

Parks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120088
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	339593
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Stafford

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 of pupils on the school roll	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernie Walker
Headteacher	Miss Caroline Evans
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including the tracking system to monitor the pupils' progress, the work pupils were doing in their books, the school development plan and the 16 questionnaires completed by parents, and those from staff and a sample of pupils.

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

- the rates of progress made by pupils in all key stages and the way the school supports the needs of pupils from different backgrounds, and enables girls to make similar progress to the boys in science
- how the school's leaders, including the governors, have demonstrated the capacity to bring about improvements through developing systems for monitoring and evaluating performance
- how the school has devised a system to identify weaker performance and successfully implemented measures to correct it.

Information about the school

Most pupils are of White British heritage, although there are small groups from other minority ethnic backgrounds, a few of whom are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, as is the numbers who join or leave the school during the school year. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Parks has a Healthy Schools award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Parks Primary is a good school. It enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and successfully promotes their personal development so that they are well prepared for their next stage of their education. Pupils' good achievement is the result of consistently good teaching throughout the school. Teachers create a strong ethos for learning that stimulates pupils' interest and enthusiasm. This was commented upon by several parents. One wrote, 'The experiences my son has gained during his time at Parks have been wonderful, including some great trips and fantastic school performances.' Pupils' excellent behaviour in class and their desire to do well are significant contributory factors in their good progress. Staff know the children very well, respond well to their individual personal and learning needs and provide extremely high standards of care, support and guidance.

Standards in reading, mathematics and science have risen since the previous inspection and are broadly average in Year 6. The standards reached by girls in science now match those reached by boys. Standards in Year 2 have been low in the past but are currently starting to improve because teaching is better. Standards in writing, especially for boys, are recognised by the staff as an area for improvement. The school misses some opportunities to enable pupils to work more independently and achieve more highly. The school has introduced a number of positive strategies to raise pupils' attainment in literacy, particularly in promoting the acquisition of skills in speaking and listening, and is developing these strategies to raise achievement further. Boys have made progress in developing writing skills but many are not reaching the same standards as girls, because they are less well motivated in this aspect of learning. The proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching the higher standard of Level 5 in English is below that found nationally, because the standard of writing is too low.

Staff are effective in promoting pupils' good spiritual, moral and social skills but pupils' awareness of the diversity of other cultures, especially those found within the United Kingdom, is not as effectively developed. This weakness has been identified as part of the school's audit of strategies for promoting community cohesion and plans have started to be made to improve this aspect of the curriculum.

The staff work very closely together as an effective team to accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school and to identify the next steps for improvement. However, despite this effective collaboration, inconsistencies remain between the most effective teaching and teaching that is satisfactory. Roles and responsibilities are appropriately shared and much of the evaluation and development is carried out by the teachers meeting together. This system has proved effective, as can be seen by the many improvements made in the last few years, including those in developing an

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effective system of assessment that tracks pupils' progress at every stage of their school life. These developments demonstrate the school's good capacity for future improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of this school year, consistently raise standards in writing by enabling boys to reach similar standards to the girls and ensuring that the more able pupils reach Level 5 at the end of Year 6, through building on the progress made in acquiring skills in speaking and listening.
- Improve pupils' academic performance by planning activities that:
 - accelerate learning, especially for the more able, through pupils developing their ability to work independently
 - include examples of best practice evident in some classrooms.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils respond well to their activities and make good progress in their lessons. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson observed, for example, pupils readily accepted the challenges set by the teacher and enthusiastically tackled difficult calculations. They used their mathematical knowledge and skills well to help them in this new work and to get the right answers. The look of concentration on their faces was only equalled by the sincere praise given by the teacher.

All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are slightly below average. Overall, writing has improved in line with improvements in reading and mathematics; however girls do notably better than boys. All pupils' good learning and effective progress continue in Years 3 to 6, and although standards vary from year to year, a pattern of broadly average attainment is emerging. Standards in the most recent national tests are likely to prove to be broadly average in English, where reading is much stronger than writing. Standards in mathematics are average, and they are above average in science. This is the result of good progress.

Some pupils join the school in Years 5 and 6. They also achieve well in relation to their starting points, but do not always reach the same standards as their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points and many reach the standards expected for their age. Those who join the school after Reception settle quickly and make good progress.

Pupils' personal development progresses well through the school. Pupils are thoughtful, caring and responsive to each other's feelings and needs. They grow in confidence and enjoy taking responsibility. The position of being elected to the school council, for example, is considered to be prestigious. The members learnt many lessons about serving the community from their efforts to organise the school's Halloween disco. Pupils are aware of possible dangers around them and have a good range of strategies to keep themselves safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to develop healthy lifestyles.

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The headteacher works tirelessly with outside agencies to improve attendance. As a result, the large majority attend regularly unless they are unwell.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning with the result that pupils listen and concentrate and behave exceptionally well in lessons. Activities are well matched to the learning objectives that teachers set out at the start of each lesson, and the teachers assess understanding frequently and effectively during the course of lessons.

