

Park Hall Junior School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	104257
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	324005
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Sergeant
Headteacher	Geraldine Healy
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Park Hall Road Walsall WS5 3HF
Telephone number	01922 720761
Fax number	01922 639087

Age group	7–11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than other schools and there are slightly more boys than girls. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. The majority of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Asian or Asian British – Indian. The number of pupils whose first language is other than English is much higher than is typically found. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (mainly moderate learning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties), including those with a statement of educational needs, is similar to that seen nationally.

A breakfast and after-school club are situated on the same site. Both are run privately and inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Park Hall Junior School is a welcoming school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. They are proud of their school and enjoy it greatly. The overwhelming majority of parents have great confidence in the school and its headteacher, with one summing the school up very well by saying that 'there is a happy caring community at Park Hall and my son has greatly enjoyed his journey through the school'. The satisfactory leadership of the school has developed a warm, happy environment where staff and children work in harmony with each other. Amongst staff there is a good sense of team spirit and a willingness to take on board new initiatives and ideas, but this has not been fully harnessed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

When pupils start school in Year 3 their knowledge and skills are above average and in some years have been well above average. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average and this represents satisfactory progress overall. Inspectors agree with the views of some parents, however, who feel that progress is not fast enough in Years 3 and 4. Satisfactory teaching and learning means that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching is higher in Years 5 and 6 where teachers pay particularly close attention to ensuring that the needs of high attaining pupils are met. Here, pupils' progress is faster and many pupils are making good progress. Teachers throughout the school are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and they develop good relationships with the pupils. However, some do not always use assessment information well enough to help plan activities to match the needs and abilities of all pupils.

There are four key reasons why pupils make satisfactory rather than good or better progress. There is variability in the way in which some teachers use assessment information to check pupils' progress in order to detect and address any potential underachievement. The good and sometimes outstanding teaching in the school is not well enough identified and shared to ensure that pupil progress becomes consistently good throughout the school. Many pupils are unaware of the targets set for them and consequently are uncertain of their next steps in learning. The roles and responsibilities of middle managers have not been developed well enough for them to be accountable for standards, progress and care in their respective areas.

Pupils' personal development is good and very good relationships and good pastoral care and support result in happy learners. Pupils come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education and beyond. Pupils' behaviour is good and they have a good idea of what is needed to follow a healthy lifestyle. The satisfactory curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a wide range of skills. The school is developing links between subjects so that pupils can practise writing skills more regularly, but these opportunities are not yet extensive enough to increase progress. Pupils' awareness of different cultures in the diverse society in which we live is well developed, although the school does not always exploit and celebrate the very rich cultural mix.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop systems to ensure that middle managers become accountable for pupils' standards, progress and care for pupils in their respective areas.
- Make sure that all pupils know and understand the targets that have been set for them and ensure they know what they need to do to reach them.
- Ensure that more lessons are of the quality of the best by making sure that all teachers plan to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly the higher attaining.

- Make sharper use of assessment information to check pupils' rate of progress and to tackle swiftly any potential underachievement.

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

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were above average and were very high in mathematics. This was a rise over the previous year but the 2008 results show a decline, although they have yet to be validated. Standards fluctuate year on year and reflect changes in the proportions of higher attaining pupils joining the school, but have been consistently above average for the past five years. Pupils work seen by inspectors and classroom observations confirm this consistency, and current standards are above average overall. Standards are highest in mathematics, where they are well above average.

Given pupils' above average standards when they join Year 3, they make satisfactory progress overall. Progress is faster in Years 5 and 6, where there is more good teaching. Recently introduced systems for checking the progress that pupils make and taking action to give support to pupils when needed have resulted in faster progress for pupils currently in Year 6. There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils in the school. This is because the school works effectively to support groups such as pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils relate well to one another and are excited by all that the school has to offer. This is reflected in their enjoyment of learning, good attendance, good behaviour and keen involvement in a wide range of activities. Pupils are confident, mature and have good relationships with each other and teachers. The school council said, 'We love our teachers.' Pupils know how to keep healthy and like the additional opportunities the school provides for them. The school council are proud of the role they have in helping to make the school safe from bullying. Incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are able to articulate and express their views and opinions and this, together with their good key skills, equips them well for the next stages in their education. Pupils are involved in the life of the school via the school council and enjoy taking on roles of responsibility, but there are few opportunities for them to make contributions to the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are typified by good relationships, mutual respect, humour and warmth. Teachers are good at telling pupils exactly what they are expected to do in lessons and this helps them make sense of their learning. Teaching assistants are well prepared and contribute well to the learning of the individuals they work with. In most lessons, pupils experience a range of approaches and this helps to sustain their interest. Pupils respond well to group and pair work and collaborate

