

Parkside Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116959
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	379335
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	482
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Harris
Headteacher	Neil Mills
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2009
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Marsh

Additional inspector

Sally Hall

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspector observed 28 lessons taught by 27 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at communications with parents, the teaching and learning policy and the school's development planning. The questionnaires from pupils, staff and 350 parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

Parkside is a larger than average-sized middle school. The school has grown in size since the last inspection and is now over-subscribed. It shares the same building with a first school although it takes pupils from a wide range of other schools. Onsite childcare provision is available but this not managed by the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is also average. Most pupils are of White British heritage; a few have minority ethnic backgrounds, including some who speak English as an additional language. In the last three years the school has met the government's floor targets.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school that is highly appreciated by parents and pupils.
- Pupils make good progress so attainment is above average.
- The school is taking effective steps to close the gaps in the attainment between different groups.
- Strengths in teaching and a good curriculum are ensuring pupils enjoy learning and achieve well. The school’s effective promotion of the social and spiritual aspects of learning makes a significant contribution to these positive outcomes.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have improved the quality of teaching and have engendered a strong commitment amongst all staff to further improvement. Teachers are passionate about teaching and learning.
- Generally, teaching is effective because assessment is used well. Teachers pepper their lessons with opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their understanding to others in the class. Learning is often enhanced through the adjustment teachers make in response to this.
- The school promotes very well pupils’ understanding of right and wrong. These moral values, combined with effective behaviour management, ensure high standards of behaviour are almost always the norm.
- Overall attendance has improved and is above average. However the attendance of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below average.
- The school has a good capacity for further improvement. There is a track record of improvement since its last inspection. In addition, the governing body and the school’s senior leadership team have identified accurately the relative weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to further improve the school. These include:
 - the further reduction in teaching that is merely satisfactory by ensuring teachers consistently challenge the full ability range.

- the teaching of reading for the very few pupils who have limited awareness of letters and sounds
- that the current school development does not communicate a sufficiently clear long-term vision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enhance the progress pupils make by:
 - increasing the opportunities outstanding teachers have to provide support to those that are less effective
 - ensuring all lessons encourage higher level thinking, including through opportunities to evaluate and apply their learning in a range of problem-solving contexts
 - for the few pupils with more profound reading difficulties provide them with sessions that improve their understanding of letters and sounds
 - work with parents to improve the attendance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Develop a clear long-term vision for the school that is appropriately shared with all staff, pupils, parents and carers, to include:
 - the further improvements needed to become an outstanding school
 - overarching targets that can be used by the governing body to evaluate the effectiveness of senior leaders
 - opportunities for senior leaders to regularly check the progress being made
 - guidance for middle leaders to ensure improved consistency in planning at all levels.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons, pupils were observed to be making good progress overall. In a minority of lessons, pupils make outstanding progress largely because they are able to take a great deal of responsibility for identifying how they can improve their work and attain at the highest level. Pupils speak confidently in lessons and explain well the thinking that underpins their responses to teachers' questioning. Pupils are very willing to learn from mistakes. For instance, pupils regularly make changes to their work as result of comments made by teachers and by their peers. Pupils almost always work at a good pace, with many responding particularly well when presented with the challenge of completing a task quickly or in competition with other pupils.

Since the last inspection, improvements to teaching across all year groups are resulting in more consistent progress across the school. Although there is some variation from year to year, pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment. The 2011 results at the end of Year 6 were close to the national average rather than better because of inconsistencies in performance that resulted in rather too many

pupils failing to reach their challenging targets in either English or mathematics. This situation has improved and more consistently effective teaching is resulting in fewer pupils being below their target. The rate of progress pupils make accelerates well in Years 7 and 8 and, as a result, attainment is consistently above average by the time pupils leave school. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals progress at an enhanced rate. This is because the progress these pupils make is regularly reviewed and adjustments made to the provision they experience. For instance, some have participated in a 'lads and dads' session outside of the normal timetable.

The school ensures that different groups all achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were observed to be making especially good progress in lessons. Many are supported by adults who were observed to be taking effective steps to ensure students worked independently and fully participated in lessons. The progress made by autistic pupils is impressive, largely because their progress is very rigorously monitored and adjustments are made quickly to ensure they are on track. For instance, where appropriate, they are taught separately from their peers. When inspectors listened to very weakest students read, it became clear that some did not have a full awareness of all the strategies they need to link letters to their sounds. All pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and inspectors observed pupils working very well with their 'chat partners' and in larger groups. Although the school has organised opportunities for pupils to visit different places of worship, pupils' cultural awareness is rather limited because it largely depends on their religious education lessons.

Quality of teaching

The school is reaping the benefits from the focus it has had on teaching in recent years. The vast majority of parents think that teaching is good. Teachers have a very good awareness of how their pupils learn. They make learning enjoyable by ensuring pupils experience a wide range of activities in lessons. One pupil captured the views of many in stating, 'You do not have the time to get bored in this school.' Teachers avoid overly long introductions, preferring instead to get students working so they often learn from their mistakes. Teachers are prepared to take risks to make learning more enjoyable. For instance, one teacher intrigued pupils by not revealing the learning objectives at the start of the lesson. Pupils concentrated well as they tried to identify the purpose of the opening activity. Teachers review learning very well indeed. Throughout lessons, they pause in order to praise pupils and to check that they know precisely what is required to attain well. Towards the end of lessons, learning is often reinforced very well through activities designed to encourage deeper thinking. Teachers' questioning ensures all pupils have to think about the important ideas. In an outstanding physical education lesson, expert questioning enabled pupils to develop a range of movements inspired by the concept of a superhero. In a very effective English lesson, a teacher increased pupils' understanding of Victorian times through the use of probing follow-up questions.

