

Parklands Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 102300

Local Authority London Borough Of Havering

Inspection number 335872

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2010 **Reporting inspector** John W. Paull

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

Type of school Infant

School category Community

Age range of pupils3-7Gender of pupilsMixedNumber of pupils on the school roll420

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Mr B Gilley

Headteacher Mrs Margaret Bushell

Date of previous school inspection 4 January 2007

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Age group 3–7

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 18 lessons taught by 12 teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and representatives of agencies with which the school is in partnership. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents related to safeguarding, pupils' attainment, learning and progress, as well as policies and planning. Questionnaires were received from 120 families and the views expressed were taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- current attainment and progress, especially in mathematics
- the way that teaching and changes in how the school's curriculum are planned has affected pupils' learning and progress
- pupils' own views, attitudes and ideas and how far these match senior leaders' evaluations of them
- pupils' attendance
- accommodation for children of nursery and reception ages and whether it affects the quality of learning and outcomes.

Information about the school

Parklands is much larger than other infant schools. A large majority of its pupils are from White British backgrounds, although the numbers drawn from an increasing range of other ethnic groups are rising. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below the national average and very few are at early stages of acquiring English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. A wide range of difficulties is apparent, with many related to speech, language and communication. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stages in its Nursery and Reception classes. The governors are responsible for the management of the school's breakfast and after-school clubs.

The school holds a current Healthy School award and is working towards an ArtsMark and an Every Child Matters accreditation. It is involved in various local and national schemes for training educational staff and holds an Investor in People award.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding school has a remarkable curriculum that staff constantly adapt innovatively to inspire excellence in the learning, achievement and enjoyment of pupils. An exceptional feature is how from the Nursery classes to the end of Year 2, the school's outdoor areas are seen as extensions to the classrooms. During the inspection, despite snow, pupils were often seen outside, kitted out in boots and coveralls, gathering information for their class theme or topic. In the Nursery and Reception Years, children had previously made marks in the snow to support acquisition of handwriting skills and letter shapes, while enjoying and experiencing the conditions at first-hand. Highly effective teaching, based on meticulously detailed daily plans, ensures that such spontaneity feeds into acquiring whatever skills pupils are currently expected to learn. The inescapable fact that the whole staff are confident to work this way to the benefit of pupils is great testimony to the knowledge and skills of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a highly competent leadership team. Their teamwork is outstandingly effective in inspiring ambition and ensuring similarly strong teamwork among all adults who work with the pupils. Their successful record suggests an exceptional capacity to maintain high performance. A very high proportion of teaching assistants, as well as teachers, are skilful in leading groups, questioning pupils and facilitating their learning with effective uses of resources, including information and communication technologies. As a result, pupils are constantly absorbed by what they do and behaviour is remarkably good, which promotes learning very strongly.

Many staff are also skilful in observing pupils and assessing the levels of their work, so gaps in learning can be filled and misconceptions spotted and corrected quickly. It is a feature of the school's performance that when a concern arises, it is addressed immediately in small steps in a small group. This approach is highly effective and chimes well with the special needs coordinator's aim to act as early as possible before a minor difficulty becomes a major additional need. A representative of an outside agency with which the school is in partnership commented, 'If only all the services I work with were as responsive as this infant school, there would be far fewer problems later on.'

Children make an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their starting points are sometimes especially low in language and communication skills, and in some elements of mathematical development. Nevertheless, pupils achieve outstandingly by the time they leave in Year 2. Attainment often exceeds national averages, although sometimes it has not been quite as good in mathematics as in other subjects. Recent and current data indicate that improvement is steadily under way. That said, observations during the inspection show that pupils' mathematical skills are not utilised quite as frequently as other skills in some of the school's cross-curricular themes.

Overall, though, these contribute effectively to skills that prepare pupils for the future. Care, guidance and support, including policies and practices that safeguard pupils, are managed highly effectively. All procedures for vetting staff and ensuring safe recruitment are followed meticulously. The same applies equally strongly at the breakfast and after-school clubs, which pupils enjoy and attend enthusiastically. Pupils receive careful instructions about how to keep safe and levels of supervision are high. For example, when pupils go off the premises to visit a museum or to carry out investigative work, ratios of adults to pupils are particularly favourable. This means that pupils feel very safe and secure. Themes that involve skills in food technology and scientific knowledge result in pupils' excellent knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet and the importance of exercise. Their willingness to contribute to jobs and routines that help the school to run smoothly is highly developed, and a novel way to help children attending a Kenyan school enhances community awareness even further. Governors are effective in their support of the school, especially in their involvement in and support of financial management. Senior leaders' success in demonstrating that the school's staffing policy is highly successful has resulted in governors' determination to protect and resource this policy and thereby to achieve exceptional value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Review whether pupils' mathematical skills are always promoted as strongly as other skills in cross-curricular themes and, where they are not, make further adaptations to planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils greatly enjoy their learning and often make very rapid progress in lessons. When starting points are taken into account, achievement is outstanding. 'Everything is fun because it's exciting to learn new things', said a pupil in Year 2 and this echoes strongly with what was found throughout the school. Achievement in writing is often exceptionally strong by the time pupils leave. Reading standards are also above average. A highly creative approach across the whole curriculum encourages pupils to write innovatively, even when they are recording factual outcomes about their investigations. This is shown in some very exciting uses of vocabulary in pupils' current work. These features begin early in Year 1 and build on the excellent outcomes achieved in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress is very secure and the school's meticulously thorough assessment records confirm this. Themed displays around the building also indicate good attainment across a range of other subjects, including artwork, reflecting the school's work towards an ArtsMark accreditation. Assessments carried out in mathematics have indicated that attainment has sometimes not been quite as high as in other areas, as was the case in 2009. However, this year group contained an unusually high number of pupils who joined the school halfway through Year 1 or later. Opportunities to focus pupils' mathematical skills were occasionally missed during cross-curricular work. Nevertheless, expectations of pupils are high and targets are set