well with each other to solve problems and 'find out', especially in mathematics. In too many lessons, however, teachers do not always ensure that pupils know what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve their levels of attainment. In these less effective lessons, teachers do not plan adequately for the range of abilities in the class or build on pupils' prior knowledge. This slows progress because a minority of pupils are either not challenged enough or struggle to comprehend. The school monitors and evaluates lessons rigorously but does not link this to training so that good practice becomes shared and celebrated.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to make steady progress in developing basic skills. The school recognises the need to develop a more diverse and creative curriculum that will offer greater challenge to the more able children and accelerate their progress in all curriculum areas. Leaders are aware that there are still not enough opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects and that this has a negative impact on the speed at which writing skills can improve. A wide range of visitors and visits, including the Year 6 residential trip to Cornwall, as well as an extensive variety of after-school activities, enrich the curriculum and promote and enhance pupils' personal and social development. The school provides pupils with a wide variety of sporting activities as part of the school day. These, together with well-supported creative and educational activities outside normal lessons, make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, their levels of enjoyment and their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school supports pupils' personal needs well, ensuring that they are happy and confident. One parent spoke for many by saying, 'Park Hall is a happy and caring environment.' This is evident in the warmth in the relationships between children and adults. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure, although systems for the recording of equality issues are not sufficiently rigorous. There are satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' progress. This is now being regularly tracked but the data are currently not being used efficiently by all teachers to plan their lessons to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Targets set by teachers are not always shared with pupils, nor are they related to National Curriculum levels, which limits their effectiveness in helping pupils understand how to improve. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified swiftly, and clear targets are set in their individual education plans.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought fresh ideas and are committed to moving the school forward. However, they do not always share these ideas well enough with other teachers and there is a disparate approach to school improvement. There is an accurate, clear awareness that, despite recent improvements, progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4, still needs to be faster. Middle leaders are eager to take real accountability for their respective areas but have little responsibility for monitoring standards, learning and teaching and this is holding back improvements in pupils' achievement. The governing body brings a wealth of relevant experience to its deliberations. It is extremely supportive of all the school's work but

does not always act as a critical friend by asking the searching questions it needs to hold the school sufficiently to account. Leaders ensure that all pupils get on well together, but the extent to which pupils are encouraged to work in the community with others from different ethnic groups is limited and so community cohesion is only satisfactory.

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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?	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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
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	2
The extent to which 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	3
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?	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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Hall Junior School, Walsall, WS5 3HF

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to your inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. I would like to say a special 'thank you' to the school council and those of you from Years 5 and 6 who gave up part of your lunchtime in order to meet us. We judge that your school is a satisfactory school. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving.

These are the things that we think the school does well.

- You get on well with your fellow pupils and with your teachers. Park Hall is a well-ordered school and you look after each other very well.
- The standards that you reach are above average and your standards in mathematics are well above average.
- You show a great enjoyment in your learning and know a lot about the importance of staying healthy and keeping safe. You know there are people to whom you can turn with worries or concerns.

To help your school get better for you, we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following.

- Ensure that all of your lessons are as good as the best by making sure that when teachers plan work for you, it is not too easy or too hard, but just right for you.
- When teachers set targets for you, they need to make sure you all know them and what you need to do to reach them.
- Make sure that teachers who are responsible for subjects check on how well you are taught and how well you are doing.
- For all the teachers to watch out carefully for any of you who slip up in the progress that you make.

Thank you once again for making such a helpful contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed watching you learn.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector