

# Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119867
<b>Local Authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	339539
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alastair Younger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Susan Fielder
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Keith Berry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Whitegate Drive Blackpool Lancashire FY3 9HF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 764130
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@park.blackpool.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with the chair of governors, senior staff, the school improvement partner and several pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documents including records of pupils' progress, the school's policies and development plan and minutes of governors' meetings. Ninety-three parental questionnaires were analysed alongside 39 staff and 109 pupil questionnaires.

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

- the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
- the promotion of equal opportunities
- the quality of teaching and learning and its contribution to the progress pupils' make
- the effectiveness of care, support and guidance and the safeguarding of pupils.

## Information about the school

The school provides for a wide range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All have a statement of special educational needs. Though formally designated as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulty, in recent years the range of pupils' needs has significantly widened and become more complex. Over a half of pupils now have a statement other than for moderate learning difficulties. These include autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties, sensory impairment, speech, language and communication difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have a combination of these.

Nearly all pupils are White British. Boys outnumber girls by about two to one. The school serves an area with a wide range of socio-economic characteristics. Over a half of all pupils are entitled to free school meals.

The school is currently pursuing specialist status in the performing arts.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?****1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****1**

## Main findings

This is a wonderful school. It is held in exceptionally high esteem by parents. Pupils love attending and staff thoroughly enjoy working with them. As one parent succinctly puts it: 'I don't have one bad thing to say about this school'. This was a typical response, alongside others such as, 'Great school, teachers do a great job'. There were virtually no dissenting voices.

All pupils are cared for, supported and guided exceptionally well by an extremely skilled and dedicated staff team. The pride that staff and pupils share helps create an atmosphere in which pupils strive to do their best and thoroughly enjoy doing so in a safe and happy environment. The vibrant curriculum strongly promotes essential basic skills and a huge range of other valuable learning opportunities. Opportunities to promote pupils' personal, social and health education are outstandingly interwoven with these learning opportunities. As they pass through the school, pupils become vastly more independent and relish the additional responsibilities expected of them. From what are frequently very low starting points, most pupils go on to gain a good degree of success in gaining qualifications which include GCSE and Entry Level certification in a wide range of subjects. From the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Year 11, all pupils make good, systematic progress in their learning. The evidence for this comes from accurate and thorough assessment of individual progress. The school is currently in the early stages of refining the way it tracks pupils' progress in order to monitor even more closely the relative progress of different groups of pupils.

Good achievement is the result of pupils being taught well. The enjoyment and thrill of learning, evident in so many lessons, is the result of staff taking huge care to ensure that activities are carefully planned to match the abilities and interests of each individual. The school acknowledges that the use of technological aids, including computers, to further promote and support learning is not yet maximised by all teachers.

Promoting pupils' personal development and well-being lies at the heart of the school and is considered by most parents as the most important aspect of its work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The outcomes of this are clearly evident in pupils' excellent behaviour, their good attendance and the way in which they make such a huge contribution to the school and local communities.

Leaders and managers constantly strive to maintain the highest possible standards in everything they do and in nearly every instance they succeed. This is the second time in a row that the school has been judged to be outstanding, resounding evidence of its capacity to sustain improvement. There is no sign of complacency. Morale is sky high

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and staff are provided with excellent opportunities to further develop their skills and practice in areas that have been identified through thorough and perceptive monitoring and self-evaluation. One teacher, for instance, is currently training to qualify as a teacher for the deaf in response to the growing number of pupils with communication difficulties.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Maximise the use of computers and other technological aids to promote learning across the curriculum.
- Develop expertise in using systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of different groups of pupils so as to tune even more finely the provision made for the widening range of special educational needs and/or disabilities.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