Although there are inconsistencies in marking, generally teachers identify strengths in pupils' work and set them targets for improvement. Inspectors saw many examples of peer- and self-assessment being used to increase pupil awareness of how they could improve. Homework makes an important positive contribution to pupils' progress. Alongside the many examples of good practice, inspectors observed

a minority of teaching that was less effective. In these lessons, pupils made less progress because teachers did not appropriately challenge the full ability range. Weakness in planning meant that, although pupils could achieve the outcomes, not all made good progress. This was usually because opportunities were missed to require pupils to apply their learning in interesting, challenging contexts or they did not have the opportunity to use higher order thinking.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils were observed to be well behaved, polite and considerate during the inspection. In lessons, pupils' positive attitudes contribute to the good progress they make. Evidence from questionnaires and from interviews with pupils revealed that disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils respond well to the school's clearly articulated expectations as regards behaviour. There have been some adaptations to the curriculum designed to increase the levels of concentration of a minority of pupils. For instance, this was a factor in the recent reorganisation of English groups in order to enhance the progress made by lower attaining pupils in Year 7.

Bullying is infrequent. Only very rarely is it not dealt with to the satisfaction of pupils, parents and carers. Prejudice-based bullying is also very rare. Behaviour is improving, including for those pupils whose special educational needs relate to behaviour. Although the school very rigorously monitors the overall progress of these pupils, there is not enough detailed monitoring of any changes in their behaviour over time. Punctuality is excellent and attendance overall has improved so that it is above average. Although the attendance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, the situation is improving and the school has increased the resources that are to be directed at improving the outcomes generally for this group.

Almost all pupils, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that pupils feel safe in school. Pupils interviewed by inspectors were able to provide many examples of how they are taught about unsafe situations, including what to do in such circumstances.

Leadership and management

In recent years, senior leaders and the governing body have rightly prioritised the need to improve teaching, which had been judged satisfactory in the last inspection report. They are to be congratulated on their success in making substantial improvements to this key aspect of provision. The monitoring of teaching and learning is a major strength. Strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified. Under-performance has been very effectively challenged and there is growing evidence that the school is successfully spreading the best practice. Several teachers spoke in glowing terms of the very effective professional development they experience. This is a highly effective combination of whole-school training and bespoke coaching designed to meet the needs of each individual. There is a buzz about teaching and learning that stems from the infectious enthusiasm of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

The school manages its resources well so that it is able to deploy high levels of

additional support where this is needed. This is allowing the school to take action that contributes to improved equal opportunities. A great deal of expert one-to-one support is provided so all pupils are fully included in lessons. There are also positive signs that the attention being given to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is paying dividends. Targets have been adopted for these pupils that will, even more quickly, close the gap in attainment that has been apparent in the past.

Leaders have improved the curriculum. Attainment in writing has been raised because pupils' literacy targets are being considered in subjects other than English. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is growing. Pupils spoke excitedly about the creative Fridays when they can pursue their interests. For instance, some girls have invented an alternative to kayaking that involves safely negotiating a slalom blindfold, as part of the Parkside Olympics planned for later this year. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet government requirements. The school's partnership with the high school has been effective in ensuring there is a high degree of confidence in the final assessments made relating to the pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 8.

The governing body has astute insights and has provided useful critical feedback to leaders. However, senior leaders have paid relatively less attention to improvement planning and, as a result, a longer term vision for how the school is to develop in the future is not totally clear. This makes it more difficult for the governing body to hold senior leaders to account. It also partly explains some of the inconsistencies in the planning undertaken by middle leaders which has resulted in targets in a few subjects that are less challenging.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



13 January 2012

Dear pupils

Inspection of Parkside Middle School, Bromsgrove, B61 0AH

I would like to thank you making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. Additional thanks go to those of you who we interviewed, for your interesting comments that helped inform our conclusions.

The great news is that your school has improved and is now good. Your behaviour during the inspection was impeccable and you told us that that it is almost always good even when inspectors are not in the school. We were impressed with the improvements that have been made to teaching. This good teaching, plus the lively curriculum, explain why almost all of you indicated in the questionnaire that you enjoyed school. We were also impressed with the positive attitudes you have to learning. Your teachers use questions well and you play your part by giving thoughtful responses which you explain well. When given the opportunity, you are very creative, for instance in recreating the Olympics at Parkside. All of you make good progress but the school does especially well in ensuring pupils with special educational needs receive high levels of support so they can be fully included in lessons. In the better lessons, teachers enable you to see for yourselves what levels you are achieving and what you must do to improve. Assessment is used very effectively so that you usually undertake work that is appropriate to your abilities. However, in a minority of lessons, more-able pupils in particular would benefit from increased opportunity to solve problems and think at a higher level.

To further improve your school we have asked your senior leaders to ensure all teachers challenge all of you in lessons so that you achieve even more. We think that more could be done to highlight how the school could become outstanding. You will probably have some ideas about this which I am sure the headteacher will want to hear.

I wish you all the best for the future and I hope your Olympics are a success.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

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