

Park Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124029
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359565
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Cope
Headteacher	Mrs Georgina Frost
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons and saw 16 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of parents, pupils, members of staff and the governing body. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at national assessment data and the school's assessments, samples of work done by past pupils and those currently in the school, evidence of leaders' monitoring and evaluations of their work, and documentation relating to safeguarding. Questionnaires returned by 345 parents and carers were scrutinised as well as a sample of pupils' questionnaires and those completed by staff members.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Do pupils have positive attitudes in lessons?
- Whether there has been sufficient improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6.
- How rigorous are the monitoring and the evaluation of the school's work by the governing body?

Information about the school

Almost all pupils are White British in this larger-than-average-sized primary school. An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than average. The school has achieved several awards which reflect the range of opportunities offered to pupils. Among the most recent are the International School Foundation award and Eco School Status (Silver).

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

This is a good school. Effective leaders and managers have brought about significant improvements in the school's work. Since the previous inspection the overall quality of teaching and learning has risen to good. Attainment shows an upward trend. The rate of progress has improved in Key Stage 2 and pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school. Pupils' personal development has also improved and their behaviour and attitudes to learning and contribution to the life of the school are exemplary. Good improvement is underpinned by outstanding care, guidance and support. School leaders have a largely accurate view of the school's performance and amply demonstrate good capacity to sustain improvement.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly typical skills for their age and, overall, they make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. The school's evaluation of progress in communication, language and literacy skills is more generous than the inspectors found. This is because good writing skills are not effectively developed from the earliest stages of provision. The teaching of letters and the sounds they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not give children the good support and confidence that they need to practise writing independently, nor is it always followed through as well as it could be into Years 1 and 2. This has an impact in Key Stage 1 because children are not as well prepared for their writing as they should be. Despite generally steady progress this shortfall hinders good achievement in writing at Key Stage 1.

Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is average. School assessments indicate a rising trend over the past three years and that it is likely to continue. The school's successful work on assessment and target-setting has led to their more effective use by teachers. This has a positive impact on teaching and learning which are good overall, and at times outstanding, and accounts for pupils' good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. They are keen to do well and the additional support they receive from skilled staff, well-tailored individual learning plans and high-quality care gives them a good sense of achievement. The curriculum challenges pupils well and enables their good achievement and enjoyment of learning in many areas. This is particularly noticeable, for example, in pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning and in the way role-play opportunities benefit their personal development skills.

The majority of parents and carers have positive views about the school and its work, and share an ambitious vision for its success with school staff and the governing body.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing at the end of Year 2 by:
 - embedding good writing skills more effectively in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - using a consistent and effective approach to the teaching of letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
 - evaluating the impact of provision to ensure measurable improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and their eagerness to learn mean that they get the best from their lessons. They enjoy challenges, especially when they are able to work together to find solutions. Relationships with teachers are extremely positive and pupils respond well to the guidance they are given through assessment in order to improve their work. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to contribute ideas about what they want to learn and to apply their skills in different ways. This leads to added enthusiasm for learning so pupils seek to do their best.

Overall, pupils make good progress throughout the school. No groups are seen to underachieve and a previous gap between girls' and boys' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been closed, not least because of the 'boy friendly' opportunities for role play which have added creativity to their writing. Despite the upward trend in writing at the end of year 2, progress in writing is satisfactory, rather than good and does not match the good pace of learning seen in mathematics.

Most of pupils' personal development outcomes are good, but there are praiseworthy exceptions. Excellent manners, politeness and general conduct around the school, as well as pupils' outstanding contribution to school life, contribute a great deal to the life-skills they need to secure their future well-being. The school council is extremely active and ensures that every pupil has a say in school matters. They keep abreast of what happens in other schools, by meeting their school council for discussions. Other pupils serve on the eco committee, or act as playground buddies, librarians or prefects to help daily routines run smoothly. Pupils take a strong interest in their local surroundings by working with volunteers to help clean up a school pond, for example, raising funds for charities, or inviting grandparents to an annual lunch. Pupils say they feel safe in school and share trusting relationships with adults who take care of them.

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' preparation, creative use of resources, and good subject knowledge combine well to give lessons the pace and challenge they need to ensure good progress. There is a strong sense of urgency about learning from the outset and pupils are left in no doubt about what is expected of them. Teachers take full account of pupils' varying abilities and question well to assess understanding at each stage of the lesson. Consequently, the pupils themselves can judge how well they have learned. Interesting topics motivate pupils. Support from teaching assistants is generally well focused and adds significantly to the quality of learning, though occasionally some have too passive a role during the first part of the lesson. There are a small number of instances when pupils' attentiveness is stretched to its limits or pupils do not finish practical work because the teacher's explanation takes too long. Teachers mark pupils work well in all subjects and pupils appreciate the guidance they get about how to improve.

