

Parkside Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117562
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326650
Inspection date	12 January 2009
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	217
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Muncey
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Aycliffe Road Borehamwood Hertfordshire WD6 4EP

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	12 January 2009
Inspection number	326650

Telephone number
Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy; the quality of teaching and learning; and pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Evidence was gathered from classroom visits, scrutiny of pupils' work, parents' questionnaires, discussions with staff, pupils and governors, and examination of school documentation, including assessment data and the school's self-evaluation.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This primary school is smaller than average. It has eight classes, including a part-time Nursery class. The Nursery and Reception classes form the EYFS unit. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds while over a quarter are from minority ethnic families. Nearly 20% of pupils speak English as an additional language and over 10% are at an early stage of learning English. Altogether, pupils speak 20 different languages. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected for their age. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school partway through this phase of their education is much higher than average. Staff turnover has been high in recent years. The school has the Healthy Schools award.

An Arts Playscheme, available in the summer holidays and half terms, is situated on the same site. It is 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: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well, often from very low starting points. The headteacher took up post 18 months ago. She quickly identified the most important priorities for improvement and has worked energetically and successfully to raise standards. Staffing difficulties have been resolved, the leadership team restructured and the EYFS developed so that children make satisfactory progress. There is a shared commitment among staff to ensure that, as a matter of urgency, all pupils make consistently good progress. A good programme of staff training and development has been introduced, giving teachers clear guidance about how to teach effectively. Excellent initiatives to teach phonics have been introduced and therefore pupils are rigorously taught the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent. As a result, progress in reading and writing is particularly good. The previous decline in the results of national assessments for pupils in Year 2 has been arrested and standards are beginning to rise. Assessment results in 2008 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Ambitious targets have been set for a significant improvement in 2009 and pupils' work shows that they are on course to attain their targets and reach at least average standards.

Most pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6. In 2007, national test results were above average in English, mathematics and science. The provisional results of tests in 2008 were below average in English, mathematics and science. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points, including the unusually high proportion of pupils in this year group who found learning difficult and some newcomers in Year 6 who arrived speaking no English. Standards of work produced by pupils currently in Year 6 show that standards are rising and are broadly average in English but below in mathematics and science. The school has been concentrating hard on raising attainment in English and has met with a large measure of success. It has identified the need to focus strongly now on raising standards in mathematics and science. There are too few opportunities for pupils to learn independently, to experiment, investigate and find things out for themselves. This impedes progress in mathematics and science.

Pupils are courteous and behaviour is good. As they master reading and writing skills, they become more self-assured and develop as confident learners. They are keen to learn and eager to please. They enjoy mathematics and are developing a good range of skills in information and communication technology. Their good personal development, including good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, supports their learning well. The good range of key skills they develop prepare them well to move to the next phase of their education and for their future lives. A few pupils are persistently absent. The school does all it can to overcome this problem, including text messages to parents and offering rewards for regular attendance. Attendance is improving but these pupils do miss out and do not achieve as well as they could.

Teaching is good and pupils learn effectively. Classrooms are well organised and interactive whiteboards are used successfully to support and stimulate learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils enjoy lessons. The pace of teaching is brisk and lessons provide interesting and challenging activities. Across the school, a quiet, productive learning environment has been established. Teaching assistants make a major contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. They have received good training and have become increasingly skilled.

The curriculum is broad and developing well, enriched by a good range of after-school activities and educational visits. A good start has been made to teaching French in Year 3. Exciting topics stimulate pupils' imagination and encourage them to find out more about the world. The school

has identified the need to extend this thematic approach throughout the school so that lessons are even more closely matched to pupils' interests. Good links with the local secondary school support pupils' learning in physical education and music. The school council takes its work seriously and produced an informed report on the school for inspectors. Community cohesion is promoted well. Visitors from different cultures visit to talk about their customs and beliefs. Good links with local football and rugby clubs support the development of sports. Pupils participate fully in the local performing arts festival, visit the nearby home for the elderly and support fund raising events wholeheartedly. These activities give pupils a good insight into their responsibilities to the wider community.