At the forefront of outcomes for pupils is their outstanding personal development. Pupils arrive each morning bursting with enthusiasm for the day ahead. Virtually all parents agree that their children love coming to school and that many are disappointed when the weekend or a holiday beckons. As a result, attendance is above the average for similar schools and has been for many years. Considerable involvement in music and drama contributes enormously to pupils' self-esteem and their cultural and community awareness. The excellent brass band, for instance, performs extensively in public and achieves great success in competitions. Membership is available to all, irrespective of age, ability or talent – just one of the ways in which the school demonstrates its total commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities. Pupils' excellent behaviour and their consideration and support for one another testify to the quality of their moral and social development. Exclusion is almost unheard of, as is bullying. Each of the 109 pupils who completed a questionnaire confirmed that they feel safe, and discussions with individuals at break times confirmed this strength of view. The school strongly promotes healthy lifestyles and most pupils take heed, making healthy choices at mealtimes and participating enthusiastically in physical activity. Nevertheless, a higher than average rate of obesity has led to the involvement of a health mentor in the school. The massive gains pupils make in becoming increasingly independent and responsible, and their exceptional drive to be involved with and to help the community, contribute enormously to improving their prospects for the future.

The vast majority of boys and girls make good, and sometimes very good, progress. This was the case in all of the lessons observed during the inspection. When the extent of their learning difficulties and other barriers to learning are taken into account they can be seen to achieve well. Starting points are nearly always well below those expected of children of their age but through skilled teaching and exceptional support and guidance, all pupils are able to gain nationally recognised qualifications before they leave. An excellent partnership with a local secondary school enables higher attaining Year 10 and 11 pupils to be taught GCSE courses by specialist teachers alongside their

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mainstream peers. The numbers of pupils gaining GCSE passes increases each year. Passes are usually at the lower end of the scale but last year, for the first time they included a minority of 'C' grades. Lower attaining pupils gain success in a good range of Entry Level assessments, reflecting attainment of about Level 2 or 3 of the National Curriculum. Science is an area of considerable success, with nearly all Year 11 pupils gaining a GCSE pass last year. Science teaching observed during the inspection explains this success; it was outstanding.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Underpinning the good and occasionally outstanding teaching is the effectiveness with which staff form highly productive and respectful relationships with pupils. These relationships play a significant role in ensuring that pupils develop extremely good attitudes to learning and behave so well. Classrooms provide a vibrant and celebratory

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

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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environment for learning, with prominent displays of pupils' best work and bright, informative visual aids to learning. Skilled support staff are very carefully and purposefully deployed to support individuals or small groups in their learning and behaviour. This is made possible by careful and continuous assessment of pupils' progress and of their individual needs. Pupils are frequently involved in assessing their own work and evaluating that of others, and teachers take care to check at the end of each lesson those things that pupils have learned and where more consolidation may be needed before moving on to new learning. All of this is shared with pupils so that they know how well they are doing and how they could improve their work. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and an excellent understanding of the special educational needs and/or disabilities of each pupil. Lessons are carefully planned to include a wide range of connected activities, often practical and exciting, in order to maintain pupils' attention and ensure that they enjoy learning. Good, imaginative use is made of many stimulating resources. Interactive whiteboards are extensively and expertly used but occasionally opportunities are missed to use computers and other technological aids more constructively to promote learning, for instance by allowing pupils to research more for themselves.

The curriculum provides all pupils with a wealth of memorable experiences and learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom. Personal, social and health education is a central thread which runs through all subjects and contributes significantly to the relevance of the curriculum and to outstanding outcomes. Teachers are careful to maximise the promotion of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy whenever possible. This was seen, for instance, as pupils rehearsed counting skills during science and music lessons and writing skills in a child development lesson. Lessons are particularly well tailored to pupils' needs and attention spans. Primary aged pupils are taught predominantly by their class teachers while older pupils visit a range of specialist resourced rooms, much as they would in a mainstream school. A special class has been created to help a group of more vulnerable Year 7 pupils make a successful transition to the secondary model. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by excellent links with partner organisations including collaborative work with two other schools on a business enterprise venture.

