

# Park Way Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118302
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	312877
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Davies

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Baker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Dhanecha
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Park Way Maidstone ME15 7AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 753651
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 682878

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Park Way is similar in size to most other primary schools. The number of pupils attending the school has fluctuated over the last few years, and this movement has contributed to changes in staffing levels. The complement of staff is now largely stable, with a new deputy headteacher joining the school this April. Recently, more pupils have come from other schools. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds has also increased – these form a very small minority and most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year, but is generally below the expected level.

When the school was inspected last it was found to be in need of significant improvement and given a Notice to Improve. The school was subsequently visited by HMI in June 2007 and was found to have made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues in need of improvement outlined in its previous inspection report.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Park Way's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. There has been much improvement since its last inspection, such that its curriculum and care are now strong features. Even where the school was already successful within pupils' personal development, things have moved on. Attendance has risen, for instance, to broadly average levels because of the school's robust action. Its considerable support for individual pupils experiencing difficulty or with challenging behaviour helps to build a positive foundation for their academic activities. Indeed, pupils work with much industry and interest in lessons. These factors make an important contribution to their progress. An improving academic picture was evident in better national test results in 2007, and achievement is now satisfactory from Reception onwards. This improvement has yet to have a full impact on standards. These are below average in English, mathematics and science, largely because too few pupils reach the higher levels. During lessons, progress is often good, but not yet consistently so. Sometimes the pace of teaching is too slow or activities need a sharper edge of challenge to push pupils that bit further, particularly those who are more able.

Key to the school's improvement is the clear and accurate direction from senior staff. Two conspicuous features of its good leadership are the extensive liaison amongst staff and rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress. The comprehensive exchange of information across all levels successfully brings together support for pupils' pastoral and academic needs and allows for well targeted intervention to help those with learning difficulties or in danger of falling behind. Teaching is monitored substantially and the school has seen its quality rise over the last two years. Subject leadership already makes a valuable contribution. Nevertheless, some subject leaders have more scope than others to use their expertise to the full to influence and improve the school's performance.

The school is keen to meet the needs of its pupils. Its popular extra-curricular activities and links with local educational facilities, all successfully enrich pupils' experience, as do its use of other services to extend awareness of health and safety. Closely focused learning targets for English and mathematics give a firm steer to teaching in these subjects, so that pupils are now gradually developing a solid basis of academic skills for use in later life. Writing is still proving a harder nut to crack than reading and mathematics, but staff take time to prepare pupils well for writing tasks, and this is paying off. Nevertheless, the school is aware that more could be made of opportunities for writing within other subjects to give this subject a further boost.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Reception is poised for further development with the appointment of new leadership. Children settle in well. Routines at snack time are well known and children enjoy quietly eating their fruit. All listen with interest to others talking about their work. Teachers and support staff work as a team, seamlessly exchanging responsibilities. Their sensitive support is particularly effective with those children who are especially demanding – using an unobtrusive chat and a purposeful task to good effect.

Progress is satisfactory and, in some cases, children progress well. For example, the school's data shows good progress in mathematical calculation. Progress is also good in some lessons.

The use of real coins, and focused teaching in small groups, ensure children's growing confidence with the use of money and its value. Standards move on appropriately, but are still largely below expectations by the end of Reception.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase pace and challenge in lessons to ensure that teaching is always good, and raise standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly at the higher levels.
- Make full use of opportunities in all subjects for pupils to write.
- Ensure that all subject leaders can make full use of their expertise to influence and improve the school's performance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Indications that the school's hard work was paying off were evident in the improvement to last summer's national tests. These results pointed to significantly better progress than the previous year. All groups now achieve satisfactorily, including pupils with learning difficulties, those new to the school, and those learning to speak English as an additional language. During lessons progress is frequently good, but not yet consistent enough to lift achievement further. It is also too early for improvements to have had a full impact on standards, which are below average in the current Years 2 and 6. The school is already focusing on its more able pupils to secure a greater proportion reaching the higher Levels 3 and 5. The school's assessment information indicates that more pupils are on track to reach Level 3 in the current Year 2; a greater proportion are also targeted to reach Level 5 in mathematics at Year 6.

Pupils are benefiting from the concerted promotion of English and mathematics, although writing still lags a little behind. Progress in science is satisfactory, but this subject has not improved to the same degree as literacy and numeracy because it has not received the same close attention. The school is now tackling this issue through a greater focus on scientific investigation.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say that they are proud to come to Park Way and can think of little that would make it better. Their ready enjoyment of school life is illustrated in the high take up of extra-curricular activities – some even have waiting lists – and their hard work during lessons. Much participation in sport shows that pupils are well aware of the benefits of being active, and many enjoy the healthy school lunches.

