

Park Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109790
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	288496
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Olson Davis

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Wall
Headteacher	Mrs N Browne
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002
School address	School Road Tilehurst Reading RG31 5BD
Telephone number	01189 015515
Fax number	01189 015516

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school is on a split site. The school is over-subscribed and this has led to large classes in the junior department. There are plans to build a new school in the near future. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English is lower than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average although there is some variation between year groups.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Park Lane Primary is a satisfactory school with good features. Under the good leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher and supported by a strong governing body the school is making rapid and sustainable improvement from a period of instability when standards were declining. The leaders' effective use of good school self-evaluation and a sharply focused school improvement plan have led to many improvements in provision and achievement. Behaviour has improved and standards are higher in mathematics and science. There is good capacity to build on these recent successes. The caring approach adopted by all adults ensures that there is a calm and supportive environment in which pupils can develop. Pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage in their personal development. By the time they reach Year 6 they are confident, mature members of a harmonious community.

The school's good care, support and guidance contribute to pupils' good personal development. This is shown by their evident enjoyment of school, positive attitudes to work and their good attendance. They are polite and friendly. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel that their children do well academically and socially. One parent wrote, 'My child loves all aspects of school life. He never complains about going and runs to the gate every morning.' Understandably, a few parents express concerns that deficiencies in accommodation have affected their children's progress adversely. One commented, '...the school is hampered by the cramped accommodation and large class sizes.'

Teaching is satisfactory and as a result, pupils make steady progress in their learning. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Teaching is quite often good, but not consistently so because teachers have too few opportunities to share good practice. Although there are good examples of teachers checking on pupils' progress this is not the case in all lessons and this sometimes leads to a slow pace in learning. Teachers have improved the way that they teach mathematics and science. As a result, standards have improved in these subjects. Standards in writing are not as high as they should be because pupils have too few opportunities to develop their writing skills other than in literacy lessons.

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Senior leaders give clear direction to the work of the school. Middle managers offer useful support and advice to colleagues throughout the school. However, they do not sufficiently monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility or work alongside their colleagues. This limits their ability to raise standards by providing help where it is most needed. Governors carry out their role diligently and effectively. They work assiduously to address the difficulties caused by the school's accommodation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is good. This area of the school has a new co-ordinator who has developed a well-organised and motivated staff team who provide a rich and stimulating learning environment for the youngest children in the school.

Children thrive in a curriculum that is well planned to ensure coverage of all areas of learning. The Foundation Stage team assess children thoroughly so that they know how to manage the next steps in their learning. Children make good progress in all areas and are well prepared for Year 1. More recently there has been particular focus on the development of early writing skills

to develop children's confidence to 'have a go' and enjoy writing. This success in developing early writing skills is helping the school to move towards its aim of improving pupils' writing throughout the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects.
- Make the quality of teaching consistent so that all lessons have good pace and that all teachers keep a closer check on pupils' progress.
- Develop the role of middle managers to ensure that each has proper oversight of standards and the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry is average. Children make good progress and many reach the goals set for the end of the Reception year. They do particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development. The pupils achieve satisfactorily from Year 1 to Year 6. Standards in the current Year 6 are average and boys and girls make satisfactory progress. The school is likely to reach its targets this year. Effective school self-evaluation and swift action by the headteacher brought an improvement in standards in mathematics and science in 2007. The school focused its teaching on improving pupils' investigational skills. However, standards in writing at the end of Years 2 and 6 were not as high because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write purposefully in other subjects. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make the same progress as their classmates because of the effective additional support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has successfully revised its procedures for promoting good behaviour and pupils respond well showing respect and care for each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a strong social sense by raising money for charities at home and abroad. The school choir is active in the community. Pupils make enthusiastic contributions to the life of the school and feel that their views are valued. For example, the school has introduced a 'friendship bench' in the school garden and has made changes to break-time arrangements on the recommendation of the active school council. Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of good diet and exercise. They eagerly participate in the many opportunities for sport and exercise. Pupils have a sound grasp of basic skills and good personal and social skills. This prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are some clear strengths in teaching across the school despite some inconsistencies. Pupils feel involved in their learning because they understand what they are expected to learn and achieve by the end of the lesson. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and this helps the children to tackle their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Some teachers are skilled at questioning pupils to check their understanding throughout the lesson, adapting the lesson and tasks to meet their needs. However, not all teachers check so carefully on pupils' learning to ensure that they are making good progress. In some lessons, the pace of learning slows because introductory sessions are too long. Therefore, pupils have insufficient time to complete their tasks and to write for extended periods. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide good support to individuals and small groups who need additional help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's focus on developing pupils' investigative skills is working and is successfully raising achievement in mathematics and science. Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills are becoming increasingly effective in literacy lessons but are not planned well enough in other subjects. Pupils speak enthusiastically about design technology and physical education and their artwork is vibrant and celebrated in lively displays. Pupils' learning and personal development benefit from a well-planned programme in personal, social and health education. Pupils' learning also profits from the good links with parents, other schools and outside agencies. The school environment, especially the garden area, is used well to promote learning in the Foundation Stage and on the Key Stage 1 site. However, deficiencies in the Key Stage 2 site limit opportunities for more active learning for the older pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is strong and pupils feel well supported and safe. Parents appreciate this aspect of the school's work. One wrote, 'I feel the ethos for the pupils' happiness and social well-being is very good'. Supervision at break and lunchtime is rigorous and enables pupils to enjoy safely the many playground activities. Pupils report that any rare incidents of disruption or bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. All requirements for ensuring pupils' health and safety and the safeguarding of pupils are met. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. There are well-organised systems for identifying and meeting their needs. Teachers make good use of assessment data to guide pupils on how to improve in English and mathematics, but this is not as well established in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders know the school well. The headteacher promotes a strong, caring ethos in which pupils make good progress in their personal development. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and together they have accurately evaluated the school's work. The school

improvement plan correctly identifies the key areas for improvement, including the need to improve standards in writing. Prompt and effective action by the headteacher has resulted in improved standards in science and mathematics. This illustrates the school's good capacity to improve. The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching with a focus on raising standards. Careful checks are made to ensure that advice has been taken up but some variation in the quality of teaching remains. This is because middle managers are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and in working alongside colleagues. This limits their contribution to raising standards in their areas of responsibility. Governors are strongly involved in the process of school improvement. They carry out their monitoring role well and provide good challenge to the school. Governors are concerned by the large class sizes and have provided additional teachers and teaching assistants to increase the amount of group teaching.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Lane Primary School, Reading, RG31 5BD

My fellow inspectors and I visited your school recently to check how well you were getting on. Thank you for being so friendly and making us feel so welcome. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education and has some good features.

Here are some of the good things about your school:

- your attendance is good and the staff take good care of you
- the children in the Foundation Stage do well because they are given interesting activities
- you enjoy your learning and the other activities in school
- you behave well and want to do your best in lessons
- the school listens to you when you suggest how things could be better and you value being given responsibilities
- you are making satisfactory progress in your learning and this is getting better
- the headteacher and governors have clear plans on how to improve the school.

To improve further, we have asked the school to:

- help you to do better in your writing by giving you more opportunities to practise your writing skills in different subjects
- make sure that teachers share their ideas on what works best, so that all lessons are brisk and lively
- encourage teachers with responsibilities to visit classrooms more often to see how well you are learning.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school. We also hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school even better for you.

Yours sincerely,

Olson Davis

Lead inspector