

The Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125461
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340769
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Kauffman

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Woodward
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Eastwood
Date of previous school inspection	8 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and one administrator. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff ' including senior and middle leaders and therapists ' external agencies such as the therapists and the Gypsy Roma coordinator, pupil groups and parents. They observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the governors' master file, school policies, assessment systems, safeguarding procedures, pupils' class work and 52 questionnaires returned from parents.

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

- How well the school's comprehensive review of its self-evaluation has included all stakeholders' views.
- Parents' general involvement in the school and their interest in tracking their child's progress.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- How well the range of assessment processes has been refined into a system to track targets for pupils' academic and personal development.

Information about the school

The Park School is located in an area with a rich diversity of cultures and backgrounds. Pupils are drawn from a wide area, including out of county. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school is now designated as a centre for pupils with learning difficulties (LD). There is no fixed nature of the intake and individual ability levels and additional needs fluctuate annually to some degree, although current needs include severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, emotional and social needs. The local authority has categorised the school as having a language specialism, which is used widely across the county.

The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but a significant percentage, exceeding national averages, come from Gypsy Roma and Asian Pakistani heritages.

The school's new technology extension has expanded the specialist teaching areas. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a multi-faith garden supported by the local mosque, the United Reformed Church and the Buddhist temple and there is a new music studio, Home Lodge, in the school grounds. In 2009, the school was one of the first schools in the country to gain the Investors in People Gold 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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Park School lives up to the excellent reputation it has in the community. Staff continually focus on improving the provision for all learners. Home visits and a rigorous assessment on entry to the school establish pupils' starting points. Excellent curricular plans that link basic skills and personal development with the Every Child Matters national agenda provide a central core to the curriculum, ensuring all pupils can meet their potential and be happy and independent in their future lives. The resulting outcomes are impressive. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to remain healthy and keep safe, and the benefits of behaving well. They make good progress in their lessons, and an increasing proportion make outstanding progress. The majority of parents and carers are very happy with their role in the school's life; during an open morning for established and prospective parents and carers, parents expressed their confidence in the school. One family explained, 'I am so happy my son has found The Park School. He has had wonderful opportunities for independence such as the school's activity holiday.'

The quality of teaching is good. Many examples of outstanding teaching were observed, but occasionally lessons are not conducted quickly enough to ensure pupils make rapid progress. Inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback also help to explain why progress is not yet outstanding. In most cases, however, teachers' planning focuses on establishing good learning habits and teachers make explicit use of each pupil's tracking data to ensure targets challenge pupils' learning. One new teacher explained that 'this is a fantastic school which has rekindled my real passion for teaching'. Well-trained teaching assistants provide high-level support for pupils. The school works with the Teacher Development Agency to explore continuing professional development, keeping all staff training at the cutting edge of innovative ideas, and plans to use coaching to share good practice. The school's pioneering work in assessment involves all staff; it has established the Park Profile. This profile measures individual pupils' degree of independence when using key skills. It also identifies their success in applying independent skills in unsupported settings.

The vibrant curriculum has established a central core of basic skills in communication, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). This is firmly supported by an everyday approach to personal development; together these shape the foundation for all learning. Cross-curricular links have a strong impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning because they consolidate pupils' understanding of why certain key skills are important. Excellent links to other LD schools are exploring investigative work into and comparing data on reading, spelling and mathematics to test the accuracy of the level of challenge at key points in a year for each pupil.

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Excellent care, guidance and support are central to the school's planning. The outstanding therapists are a powerful tool for improving self-esteem. Parents are involved in ongoing discussions with both school and therapy staff where issues arise, particularly in speech and language targets. Reports, individual education plans and annual reviews provide parents with a detailed review of their child's academic and personal development, although parents and carers say that they often find information from the school difficult to understand because of the technical language, or that there is a slow response to their queries. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary and regularly reviewed.

An outstanding senior team leads the school. Their ambition for improvement has given them an appetite to accept only the best for every child in the school. The headteacher is an enabler and she has enriched her senior team by devolving responsibilities, giving managers the desire to exceed their goals. Self-evaluation is very detailed and is continually being refined. Continuing professional development that is linked to robust monitoring and evaluation systems ensures all staff have the opportunity to take on new challenges; for example, the new middle management team have a pivotal role in developing policies as well as monitoring teaching and learning to ensure consistency across the school. The school has maintained unwavering improvement since the previous inspection and has excellent capacity for further improvement. This is highlighted through its exciting building, environmental and faith projects and the recent gold award for its Investors in People review.

The newly formed team of governors does a good job. Their individual committees are strong, for example the finance committee, but the structure and accountability of those individual committees are not sufficiently well reflected in the work of the whole governing body to assist the school on its journey to further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress by ensuring that lessons are carried out at a consistently brisk pace and that marking and feedback always show pupils clearly what they need to do to improve their work.
- Strengthen parental links by reviewing communications with parents and carers.
- Develop the governors' role in monitoring and evaluation through a structured approach to governors' visits and feedback so that they have a greater influence on whole-school evaluation.

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

In the lessons observed during the inspection all learners, including minority ethnic and Gypsy Roma pupils, were seen to be achieving well and many were making even better progress. There was a real buzz in a Year 7 lesson where pupils could not wait to improve their ICT skills because of the introduction of an exciting publishing package; the link to advertisements they are familiar with in everyday life strengthens their progress. In science, the wow factor for pupils was their amazement of how they could

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experiment with the power of an electric motor; collaboration and sharing ideas prompted some very inquisitive questions about a motor that could power the whole school. The challenge to pupils' thinking and decision making in English, following the use of a video clip on corporal punishment, prompted lots of comments about right and wrong and social conscience. Outstanding provision has a powerful influence on pupils' self-esteem. In individual education plans, a consistent focus on small steps in both academic and personal development targets challenges pupils to do their best.

Learners can explain how to maintain a healthy lifestyle in relation to eating, exercise and their feelings. Pupils enjoy the many lunchtime activities such as computer club, Tai chi and gardening which enrich pupils' experience and give them confidence in making choices. Relationships are excellent. Pupils feel safe and know about safety issues. All know they can talk to an adult who can help them if they are worried; in some cases, pupils like to confide in pupil mentors. Behaviour is usually very good. Strong management systems ensure that even those few pupils who have difficulty controlling their behaviour come to realise that good behaviour brings success in learning.

Action taken to ensure good attendance is innovative and consistent. Learners' contribution to the wider community is limited by their complexity of need, although projects such as singing at the cathedral at Christmas are encouraging regular rehearsals to get ready to sing with other choirs. Pupils' involvement in the school community is good; for example, they acted as guides during the open morning. Parents remarked on the polite and confident guides. The school council members take their role very seriously. Pupils' economic well-being is encouraged by having a budget to improve areas of the school where the pupils have reported issues. Paired or group work in class, as seen in science, showed pupils' ability to work collaboratively. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All staff model strong values and pupils have developed a keen sense of right and wrong. Pupils are reflective; they care for each other, as shown by the work of the pupil mentors. The quiet memorial garden encourages thinking. The school uses multicultural events to celebrate diversity and the multi-faith garden is an example of the school working together with its community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ 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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The senior staff are aiming to share examples of outstanding teaching across the school through coaching and mentoring. Teachers' clear planning ensures that all work is matched to pupils' individual needs. Many teachers use innovative teaching styles such as using 'YouTube' in a lesson on relationships to explore 'the world's strictest parents'; pupils were stimulated to discuss and understand how and why relationships can be different. Pupils are developing very good learning habits to help their future development. Less successful lessons lack pace and some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback reduce their impact on improvement.

The lively and outstanding curriculum adds a sparkle to learning; customised planning has a purposeful link into everyday life, encourages independence and builds self-confidence. An example was a trip to the local shopping centre to buy items for school, so rehearsing pupils' money skills and interpersonal relationships. Pupils experience a broad, balanced curriculum with good opportunities for personal, social and health education and citizenship to help pupils cope with the challenges of growing up. Flexibility is a key to the curriculum's success. Work-related learning, college placement and work experience support pupils into the wider community. Many local companies are pleased to welcome Park School pupils on work experience.