Rigorous systems and procedures help to ensure the safety of pupils. Excellent attention is paid to all aspects of care, guidance and support, not only for pupils but increasingly so for some very appreciative parents, for instance, those who have been given resources to help them communicate more effectively with their children through the use of signs and symbols. The school works extremely effectively with a wide range of care and support agencies. Pupils identified as being particularly vulnerable are quickly identified and if necessary receive additional support from a learning mentor.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2

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<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Only the best will do for the headteacher, staff and governors. Staff are passionate about their jobs and there is a tremendous sense of everyone working together and supporting one another to secure outstanding outcomes for pupils and the trust and support of parents. Leadership and management duties are extremely well distributed and, at every level, responsibilities are diligently fulfilled. Leadership of the curriculum is a particular strength, as is that of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher provides an excellent figurehead for the school but one of the greatest strengths of leaders, managers and governors is the cumulative outcome of their work rather than the result of individual success. The school is constantly changing in response to time and circumstance, but the changes are nearly always small because emerging barriers to improvement are very quickly identified and dealt with before they can develop into problems. It can do this because self-evaluation is rigorous, effective and accurate. Governance is very strong. Members of the governing body have clearly defined roles and responsibilities which are executed exceptionally well. A highly effective committee system aids efficient working. There is a strong commitment to governor training and many governors bring to the school valuable personal skills and experience. Throughout the school, the promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent. Typical of this is the work of the Disability Equality Scheme working party which has resulted in many adaptations to the school buildings to improve access and the replacement of fixed-height work surfaces in the food technology room with adjustable ones. Safeguarding procedures are well understood and implemented with care. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection and meticulous attention is paid to the recruitment of suitable staff. The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. It has a high profile in the local community, bolstered by regular participation in cultural, multicultural and sporting events. Pupils and staff support many national and international charities and causes and through this, pupils gain an extensive understanding of the difficulties faced by different sectors of society and what can be done to help them.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Very few children enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are currently only two. Provision often extends to pupils in Years 1 and 2 who are deemed likely to benefit from it on account of the very early stages of their learning and development. This is entirely appropriate and these pupils were seen during the inspection to be benefiting greatly from the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the teaching and learning style it encourages. Children entering the school at an early age often exhibit more complex and severe special educational needs and/or disabilities than pupils admitted later. The provision fully reflects this and places considerable stress on working with parents to help their children communicate more effectively so that their wants and needs can best be addressed. Outcomes are outstanding. Children make rapid progress in their learning and develop essential personal and social skills which help them transfer successfully into classes in the main school. There is plentiful evidence of outstanding teaching and none to suggest it is ever less than good. The same outstanding quality of care, guidance and support as is seen in the rest of the school is clearly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leadership and management are outstanding. It is perceptive, evaluative and promotes the highest of ambitions.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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**

The inspection supports parents' overwhelmingly positive views of the school. A far

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higher proportion of parents than is usual returned questionnaires. Parents were keen to express total approval of the quality of teaching, leadership and management and the fact that the school keeps their children safe. They feel listened to and valued as partners in promoting their children's learning and development.

In the heartfelt words of one parent, 'Long may this school be allowed to continue helping children to move on in their lives'.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Park 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 136 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	65	25	27	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	68	73	18	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	66	71	20	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	69	20	22	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	67	72	19	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	66	23	25	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	69	21	23	1	1	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)	58	62	24	26	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	66	71	19	20	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	65	70	19	20	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	61	29	31	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	65	70	19	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	72	18	19	0	0	1	1

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 outstanding 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:	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



7 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park School, Blackpool, FY3 9HF

What a wonderful two days my colleague and I shared with you a short while ago.

Thank you for making our experience so pleasurable and for taking time to talk to us.

We were impressed. So much so that we are saying that Park School is outstanding; but you probably know that already!

The bottom line is that we feel the school is helping you towards an optimistic outlook for the future. You make good progress in your learning because you are well taught. You thoroughly enjoy school because you are exceptionally well cared for and presented with a splendid array of learning experiences. We loved seeing how well you got on with each other and how remarkably well you behaved. We also noticed the passion of the people who lead and manage the school.

An important part of our job is to make suggestions as to how your school could get even better. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher agreed with us that better use could be made of computers to help you learn and that by carefully monitoring the progress being made by different groups of you the school could be absolutely sure that all of your needs are being met.

Finally, can I thank you for inviting me to the wonderful performance by the school brass band?

All the best and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

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