Good care, guidance and support help pupils to learn effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and look after themselves. They know about the types of food that are needed to create a balanced diet and why they need regular exercise to keep fit. Academic guidance is good. Staff offer lots of encouragement and teachers mark pupils' work with good advice on how to improve. New pupils, including those who speak little English, are soon made to feel at home. They make good progress on all fronts. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well so that they experience success and achieve well. Work is modified to challenge faster learners so that they also make good progress.

The good leadership of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher has been the driving force behind recent improvements. They maintain the highest expectations of pupils' ability to succeed and achieve excellence. They form the core of a team of staff who are committed to improving provision. The school's self-evaluation is too modest; leaders are very ambitious and set high expectations for pupils' performance and therefore they do not fully recognise that the school's overall effectiveness is now good rather than satisfactory. Each pupil's progress is monitored closely and any signs of underachievement are investigated thoroughly to see if any extra support is needed. The roles of subject leaders are still developing so that they can gain an overview of provision and can identify the areas for improvement. The site manager has made a major contribution to making the school look bright, colourful and inviting. The governing body is supportive but governors, many of them new, are still exploring how they can be most effective. Staff are welcoming and quickly make new parents and their children feel at ease. Parents are very pleased with the education the school provides. One wrote, 'I am impressed with the recent changes that have been made; behaviour has improved and children are benefiting from the strong focus on reading and literacy.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and leaders have good plans to further develop provision. Welfare arrangements are good and children's health, safety and well-being are top priorities. On entry to the Nursery, the majority of children have a very limited vocabulary and find it difficult to express themselves clearly. Many do not understand the meaning of ordinary, everyday words. A third of children in the Nursery are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Teaching is satisfactory and staff grasp opportunities to extend children's vocabulary and encourage them to engage in discussion. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those that children choose independently. Children in the Nursery thoroughly enjoyed jumping around a track they had made from large bricks. This gave them good opportunities to count as well as enjoy the physical activity. Relationships are good and children settle very quickly into class routines. In the Nursery particularly there is a calm, productive atmosphere. Here, children are encouraged to explore

their surroundings and select their own resources. They show that they are beginning to be able to explain their choices and answer simple questions about the activity they are engaged in.

Children's progress is assessed continually in order to identify and plan for the next steps in their learning. Satisfactory progress is made in all areas of the EYFS curriculum but standards by the end of Reception remain well below average. In Reception there is not always a good match of activities to the children's particular stages of development and there are too few opportunities for the children to engage in practical activities. Consequently, some children become restless and inattentive. The outside area is due to be refurbished but imaginative use of the current facilities provides an exciting place to explore. The puppet theatre in the Reception class provides good opportunities for imaginative play and for extending speaking and listening skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- In order to further raise standards, give children in the EYFS and pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 more opportunities for investigation, experimentation and first hand learning experiences.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders in monitoring provision, identifying areas for improvement and raising standards.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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	3
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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	3
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

13 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parkside Primary School, Borehamwood, WD6 4EP

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time with you and felt very welcome. We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around school. This is what we found out.

- You are polite, considerate and sensitive to the needs of others.
- You said that you really enjoy school and you like your teachers.
- You like learning new things and you make good progress as you go through the school, especially in reading and writing. You are also developing a good range of computer skills.
- You are keen on sport and have a good understanding of how to keep fit by making sure that you have plenty of exercise.
- You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves.
- You take your responsibilities seriously and the play leaders do a good job.
- Your school council plays a part in improving the school and we were very pleased to read the well-written report councillors had prepared for us.

Mrs Muncey is a good leader and there is a great feeling of teamwork in the school. The teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff all work closely together to raise standards. Mr Honour does a wonderful job in making the school look so bright, neat and well looked after. Also, carefully mounted displays of your work make the environment bright, colourful and cheerful. Of course, each and every one of you is also an important member of the team. Just as the adults in your school are working hard to help you to succeed, you too can help by making sure that you always work hard, do your best and come to school regularly.

We have suggested two things to improve the school further. We think that you should have more opportunities to investigate, experiment and find things out for yourselves. If you follow your own lines of enquiry more frequently, we think it would help you to learn better and also sharpen your mathematical and scientific skills. Also some of the teachers who are subject leaders need opportunities to find out how much you are learning and find ways to help you to learn even more.

Yours sincerely

John Messer

Lead inspector