Transition arrangements are excellent. Care, guidance and support for pupils are paramount in all aspects of learning and well-being. Pupils and their parents and carers value carefully targeted therapy sessions. A wide range of agencies is called upon to support pupils and their families. Excellent advice comes from external partners such as the Connexions adviser and the Gypsy Roma family coordinator. The families trust her

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judgements and she helps to support pupils through difficult times when, after a family move, they need to reintegrate into school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are single-minded about ensuring pupils enjoy their education and are outstanding in terms of sensitivity and challenge. All staff work stringently to ensure pupils become as independent and confident as possible, while aiming to drive pupils to achieve the best they can throughout their time in school. Morale is high and staff at all levels take on management responsibility with enthusiasm. Extensive monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning take place and a rigorous analysis of all areas of the school's work is collected and collated. The governors are a new team; their structures and procedures are developing effectively but not yet embedded. Nonetheless, they ensure that statutory requirements, including through some exemplary practice in safeguarding, are met.

Engagement with parents is positive, although a minority of parents find communication from the school difficult to understand. There are outstanding links with local schools and services. The Park School has taken a lead in working with other schools on areas such as assessment and language development. The school is inclusive. Awareness of other cultures, lifestyles and the importance of developing personal qualities, for example empathy and negotiation, help pupils to take their place in society. Community cohesion has started well in the school through a range of activities from local links to nearby shopping to supporting a school in Kenya. The school has audited community cohesion and produced an action plan, but governors have yet to assimilate community cohesion into their committee structure.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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

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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

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents are very positive about the school. Even where parents did have concerns about communication, their final comment generally expressed confidence in the school. Open morning was a very busy occasion with many prospective parents keen to see the support offered by the school. One parent commented, 'The school has such a good reputation I wanted to see for myself whether it would suit my son.' Parents of Gypsy Roma families feel well supported through the difficulties they experience as their families move around and schooling loses continuity. The school has a thriving Friends' Association. Recently a series of family learning workshops received positive evaluations.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The 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 forty-five completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection with a further 7 received later. In total, there are 102 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	58	17	38	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	28	62	16	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	58	18	40	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	44	20	44	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	62	15	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	58	15	33	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	51	17	38	2	4	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)	24	53	17	38	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	62	14	31	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	53	14	31	3	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	44	22	49	3	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	60	15	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	67	13	29	1	2	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.



11 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Park School, Woking GU22 7AT

My colleagues Julie Coop, Carol Hoskins and I would like to thank you so much for welcoming us to The Park School and sharing many of your lessons and your lunch hour. We enjoyed talking to you over our delicious lunch and were so interested to know how much you understand about healthy eating.

From the moment we walked into the school and saw the wonderful artistic firework flower arrangement you made, we could see how creative you are and how you respect your school and love to make it look attractive. We agree with you and many of your parents that The Park School is outstanding.

Your staff work very hard to help you make progress in your learning. Teaching is good and we saw some outstanding lessons, and this ensures that all groups of pupils achieve well. Really good guidance and support help you to make great strides in your personal development, and learn the importance of good behaviour. We could see how much you enjoyed running the tuck shop and doing all the practical activities that help you practise your new skills. To add to the success of your school we would like to suggest some ideas that may help to make it even better.

We have asked those in charge to:

- improve your progress even further by ensuring that all lesson activities take place as quickly as the best we saw, and that teachers always show you clearly how to improve your work
- strengthen communication with your parents and carers
- help the governors to develop their monitoring and evaluation through structured school visits and feedback, so they can have more say in school self-evaluation.

You can do your bit to help by always listening to advice from your staff and concentrating hard in lessons to complete all your targets.

Yours faithfully

Lynne Kauffman

Lead inspector

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