

Park Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124029
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314784
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ronald Cope
Headteacher	Sandra Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Carberry Way Weston Coyney Stoke-on-Trent ST3 5QU
Telephone number	01782 312384
Fax number	01782 312384

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2007
Inspection number	314784

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school has seen significant changes in leadership, including at governor level, in the past two years. The deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher since April 2007, covering the headteacher's maternity leave. Children's skills on entry to the school are below the levels expected for their age, particularly so in mathematical development. The school has few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. It has recently admitted a small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Children get off to a really good start in the Foundation Stage. They make excellent progress because provision is outstanding in that age group. The school has successfully extended elements of that provision into Years 1 and 2. Therefore, pupils make good progress in that age group and standards are above average in Year 2. The school has taken positive steps towards improving provision in Years 3 to 6. However, although satisfactory, the quality of teaching is more variable here, resulting in the pace of learning being slower. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Because of pupils' underdeveloped data-handling, problem-solving and investigative skills there has been a decline in standards in mathematics and science in recent years at Key Stage 2. The school is beginning to tackle these weaknesses and there is evidence that standards are getting better, although they are only average by the end of Year 6. The over use of mundane worksheets in some classes adds to the issue in science. It also limits the opportunities pupils have to consolidate and extend their writing skills by writing at length in different subjects. Pupils themselves say that 'it sometimes gets boring when we have lots of worksheets to do'. This affects their behaviour, which, overall, is satisfactory, and they become restless, sometimes disrupting learning for others.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living, gained from the healthy meals at lunchtime and the high rate of participation in the many sporting activities on offer. The sound curriculum promotes these aspects of learning well. Staff care for the pupils, and pupils know there is always someone they can turn to for help should they need it. As a result, they enjoy school and form good relationships with each other and with staff. Several said that their teachers 'make learning fun' and show them 'new ways of learning'. The acting headteacher has sharpened assessment procedures and has begun to make teachers more accountable for the progress their pupils make. The school has rightly identified the need to provide training for staff to improve the quality of their marking of work to accelerate pupils' progress. At present, pupils do not always have sufficient guidance to help them see how to improve their work by themselves.

The school is properly led and managed. Despite the changes in the leadership team, the acting headteacher has continued to move the school forward in the past year. The relatively new governing body understands its role in holding the school to account. However, governors do not yet have mechanisms in place to gain first hand information about the effect their decisions have on pupils' learning. The continuing upward trend in Years 1 and 2, the green shoots of improvement evident in Years 3 to 6, and the drive for improvement coming from the leadership team all give the school sound capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children quickly settle into the friendly, purposeful learning environment the staff create in the Foundation Stage. Excellent teaching and an exceptionally well organised range of creative learning activities contribute in great measure to the high levels of confidence children display as they go about their tasks. Concentrating for considerable periods of time, they work on their own or alongside other pupils, sharing, taking turns, listening to each other and adults, and

developing good levels of conversation. The good links between indoor and outdoor provision add to the fun children have learning, and contribute to their excellent progress.

The very effective use of simple-to-manage assessment systems that track each child's progress in all areas of learning ensures that staff know the children really well. They use this information to set targets, and the excellent links with parents create a successful partnership that helps the children to succeed. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are outstanding and, by the end of Reception, children attain skills that are above the levels expected nationally for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 by providing more data-handling, practical and investigative tasks for pupils and cutting down on worksheets that prevent pupils recording their findings in different ways.
- Ensure that all teachers draw properly on assessment information to provide challenging work for all pupils, and back this up with good quality marking that shows pupils how to improve their work.
- Find ways of ensuring that governors gain first-hand knowledge about teaching and learning to enable them to fulfil their role in holding the school to account for its outcomes.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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

While achievement is satisfactory overall, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in this age group use their literacy and numeracy skills really well in other subjects. This, and their developing ability to find things out for themselves, contributes greatly to their good progress. Standards have risen considerably in Year 2 since 2005. They are now significantly above average in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics.

Standards are broadly average in Year 6. However, the national test results for Year 6 were below average in mathematics and science in 2007. Standards have declined in these two subjects since 2005. They have remained at the national average in English. Pupils' progress varies in Years 3 to 6 because the quality of teaching is variable. Overall, there are weaknesses in pupils' ability to investigate and solve problems, and to interrogate and interpret data. This affects their progress in mathematics and science. The school is tackling these weaknesses and, as a result, pupils are making better progress in these areas. Nevertheless, there is some way to go for the work to be fully effective.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils mostly enjoy school and they attend regularly. They like practical lessons and admit to being bored when their work is not challenging enough. This also shows in their behaviour in class. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep safe. However, younger pupils are sometimes afraid of older pupils racing around the playground. Parents voiced some concerns about bullying, although pupils clearly know what to do should it occur, and report that the school deals with any incidents quickly and effectively.

Pupils think deeply about issues such as loneliness and poverty, and enjoy the school's strong links with the local church. They generally respect others but there have been a few incidents of racist name calling in the past year. The school has tackled these sensitively and well. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and they contribute satisfactorily to the community. As school councillors, they manage their own budget and contribute to decisions about how to make playtimes more social occasions. The school prepares them adequately for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good teamwork and consistently high expectations of pupils' work rate and behaviour contribute greatly to the good progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2, and to their enjoyment of school. In this age group, teachers plan carefully across subjects, building effectively on what pupils already know and promoting basic skills at every opportunity.