Consequently, they are able to adapt tasks and promote more effective learning. Other adults support individuals and groups well, allowing children with complex needs to participate in the learning activities in ways appropriate to their capabilities. Activities are often planned so that they support the whole school aims of improving literacy; children respond well to opportunities to talk and collaborate effectively. In the most effective literacy lessons, teachers offer good models of effective speech and writing, often using challenging vocabulary and encouraging children to follow suit. However, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of

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

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independent learning, particularly for the more able. Computers are in regular use to aid research and to consolidate or extend pupils' knowledge and skills. The school has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the teaching, informed by effective monitoring and supportive lesson observation programmes.

Teachers use the assessment of pupils' work to accurately identify the next steps in learning and these are shared with the pupils either as the objectives for the lesson or as personal targets for learning. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, is well-organised and includes imaginative learning opportunities. These happen both within lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Talented pupils are given opportunities to develop more rapidly, especially in sport and music. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' good progress, personal development and well-being. Good provision for the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is embedded across the curriculum. Varied extra-curricular opportunities have a high take-up rate.

All the school's work is underpinned by the staff's care and support for each child. Good links are made with families when children start and this continues through the school. Child protection has a high profile and the school responds quickly and appropriately if there are concerns. Good procedures to support children starting school and those joining the school partway through their primary education help them to settle quickly, and strong links with the local secondary school ease transition at the end of Year 6. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by teachers and the teaching assistants to work on targets set for their development so that they can participate effectively in lessons. Good links are made with a range of outside agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has won the commitment and raised expectations and ambition of the whole school community through her dedication to improving the school. Staff work together very well, supporting one another and developing effective whole-school systems. This collaboration has underpinned good pupil progress. However, the best practice evident in classrooms is not shared widely enough and opportunities to spread expertise are missed. Pupils' work and progress are monitored thoroughly, both as individuals and as part of different groups. Possible underachievement is identified so

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that additional support is given. This enables all pupils, whatever their abilities and backgrounds, to have an equal opportunity to succeed while enjoying their time at school. The strong focus on meeting all pupils' personal pastoral and learning needs is shared by all. Policies and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and safeguarding are extremely rigorous and robust action is taken if there are any concerns.

Governors have played an important part in strategic planning for improvement and contributed well to decisions in their efforts to ensure the best for pupils. They are well informed and monitor the work of the school and so feel able to challenge its effectiveness if there is the need. Partnership with parents is good and the vast majority of parents feel well informed and involved. This was particularly evident at a mathematics curriculum meeting held for parents during the inspection. The governors and headteacher have been focusing on developing community cohesion to promote effectively pupils' appreciation of the diversity of modern society. They have reviewed and evaluated their links with the local community, the church and the wider community through their links with local schools. They recognise that whereas their global links are developing satisfactorily, the contacts that are being made with more diverse communities across the city are not strong enough.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the nursery classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage with a variety of experiences and skills but the range of abilities is well below that expected for their age. They settle very quickly, enjoy what they are doing, and go on to make good progress.

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The inspection took place early in the year when the youngest children had only been in school a short time and were still only attending part-time. Despite this short experience of school, they were already using the resources with confidence, joining in whole-class discussions with pleasure and actively offering answers to questions.

Across the whole Early Years Foundation Stage many opportunities are provided each day for adults to work with the children, either as a separate group or on an individual basis, to observe and assess their knowledge and skills and to develop activities to promote their development. As a result, children in the Reception year make good progress from their low starting points, although they start Year 1 below average, particularly in their language skills. This is an area of development identified by the school and is a focus for improvement. All adults contribute positively to the caring and supportive environment and this effectively promotes children's safety, welfare and social skills. Children spend much of their time appropriately in choosing their own activities, in experimenting, and exploring the resources and their surroundings. The outside areas are available to extend their physical activities and the opportunities for investigation and creative development are promoted well outside of the classroom.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Only a very small proportion of parents returned the questionnaire. Of those parents, the vast majority feel their child's time at Parks is a really positive experience, praising the teaching, the progress their child is making and the way the school looks after their child.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Parks Primary 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 296 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	44	7	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	56	5	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	44	7	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	50	6	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	56	5	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	44	6	33	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	50	6	33	0	0	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)	9	50	5	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	50	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	44	7	39	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	39	8	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	44	7	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	43	10	43	0	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 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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">■ 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.



14 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parks Primary, Leicester LE3 9NZ

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. You are rightly proud of your school and what it does for you. You and your parents are correct in thinking that you go to a good school. Here are some of the things we found out about you.

- you get a good start to your schooling in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- you make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics, and you reach standards in Year 6 that are in line with most pupils of your age.
- your behaviour is excellent. You are polite, friendly and helpful to everyone. You told me how everyone gets on well together and that you enjoy helping the younger children.
- you told me that you like your teachers a lot and you feel very safe in school. I could see that you are taught well and you enjoy trying to meet the challenges teachers set you. I could see that you want to do well in your work and you understand the targets teachers give you to help you improve.
- everyone in the school works together as a strong team and there is a good partnership with your parents and others who can help you to learn.
- the staff look after you extremely well so you are kept safe and feel happy at school.

Even though Parks Primary is a good school, there are some things it can do to make it even better. We have asked the headteacher and governors to:

- help you to get better in your writing, especially the boys and the more able of you, through building on your effective speaking and listening work
- ask your teachers to plan activities that help you get better at working on your own
- continue to get you to use lots of speaking and listening activities in literacy lessons
- make sure that you all benefit from some of the best things going on in some classes.

Thank you again for helping us and we wish you well. You can help at school by all doing your very best.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Stafford

Lead inspector

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