

Parkfields Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109662
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	395484
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Keith Brown

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	467
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Dickens
Headteacher	David Brandon-Bravo
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2008
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Age group	9–13
Inspection date(s)	27–28 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Brown Additional Inspector

Genevieve Usher Additional Inspector

Catherine Stormonth Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 21 teachers, and made brief visits to three other lessons. They were accompanied for part of the inspection by a sign language interpreter. A number of lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, a partner lower school headteacher and the school's local authority adviser. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documents, including policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils, self-evaluation records and assessment information. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 352 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This average-sized middle school serves Toddington and the surrounding villages. Since the last inspection pupils have joined the school from a steadily increasing number of lower schools. In September 2011, Year 5 pupils came from 15 different lower schools. Parkfields Middle School is a member of the Harlington Area School Trust, an education partnership.

The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small number at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is average. Since 1 April 2012 the governing body, on behalf of the Harlington Area School Trust, has managed a specially resourced provision on the school site for pupils with special educational needs who are deaf. This currently provides for eight pupils from across the local authority. The school specialises in science. It meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school's breakfast club is managed by the governing body and was included in the inspection.

Among its awards the school has Sportsmark Gold, the International School Award and National Healthy School Status.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. It has improved since its last inspection, when it was also found to be outstanding. Pupils flourish in an environment that fosters their academic progress and broader social development exceptionally well.
- All groups of pupils, including deaf pupils, make very rapid and sustained progress and achievement is excellent. Attainment in all subjects is consistently well above the levels expected nationally by the time pupils leave school. The outstanding curriculum makes a great contribution to the pupils' academic success and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps them to develop into mature, responsible and thoughtful young people. The school makes excellent use of its specialist science status to extend and enrich learning across all subject areas.
- Teachers plan very interesting lessons and challenge pupils with high expectations. The pursuit of consistently outstanding teaching is increasingly being met because of the commitment and dedication of the staff. Teachers occasionally miss opportunities to stretch some pupils to be more creative in their learning.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour contributes very well to the strong relationships and very positive atmosphere in the school. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, attend regularly and take full advantage of the wealth of opportunities on offer to them. They take a great pride in their school. Pupils are outstandingly well cared for and feel extremely safe.
- Leadership and management are exceptionally strong. The headteacher and his senior team know the school's strengths and development needs well and have guided its growth with well-focused and successful planning. Governors and the wider Harlington Area School Trust provide an ambitious and clear vision for the continuing success of the pupils.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine teaching in the small minority of lessons where it is less than outstanding by ensuring that there are more opportunities for pupils to deepen and stretch their learning by being more innovative and creative in their thinking.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with a wide range of prior attainment, but it is broadly average overall. Progress is rapid in Key Stage 2 and pupils in recent years have achieved above average scores in English and mathematics in their Year 6 national tests. There was a dip in Key Stage 2 test scores in 2011. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 and the school's assessment records show that they are on track to reach above average levels of attainment. In Years 7 and 8 pupils make exceptional progress. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment, based on secure externally moderated teacher assessments, is well above average in English, mathematics and science. The majority have already achieved the expected level of attainment for pupils at the end of Year 9.

Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about their learning. In lessons they settle down to their studies straight away and concentrate exceptionally well. Because tasks are so engaging, pupils are determined to succeed. For example, in an outstanding Year 7 English lesson the teacher pitched a written task on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at a demanding level, building on pupils' knowledge of National Curriculum levels. Pupils aspired willingly to higher levels and independently produced high-quality responses. There is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are closing the gap on pupils nationally. This is because their needs are identified early, work set is matched closely to their ability levels, and teaching assistants are deployed very well to support them by demonstrating skills precisely, teaching subject-specific vocabulary and providing both challenge and encouragement. Teachers' clear delivery enables deaf pupils to lip-read and they are provided with many visual stimuli and helpful resources.

The development of literacy skills across the curriculum is very strong. Pupils all have a reading book and when they arrive to each class they quietly sit down and read until the lesson starts. They read aloud accurately in class, fluently and with expression, showing a very good understanding of the text. Pupils' attainment in reading is above average at the end of Year 6, and well above national expectations by the time they leave Year 8. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are very pleased with the progress that their children are making at the school and agreed that their children's needs are very well met.

Quality of teaching

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The quality of teaching is consistently high and many examples of outstanding teaching were observed. Teachers know their pupils very well, encourage them to succeed and motivate them to participate fully in class. They use examples from everyday life in lessons and these contribute very effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Excellent planning of the curriculum supports teaching very well and provides regular opportunities for teachers to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons and tutor group time. Teachers make it clear that they have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour, effort, and the presentation of their work. They demonstrate excellent subject knowledge which they use to set very clear learning objectives and to plan relevant activities, including skilfully adapted work for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They pay very good attention to the needs of deaf pupils through the use of specialist technology such as radio aids.