Although pupils report the occasional case of poor behaviour, they also say that this is not usual. Indeed, their good behaviour ensures lessons are always productive. They work well in groups and help each other out when they are stuck. Activities at playtimes can be boisterous, but are undertaken safely and sensibly. Trained pupil 'mediators' are on hand to sort out any problems. These pupils take their responsibilities very seriously, even when it means leaving a game of football to help someone out! The school council meets every month and has done much to improve resources for outdoor activities. Pupils' strong personal skills are valuable

assets for the future, whilst improving skills in literacy and numeracy provide a sound basis for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is never less than satisfactory. In fact, it is often good. The use of precise graduated learning targets gives teaching a clear path that is successfully building pupils' knowledge and skills. In most cases, pupils can explain not only their task, but also what they are learning and how they are going about it. Teachers and teaching assistants provide a strong team and there is well focused support for small groups.

It is clear from pupils' interest and attention that activities are pitched about right. Nevertheless, opportunities are sometimes missed to push pupils on that bit further. For example, questions are not always varied for different ability groups and, sometimes, higher attainers could have more demanding tasks to start off with, rather than something else to do when they have finished. There are also times when the pace of teaching slows, for example when explanations have not been clear enough so that pupils become confused.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' ready interest and participation celebrate a wide curriculum that is relevant and enriching. Pupils think all the many clubs are 'great!' and name football, gardening and science amongst those they particularly enjoy. French lessons are also on offer from Year 2 onwards. Strong links with local facilities – including the police service and the town's museum and library – successfully widen pupils' experience. Close partnerships with other schools give pupils additional science and technology and allow them to take part in sporting and musical activities with others. The comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education includes an innovative scheme offered by the local army barracks to introduce pupils to the dangers of drugs.

Intensive support for English and mathematics means that pupils are developing an increasingly confident range of key knowledge and skills. Provision for information and communication technology has been greatly extended. The next planned step is to establish links between subjects. As a result, the school is not yet able to make the most of other subjects to widen writing opportunities.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral and academic care is carefully tailored to meet the school's particular challenges. It is not surprising, therefore, that the pupils say they feel safe and happy. Rigorous and frequent assessment is at the heart of the school's support. Rapid intervention draws effectively on internal resources and strong external links to ensure that individual needs are met, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support for those with poor attendance or with challenging behaviour is extensive and helps these pupils to gain from their education as others do.

Careful induction programmes ensure that all who are new to Reception and other year groups quickly feel at home. A 'buddy' system for new arrivals is one important feature of this support, as is access to translators for those who speak little or no English. Risk assessment and safeguarding procedures are thorough.

Pupils are well aware of learning targets. Regular marking and comment give pupils helpful information about their progress and, sometimes, guidance on how they could improve their work further.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Strong leadership from senior staff has been key to the school's good improvement and common sense of purpose. Communication is extensive, particularly when evaluating pupils' progress and deciding what to do next. Teaching assistants report a much more focused academic role and know their evaluations are valued and acted on. Regular monitoring ensures the school has an accurate grasp of its overall effectiveness and a clear idea of where it is going. Its success so far points to good capacity for the future.

The large majority of parents are pleased with the school. A small minority expressed concern about communication, but evidence shows that the school takes this contact very seriously, does much to reach out to its families, and acts on their concerns.

Subject leaders already play an important role in school improvement. Action plans give careful attention to outcomes and impact. Nevertheless, not all subject leaders have the same degree of opportunity as others to check and influence development. Governor focus groups ensure the governing body is well informed and, therefore, able to act as a valued critical friend. Governors have taken a prudent approach to financial management so that the school can weather the challenges of its fluctuating pupil numbers.





## 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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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	3
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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Way Primary, Maidstone, Kent ME15 7AH

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us so welcome. Last time your school was inspected it was found to need a lot of improvement. This is not now the case. Staff have worked hard to make the school better and, although there are still things to do, the school now does a satisfactory job. We were pleased to hear that you are proud of your school. Indeed, your good behaviour and hard work in lessons help to increase your progress, so that your achievement is now satisfactory.

Here are some other important things we found out.

- You look after each other well – even if this means leaving a game of football to help someone out!
- Standards have improved, although these still need to be higher so that you can make the very best of your future.
- Attendance has got better too, and this helps those of you with poorer attendance to get more from school life.
- You like all the different activities and many clubs you have at school and these widen your experience and make learning interesting.
- All the staff take good care of you and check your progress very carefully.

Here are some things we have asked the school to do to make things even better.

- Ensure that teaching is always good and that your lessons challenge all of you to do your very best all the time.
- Make sure that you have lots more opportunities to practice your writing in other subjects.
- Ensure that the staff who look after each subject have every chance to make these subjects better.

With very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead inspector

31 January 2008

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Lead inspector