at challenging levels. Pupils in any kind of difficulty are immediately supported. The result is that their progress is at least as rapid as that of others and they achieve outstandingly well.

All staff, including ancillary staff, know the pupils very well. As a result, the idea that every child matters is fully worked out in practice. Pupils feel completely safe in school and behave remarkably well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are frequently amazed at what they learn and staff are confident in allowing them opportunities for both reflection and to show excitement. Pupils are very willing to share ideas and equipment with each other. They are also very interested to listen and to learn about what keeps them healthy and safe, and to put their knowledge into practice very diligently. For example, they make very sensible choices about what they eat in the dining room. They volunteer to carry out any job or routine that will help their teachers, doing so with palpable enthusiasm, care and pleasure. They have also collected pennies for a school in Kenya and each class has worked on displaying their findings about that country. So trusted were pupils that their suggestion in one class, to cover a whole stair banister with pennies, was accepted 'not one coin went missing! Pupils' strongly developing literacy and numeracy skills, as well as good standards in the use of information and communication technology, serve them well for the future. Attendance, however, is at average levels, holding this outcome back a little. Staff work very hard with parents to counter unnecessary absence, although not always with the fullest of cooperation in return.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning			
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2		
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1		
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress			
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1		
Pupils' behaviour			
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles			
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community			

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is of outstanding quality. In all lessons observed in the inspection, it was never less than good and was outstanding on a high number of occasions. This success is based on teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants in parallel classes in all year groups. This ensures a whole school vision of what really good teaching consists of. Pupils receive the same targeting of skills and knowledge, irrespective of the class that they attend, because thorough planning is always shared, based on unstinting sharing of equipment, resources, ideas and expertise. Furthermore, this extends to the full inclusion and involvement of teaching assistants, who are very effective in supporting and assessing what pupils do. This also extends to very high quality written marking in Year 2. All pupils thrive in this environment, no matter what their background or different level of prior attainment. Pupils with a special or additional learning need are supported as soon as any barrier or requirement emerges. Small groups are focused with adaptations to the curriculum that meet exactly what they need to learn and, as a result, they progress rapidly in whatever area it might be. For example, a small group went out from the Year 2 classes to help them understand how to access information and communication technology more effectively. The expertise of the school's special needs coordinator, whose inclusive approach is exceptional, facilitates all this even further.

A remarkable curriculum underpins the excellent learning and progress that pupils make. It is constantly under review, so it fully builds on needs identified in the Early Years Foundation Stage for pupils of all backgrounds and ability. As a result, it is always highly relevant to pupils as soon as they transfer from Reception classes into Year 1. In terms of the National Curriculum, it contains all the subjects and areas that it should and includes all other elements of the basic curriculum such as personal, social, health and citizenship education, and religious education. All of this is enhanced with well-chosen visits, often using public transport and other features to excite pupils and add to their experiences beyond the outing itself.

All procedures to safeguard pupils, including risk assessment, provision of first-aiders with paediatric qualifications and policies to promote excellence of behaviour, follow local and national guidelines scrupulously. All of this is reflected in the strength of outcomes for pupils. For example, no serious incidents of poor behaviour or of a racist nature have been recorded at the school for three years. These findings relate similarly to the breakfast and after-school provision.