Teachers are particularly skilful at assessing how well pupils are grasping new ideas and intervening at just the right time to clarify a misconception or provide another example to reinforce a key message. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils worked on a range of carefully constructed tasks on probability and variation. These were designed to help pupils to work out mutually exclusive outcomes. The teacher's questioning and use of practical examples and analogies helped pupils to learn imaginatively and independently. It is typical of the school's aspirational approach that leaders have identified that staff occasionally miss opportunities to fully stretch pupils in their thinking, and in such cases progress is good rather than outstanding.

The marking of pupils' work is exceptionally thorough. Teachers praise high-quality work appropriately and provide clear guidance for improvement. Pupils assess their own work accurately and maturely. Parents, carers and pupils express great satisfaction with the quality of teaching at the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, parents and carers, and staff say that the excellent behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. Records of behavioural incidents, attendance and exclusions fully support this view. Movement around school is very calm and orderly. Pupils respond very well to the school's strategies for managing behaviour. There is a high level of respect for others, regardless of background or ability. A well-planned reward system encourages positive attitudes and pupils value the 'Praise Postcards', 'Toast of the Week' and 'Head's High Profilers' awards. There are a few pupils whose particular needs result in them exhibiting difficult behaviour at times. These pupils are managed very well indeed and their progress in lessons improves. The school's clear anti-bullying policy is rigorously enforced. The many pupils inspectors spoke to noted that any rare instances of bullying are addressed very promptly and effectively by the school. Pupils show an excellent understanding of the different forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying and cyber-bullying.

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Pupils said they felt very safe and well cared for, and parents and carers agree. Pupils have an excellent understanding about what constitutes unsafe situations and talk confidently about how to keep safe and stay healthy. The school pays excellent attention to pupils' safety and the sensible conduct of pupils ensures the school environment is well-ordered and safe. Pupils' above-average attendance is being sustained because of well-focused strategies to follow up any issues that arise. Pupils are consistently punctual to lessons.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and his senior staff form a cohesive team with very high ambitions. As an active member of the Harlington Area Schools Trust the senior leadership team shares a vision, together with its school, college, business and university partners, of providing a first class education for pupils aged 3–19 in the local area.

Senior leaders' uncompromising pursuit of excellence is securely founded on rigorous self-review and a determination to achieve equality of opportunity and the best possible outcomes for every pupil. They have a close, common understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a determination to achieve excellence in every area, including leadership of the resource base for deaf pupils. This drive has ensured that academic standards and pupils' progress are outstanding. Plans are evaluated and followed through rigorously. Senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the strengths and professional development needs of teachers, and a very effective system for managing performance. They are increasing the opportunities for staff to improve their teaching by observing the existing best practice of their colleagues.

Staff morale is very high and all staff work together outstandingly well. Data are used exceptionally well to assess the performance of individual pupils, pupil groups, curriculum areas and the whole school. Any underachievement is quickly spotted and effective intervention strategies are put in place. The governing body provides excellent strategic direction and challenge, and is involved fully and systematically in evaluating school performance. It ensures that the robust arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

The outstanding curriculum is exceptionally well matched to pupils' needs. It is central to securing pupils' positive engagement and excellent achievement. Pupils say they enjoy the regular themed days and subject-based initiatives. For example, during the recent 'Elizabethan' day, pupils in mixed age groups learned a great deal about the food, clothes, cosmetics, dances, currency and religion of the Tudor age. The curriculum is supplemented by an outstanding range of art, dance, music and sports activities, as well as by visitors and visits, which promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well. The breakfast club, run by the school each day, is organised and supervised efficiently and provides pupils with a range of purposeful activities.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parkfields Middle School, Dunstable, LU5 6AB

I would like to thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we inspected your school. I would also like to thank those who shared their views with the team, including those of you who completed questionnaires.

The school is providing an outstanding education for you. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Excellent teaching leads to you making outstanding progress and reaching levels well above those expected for your age. Your attendance rate is higher than in most middle schools. Well done and please keep it up. Most of you behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. You told us that you are happy and feel exceptionally safe at school. The curriculum is excellent and you are gaining a wide range of skills that are preparing you very well for upper school.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined for the school to become even better. We have asked the teachers to make sure that all lessons stretch you and help you to be more creative in your thinking and learning. You can help by continuing to work hard, checking your work carefully and telling your teachers if you need them to explain some of the work in more detail.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Brown
Lead inspector

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