. Outstanding support is offered to pupils and families who are experiencing personal difficulties. Procedures to monitor pupils' progress are rigorous. The school has reviewed its target setting process to provide more relevant and meaningful procedures to involve pupils more effectively in their learning. There are good examples of this, for example, where pupils have evaluated their topic work. There are also missed opportunities, for example, at the end of a lesson when pupils could have been asked to evaluate their own or a friend's work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School leaders have used their good self-evaluation to accurately identify the school's key improvement areas and have produced good plans to tackle them. For example, the excellent impact of leaders' work in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 can be seen in much improved standards and achievement. Leaders use performance management well to identify staff training needs and the recent track record of improvements shows the school has a good capacity to improve further. The governing body is a good 'critical friend' and very supportive of the school. The school regularly surveys parents for their views in order to improve the school further.

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

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	2
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	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

21 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Gate Primary School, Southampton, SO31 6LX

Thank you very much for helping us during the inspection, particularly by talking to us about your school and all the opportunities that it offers you. We were particularly impressed by your friendliness and politeness. We think that your school is good and that some aspects of your school are excellent.

These are the things that we thought were particularly strong in your school.

- Your enjoyment of school and attendance are excellent.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you have very good attitudes to your work.
- Your school offers you a wide range of exciting opportunities to learn because it has excellent links with many other organisations. In particular, the curriculum offers exceptional opportunities for you to develop into well-rounded people.
- You are learning well. Your classrooms are pleasant places to learn in and you have excellent relationships with adults in school.
- Adults take very good care of you and ensure that if you need help, it is provided. You know whom to talk to if you are worried about anything.
- You understand very well about staying healthy and keeping safe. You contribute very well to your school community by taking on responsibility for jobs and also to the wider community, for example, by fund raising.
- Your headteacher leads your school exceptionally well and all the adults at your school are working together as a team to do their best to provide you with a good education.
- Children get off to a flying start with their education in Reception and Year 1.

We have asked your school to ensure that all of you have opportunities to make judgements about how successful you have been in your work. This will help you to set your own targets for improvement and help you develop as people who enjoy learning and who always want to do their best as they go through life. We have also asked the school to give teachers opportunities to develop their leadership skills further.

I would like to send you my best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Beryl Richmond

Lead Inspector