

Park Junior School, Wellingborough

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121870
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314124
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vimal Savani / Heather Saunders
Headteacher	Lynette Mura
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2004
School address	Great Park Street Wellingborough NN8 4PH
Telephone number	01933 224501
Fax number	01933 277976

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Park Junior is an average size primary school. About two thirds of the pupils are from a White British background. The remainder are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. A significant number of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well above average. The nature of these include moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and autistic difficulties. The school has a small eight place unit for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Park Junior is a satisfactory school. There are good features to its work. Effective care, guidance and support and a positive school atmosphere lead to good personal development and well-being for pupils. The school has taken effective action to rectify underachievement and pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. Teaching is satisfactory and there are signs that this is improving.

Most parents are pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Typical parental comments include, 'Friendly atmosphere', 'My child enjoys school, particularly the extra-curricular activities' and 'Staff are approachable'. However, a significant minority who returned the questionnaire have concerns about their children's progress. The school is working hard to improve this, and it is now satisfactory.

With her staff, the headteacher has created a positive climate for pupils to learn and staff to work. Leadership and management are successfully promoting good personal development. The impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement and on teaching is as yet satisfactory. Nevertheless, the school evaluates its performance well. It has used the findings to bring about the rapid improvements that were needed over the last year, particularly in reading, mathematics and science, after a decline in 2007. Teamwork among the staff is strong and there is a clear commitment to making the school even better. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

The 2007 national test results for Year 6 were below average. National comparative data indicated that pupils did not make enough progress in English, and their progress in mathematics and science was only just satisfactory. The school has taken effective action to rectify this situation. Pupils now have more opportunities for investigative and problem-solving work in mathematics and science. Initiatives to improve English have been more successful in reading than in writing. While the school has increased the range of writing provided, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities for extended writing or to apply and develop writing skills in other subjects. Standards in the current Year 6 are below average in English but closer to average in mathematics and science. Pupils at an early stage of learning English receive well-targeted support and make good gains.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Across the school, teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. The purpose of lessons is made clear. There are a number of examples of good teaching. In these lessons, pupils are challenged well because tasks are well matched to their needs and learning maintains a brisk pace. However, this good practice is not consistent in all classes. Occasionally, challenge and pace are not high enough and learning slows. There are also inconsistencies in pupils' presentation and the amount of work they produce. Pupils enjoy the good range of additional activities provided, including clubs, visits and visitors.

Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected by their keen participation in activities and their above average attendance. They are friendly, polite and supportive. Pupils work collaboratively in lessons and play together well in the playground. Clear expectations by staff and good relationships lead to good pupil behaviour. The few pupils with challenging behaviour are well managed by staff. Pupils in the unit receive good care and support. Pupils adopt good healthy lifestyles and are well aware of how to keep themselves safe. They make good contributions to the school and wider community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in writing, by providing more opportunities for extended writing and for pupils to apply and develop skills in other subjects.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching, ensuring that all lessons are suitably challenging for pupils and that learning maintains a brisk pace.
- Improve pupils' presentation of written work and increase the amount they are expected to produce.

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

National test results for Year 6 in 2007 were below average in English, mathematics and science. These results were lower than the broadly average results of previous years. In 2007, pupils' progress through the school was inadequate in English and barely satisfactory in mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory because of the action taken by the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make sound progress, similar to that of their peers. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress thanks to well-focused support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and show enthusiasm for school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils behave well and the few with challenging behaviour are well managed by staff. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. They thrive on additional responsibilities. Those on the school council have contributed to improvements to playground equipment and games. They also promote eco-friendly activities such as recycling materials and saving energy. Pupils contribute well to the wider community by raising funds for well-known charities. At Park Junior, pupils are adequately prepared for their next school and later life. By the time they leave, they have well-developed personal and social skills and possess sound literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have established good relationships with their class. They make the purpose of the lesson clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and effective questioning. When teachers use assessment information effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are challenged well and they make good gains in their learning. In a few lessons, pupils are not suitably challenged and find the work either too hard or too easy. The lack of guidance on how pupils should present work results in some untidy presentation. Teaching assistants are effectively

deployed and contribute well to learning, particularly for pupils who find learning difficult or need support with their behaviour. Marking provides praise and encouragement for good work. However, clear comments to help pupils improve are less consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well and enables them to make satisfactory academic progress. The school is increasing writing opportunities. However, there is scope to increase these further, particularly across the curriculum. Leaders of mathematics and science have introduced more investigative and problem-solving work in their subjects and this has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. A good range of additional activities contribute to pupils' enjoyment and interests. Popular clubs include chess, cricket, football, basketball and table tennis. Pupils have good opportunities to learn a musical instrument. There are successful residential visits for Year 4 and Year 6 to outdoor centres in Northampton and Norfolk respectively. These provide new and interesting activities which build pupils' confidence and team skills. Healthy lifestyles and personal safety education are promoted well across the curriculum. There have been good improvements to the accommodation, including the addition of a family room.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Strong pastoral care and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. Good induction arrangements and the school's welcoming ethos enable new pupils to settle quickly. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are effective. The school works hard to monitor and promote attendance and this contributes to the good attendance levels. It responds well to the needs of pupils at an early stage of learning English. Pupils with behavioural difficulties, including those in the unit, are well managed and supported. Good systems to assess and monitor pupils' attainment have been established. Pupils have individual learning targets in English, mathematics and science so most know what they need to do to improve. However, these targets are not always phrased in language that pupils easily understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has been through some challenging times in the past few years with building improvements and senior staff absence. There has been some decline in standards over this period, but the senior leadership team is now more settled and roles and responsibilities are effectively shared.

School self-evaluation is now rigorous, reflecting tight monitoring and focused analysis, and it enables the school to identify its strengths and what is needed to improve very accurately. The school is focused on raising achievement and improving teaching. Though it may find the number of areas identified for improvement in the current improvement plan challenging, it has the structures in place to make further rapid impact. For example, the quality of teaching has risen because of effective training and the professional dialogue about good teaching among the staff. Leaders are aware that further improvements are needed before teaching and pupils' achievement are consistently good.

The governors are supportive and are actively involved in the work of the school. They are now providing greater challenge about pupils' progress and teaching. Questionnaire returns indicated that a few parents do not feel that the school takes sufficient account of their concerns. The school acknowledges that it could strengthen the partnership with some of its parents.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
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	3
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

9 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Junior School, Wellingborough NN8 4PH

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. Yours is a satisfactory school. It has good features. The school has made some good improvements recently.

These are the strengths of the school.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- Your school is a friendly, caring and pleasant place to be.
- Most of you are now making better progress.
- Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- You enjoy the good range of additional learning activities.
- You show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- Staff take good care of you and give you good support.

- There are three things that we have asked the school to do to make it even better.
- Some of you could make more progress, particularly in writing.
- Sometimes your teachers could challenge you more and ensure that lessons move on at a quicker pace.
- The presentation of your written work could be improved and some of you could produce more.

You can help the improvements to continue by keeping up your good behaviour and by working hard, particularly on your writing and presentation of work. Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector

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