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	1
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	1
relevant, through partnerships	

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have succeeded completely in building a climate in which staff of all types feel valued and important to the team. A teacher's comment sums this up: 'I feel that each member of staff is encouraged to participate in every aspect of school life.' The result of this feeling is that everyone takes responsibility to contribute whatever expertise he or she possesses to the benefit of all pupils alike. Thus, equality of opportunity is promoted in an outstanding way, and barriers to achievement are tackled vigorously for pupils of all backgrounds and groups. This happens because leaders invest in initiatives that develop staff effectively and monitor teaching to ensure the beneficial use of teachers' and teaching assistants' considerable skills. This includes numerous partnerships with colleges, other schools and teacher training departments, as well as pupil support agencies such as speech and psychotherapy services. These partnerships extend the considerable expertise already available on the staff, and have a powerful impact on pupils' learning and progress. Many parents and carers are aware of how this rich approach supports their children's education strongly. Most feel engaged and well informed, although a few feel that the school does not involve them enough in the processes of strategic decision making. Governors are supportive and active and know the school well. Community cohesion is promoted effectively, although senior leaders accept that this aspect is a developing one, needing further work to maximise the effectiveness of the school's work in the local community. Staffing, resources and finances are managed highly effectively to bring about the excellence with which everyone at this school goes about their work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1	

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

On starting Nursery, children's language and communication skills are often at low levels and sometimes very low; mathematical skills are also frequently below those usually found. As a result, although boys and girls make excellent progress in all areas of learning, attainment remains below what is usual by the time they enter Reception classes. These children are then joined at this point by a number that represents half the children in each of the year groups at the school. The attainment of these children is similar to those already in the school, although they come from many different settings. Nevertheless, all the children enjoy the remarkably rich curriculum planned for them. They settle quickly, owing to the strong emphasis placed on personal, social and emotional development when they first enter in either the Nursery or Reception. The children who have been in the Nursery help to smooth the induction process effectively for those joining later, as they are very good at showing the ropes to the new ones and have grown considerably in confidence during the Nursery Year. The welcoming and highly stimulating learning environment that children meet throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, linked with exceptionally strong levels of care and outstanding teaching, ensure that progress is very rapid. Behaviour is outstanding. The children play safely, share equipment highly responsibly and speak happily about what they do and know, including 'what is good for you' and what is not.

The outstanding quality of teaching and what is taught captures children's natural curiosity and provides a remarkably rich range of activities, carefully balanced between those led by staff and those chosen by children. The outside areas are resourced extremely effectively to engage children's interest and enjoyment across all areas of learning. All adults in the Nursery and Reception classes are exceptionally adept in engaging children in conversation, developing vocabulary and sentence construction. They also have highly developed skills in observing and assessing what children do, so next steps in learning are planned individually and very appropriately. This is particularly important, as is the high quality leadership, as the accommodation is not ideal. The Nursery unit is situated well away from the Reception classrooms, which are rather small. Nevertheless, the clarity of vision and purpose displayed by the coordinator, together with senior leaders, overcomes these difficulties through their unstinting hard work, planning and outstanding management of other resources. The staff are skilled practitioners who all understand children's learning and developmental needs. Systems to monitor and track progress are very thorough and analysed to great effect. Teachers,

nursery nurses and teaching assistants alike know how to target the needs of individuals outstandingly well across all areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
,	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very pleased with what the school provides. Almost all hold the view that their children enjoy school, many of them strongly so; other high proportions are happy with the experiences that are offered to pupils at the school and feel that teaching is consistently good. Several highly complimentary written comments were on the questionnaires and only very few negative ones. These views were explored with senior staff and inspectors made other checks of their own. In all cases, they found that the school responds well to parents' and carers' concerns, investigating what they say and acting accordingly. Inspectors agree with the very large majority of parents and carers that the school is well led, so their children are safe and making good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Parklands Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 420 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	75	27	22	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	60	45	37	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	45	58	48	7	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	53	51	42	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	58	46	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	52	49	40	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	41	64	52	6	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	51	42	57	47	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	47	58	48	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	39	64	52	3	2	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	30	67	55	4	3	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	53	43	59	48	5	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	60	44	3	2	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description		
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An oustanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.		
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.		
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.		
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.		

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.
	 The school's capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. The quality of teaching. The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Parklands Infants School, Romford, RM1 4QX

Thank you for being so kind, friendly and polite when the other inspectors and I visited your school. You helped such a lot to make the two days go smoothly. We enjoyed speaking to you and seeing your work. It is great that so many of you told us that you enjoy school a lot. We also enjoyed speaking to your school councillors. One of them said, 'School is very brilliant and fun.' We all agree with this remark. Indeed, it is an outstanding school.

Here are some important things that we found out about your school:

- Your teachers care for you and teach you exceptionally well.
- Your learning and progress are very fast.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You know a great deal about how to stay safe and eat healthily.
- Your willingness to do jobs that help your teachers and to share is excellent.
- Your work about children in Kenya and willingness to collect pennies and shoes for them are excellent.
- Your work is of good quality, although mathematics is sometimes not quite as good as the other subjects. We have asked the staff and governors to include more opportunities for you to develop your mathematics skills during your topics and work on themes.
- Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff have lots of really good ideas to keep your school as excellent as it is now.

The other inspectors and I wish you the very best for your future and hope that you will always enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W Paull

Lead inspector

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