While satisfactory overall, teaching varies from good to inadequate in Years 3 to 6. Most teachers use different methods of teaching, including the imaginative use of computers, to engage pupils. However, in some classes, tasks are too repetitive and pupils have too many worksheets to complete. This gives pupils some basic skills but provides them with too few opportunities to take their own learning forward by, for example, exploring topics in depth. It also explains why pupils' investigative skills in mathematics and science are relatively weak.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Good links between subjects promote effective learning and contribute greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Younger pupils learn well through enquiry and discovery and have good opportunities for writing in all subjects. This good practice is not yet embedded in the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6. In mathematics and in science, for example, some activities focus only on acquiring facts rather than on deepening understanding.

The curriculum promotes healthy living well and provides satisfactorily for pupils' personal and social education. The school provides a good range of music and sporting activities in and out of school, and a satisfactory range of other clubs and activities, all of which contribute to pupils' learning and personal development. The sound provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they benefit from some well-planned support from teaching assistants.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Safeguarding procedures are robust. Pupils are confident that they can trust the staff to help them work out strategies to overcome any concerns they may have. The school does a great deal to discourage all forms of harassment but isolated incidents do occur and affect some pupils' enjoyment of school. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the school. One parent's views were typical when she wrote, 'The help from the staff has been paramount to my daughter's progress.'

Assessment systems provide a clear picture of pupils' progress in English and mathematics, and pupils have targets to improve their learning. However, teachers' marking rarely provides pupils with sufficient guidance on the smaller steps they need to take to reach their targets. This limits the usefulness of target setting and prevents pupils from taking increasing responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders and governors are determined to repeat the success they have had in improving provision in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 by doing the same in Years 3 to 6. The acting headteacher follows up her evaluations of teaching and learning robustly to check whether teachers are carrying out agreed improvements. This, and the sharpening of assessment procedures, is successfully raising teachers' expectations of themselves and their pupils. The school has set itself challenging targets and is now challenging all teachers to help it reach them. However, not every teacher in Years 3 to 6 fully understands their part in raising achievement in Year 6. This causes the variations in pupils' progress. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They support the school well but are not sufficiently involved in evaluating its outcomes. Subject leaders fulfil their roles satisfactorily. They are becoming increasingly involved in reviewing their subjects and guiding staff on how to improve. The action plans for literacy and numeracy, for example, set a clear agenda for raising achievement in English and mathematics. The effect is more evident in English because the strategy began last year, whereas the plan for mathematics is new this term.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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	3
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

29 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Hall Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 5QU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school, and for talking to us about your work. You told us you enjoyed school and some of you said your teachers made learning fun for you and showed you how to learn in different ways. That is good. We found that your school is satisfactory. That means it does what it should, and it could do even more to help you learn faster. This letter is a summary of what we found.

You get off to a really good start in Nursery and Reception, making excellent progress there because of the exciting ways in which you are taught. The school's leaders have ensured that some of this continues when you are in Years 1 and 2, and you make good progress here too. You make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. Things have started to improve here, however, because the school is doing a number of things to help continue the good progress you make when you are younger. Overall, your teachers teach you properly and the curriculum covers all the things you are supposed to learn.

The staff care for you and you know how to keep yourselves safe. Your behaviour is satisfactory but it tends to slip when you finish your work quickly and have to wait for others to catch up. Sometimes, in the playground, older pupils frighten the younger ones by racing around too much. You could be more careful here. Your success in sporting events and the healthy food choices you make at lunchtime tell us that you really understand about healthy living.

- To help all of you make equally good progress, we have asked your school to:
- give you more opportunities for practical work in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 and not give you as many worksheets to complete. This is to help you to investigate, solve problems, handle data and record your findings in different ways
- to make sure that your teachers always build on what you already know when they plan your work and set your targets, and that they back this up with good quality marking that shows you how you can improve your own work
- Finally, we have asked governors to find ways of checking at first hand that the school is doing its best for you at all times.

You can help in all of this by always working hard and behaving well. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely Doris Bell (Lead inspector)

29 November 2007



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Hall Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 5QU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school, and for talking to us about your work. You told us you enjoyed school and some of you said your teachers made learning fun for you and showed you how to learn in different ways. That is good. We found that your school is satisfactory. That means it does what it should, and it could do even more to help you learn faster. This letter is a summary of what we found.

You get off to a really good start in Nursery and Reception, making excellent progress there because of the exciting ways in which you are taught. The school's leaders have ensured that some of this continues when you are in Years 1 and 2, and you make good progress here too. You make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. Things have started to improve here, however, because the school is doing a number of things to help continue the good progress you make when you are younger. Overall, your teachers teach you properly and the curriculum covers all the things you are supposed to learn.

The staff care for you and you know how to keep yourselves safe. Your behaviour is satisfactory but it tends to slip when you finish your work quickly and have to wait for others to catch up. Sometimes, in the playground, older pupils frighten the younger ones by racing around too much. You could be more careful here. Your success in sporting events and the healthy food choices you make at lunchtime tell us that you really understand about healthy living.

To help all of you make equally good progress, we have asked your school to:

- give you more opportunities for practical work in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 and not give you as many worksheets to complete. This is to help you to investigate, solve problems, handle data and record your findings in different ways
- to make sure that your teachers always build on what you already know when they plan your work and set your targets, and that they back this up with good quality marking that shows you how you can improve your own work
- Finally, we have asked governors to find ways of checking at first hand that the school is doing its best for you at all times.

You can help in all of this by always working hard and behaving well. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely
Doris Bell (Lead inspector)