The school's curriculum is well organised and provides imaginative opportunities for learning. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are woven well into topic work so that pupils apply skills more widely. Exciting enterprise opportunities were seen during the inspection which purposefully challenged pupils' artistic, technology and ICT skills, for example, with a view to raising funds for the school. French is a well established feature and has provided the stimulus needed for contact with French-speaking schools abroad. The curriculum is

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enriched well by a good range of activities which boost learning in topic work as well as pupils' personal development and well-being.

There is overwhelming agreement among parents and carers that their children are safe and properly cared for in school. Many share the inspectors' view that care, guidance and support for the most vulnerable pupils, and at times families, is outstanding. There is a welcoming and supportive environment for parents and pupils. Arrangements for children starting school are excellent, as are those for pupils transferring to high school. Parents are happy with the systems in place for sharing information. Pupils' relationships in school and their tolerance of others reflect the high quality of the guidance they receive.

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?

Senior leaders have worked effectively to improve the school following the previous inspection. Well-planned professional development opportunities have enhanced leadership skills at all levels. Expectations of staff and pupils have risen and there is a corporate drive for continued improvement. Teaching and learning is managed well. Rigorous monitoring by senior staff, incisive evaluation of quality and peer-observations have helped to establish a stronger teaching team. In particular, the school has successfully improved the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2, and these pupils now make more rapid progress. The governing body takes an active role in challenging and supporting the school. Governors know the school well and effectively hold it to account through regular visits and robust performance management. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are well established and reflect good practice, for example, in the way technology is utilised and pupils are involved in assessing safety issues. The school works closely with other agencies and ensures that all are aware of their responsibilities. School leaders vigorously challenge all forms of discrimination and place equality at the heart of the school's agenda. They are equally ambitious for every pupil and determined that each will receive the opportunities needed to achieve. Community cohesion is strongly promoted. Action taken to maintain good-quality relationships with local community groups have successfully involved pupils, parents and carers. The International Schools status has opened up further opportunities for pupils to appreciate how their learning and values can be shared with other communities.

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good overall. From broadly average starting points, they make good progress. By the end of Reception most are securely within the early learning goals in most areas of learning. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those which children choose independently. Children behave well and are keen to learn. They share equipment well and demonstrate good levels of independence when making choices. The outdoor classroom is generally used well for exploration and play but children are not always provided sufficiently with activities that encourage the development of their writing skills. Some of the lessons taught by adults are too long so children lose concentration, for example, when learning letters and sounds and especially if they are not sufficiently challenged. Provision for children's welfare is good. The environment is bright and welcoming and very good relationships between staff, parents and carers help children to feel confident and safe. Assessment is thorough and usually used well to plan for children's needs. There is good leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are well trained and qualified and work with a common purpose. Ideas are shared with other settings in order to maintain best practice and ensure that children continue to achieve well.

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

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

A very large majority of parents' and carers' questionnaires were returned, and most of those were highly supportive of the school. A few parents and carers raised individual concerns which were considered by the inspection team and raised with school leaders. Questions about the management of behaviour and incidents of bullying were the most frequently referred to. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school, discussed this aspect with pupils and staff and examined policies and records relating to behaviour. This scrutiny supported the view that behaviour is outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Park Hall Primary 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 345 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 427 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	197	57	137	40	8	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	207	60	129	37	6	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	150	43	173	50	20	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	170	49	155	45	15	4	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	176	51	153	44	13	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	165	48	164	48	13	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	187	54	150	43	8	2	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)	151	44	171	50	6	2	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	150	43	176	51	9	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	126	37	168	49	35	10	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	112	32	189	55	26	8	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	136	39	172	50	25	7	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	182	53	146	42	14	4	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



20 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Hall Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 5QU

Thank you very much for the warm and friendly welcome you gave to my colleagues and me when we came to inspect your school recently. It was a pleasure to talk to you about your school because you are all so polite and very well mannered. You certainly gave us the impression that you enjoy lots of exciting events, especially ones that you can make money from! We hope the rest of your enterprise week was successful. Well done for keeping your attendance above average. That is very important, so do keep it up.

Park Hall is a good school. You make good progress and the standards reached at the end of Year 6 are improving. That is because you listen so well and work hard in lessons and your teachers work hard to make your lessons enjoyable. There are lots of new and exciting ways for you to learn, especially with information and communication technology, and all the grown-ups in school look after you extremely well to make sure you enjoy your learning safely. I must also mention the angelic singing from the school choir which I heard when I peeped into the hall after school.

Your parents and carers, teachers and the governing body are just as proud of your school as you are and, naturally, want it to be even better. You and your teachers and headteacher are certainly working hard to make it so. We have asked them to do something to help it happen. That is to help pupils to be better writers by the end of Year 2. This means that children in Nursery and Reception classes will be given a lot more activities to encourage writing and that they, as well as pupils in Years 1 and 2, will have a better understanding of letters and the sounds they make so they will be more confident writers.

Yours sincerely

Mr Kevin Johnson

Lead inspector

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