

Parkfields Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109662
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	310057
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson 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 on roll	
School	484
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Dickens
Headteacher	Mr David Brandon-Bravo
Date of previous school inspection	8 April 2004
School address	Park Road Toddington LU5 6AB
Telephone number	01525 872555
Fax number	01525 875967

Age group	9-13
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Introduction

On this one-day inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors investigated the following issues in detail: pupils' personal development and well-being, assessment procedures and the use of information and communication technology by teachers and pupils. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records. Other evidence included the scrutiny of curricular and planning documents, observation of the school's work, interviews with staff and pupils' and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but HMI found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

Parkfields Middle school is an average sized 9-13 middle school serving the area of Toddington in Bedfordshire. The majority of its pupils are from White British backgrounds. The level of deprivation is below what is found nationally and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average but a higher than average number of pupils has a statement of special educational need. The school has a specialist unit for hearing impaired children. Attainment on entry is above average. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Eco and Sportsmark awards. The school is regularly over-subscribed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parkfields Middle School is outstanding. It successfully fulfils its aim to 'create an environment that enables children to flourish, learn and grow'. Pupils of all abilities and interests are very well cared for, nurtured and challenged to do their very best. Results are outstanding, but the school offers so much more than academic success. Pupils' personal, sporting and cultural development is equally important, so the school offers a wealth of enrichment opportunities that promotes their self-confidence, builds character and adds greatly to their quality of life. Parents are thrilled with the school. Their overwhelming support was summed up by one parent who wrote, 'Parkfields gives our children the best all-round education we could have wished for; we feel that they have reached their full academic potential, gained in confidence and above all are very happy at school, so much so they hate to be absent.'

Standards are outstanding. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 are above average and have been so for the past five years. In Years 7 and 8, pupils make exceptional progress. By the end of their time at middle school, the majority have already attained the expected level of attainment for Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils attaining higher level 6 in English and mathematics in 2007 was well above the national average. Pupils who find learning difficult achieve equally well because of the high quality, personalised support they receive. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is average, and not as high as that achieved in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education are outstanding. Their mutual respect for each other and their teachers results in exceptionally good behaviour. The 'Hub' unit has had a major impact on improving the behaviour and attendance of a small minority of more challenging pupils. Absence rates are well below the national average and exclusions are rare. The vast majority of pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They act as monitors, mentors, librarians and house-captains and wear their badges with pride. They say they feel safe and free from bullying. An active school council has been instrumental in improving areas of the school. Fund-raising for charities and engagement with the local community are exemplary. Regular inter-house sport generates an excellent spirit and friendly rivalry between pupils, and adds significantly to their health and well-being.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers work together and display a corporate willingness to provide the very best for their pupils. They plan lessons that make learning enjoyable, use ICT effectively and forge strong working relations with pupils. All teachers adhere to agreed, standardised approaches that help to promote consistency and high standards. Procedures to monitor how well pupils are doing are exemplary. A 'matrix' of assessment information is used to track the progress of all individual pupils so teachers can see at a glance whether pupils are achieving their targets. High quality displays in all classrooms create a stimulating environment in which to learn.

The outstanding curriculum meets all statutory requirements. Maximum use is made of the school's specialist facilities and teachers. Pupils in Year 5 have their own classrooms, teachers and play areas which aid their smooth induction into the school. They work in groups of similar ability in literacy and numeracy lessons, which helps them to build on what they have already learned. Recruitment difficulties have led to a minimal amount of time for technology in Key Stage 3. In partnership with other local schools teachers have, for the first time, taught the

whole Key Stage 3 curriculum by the end of Year 8. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the wide range of lunchtime clubs, school visits and the annual 'arts week'.

The school's calm, friendly and welcoming ethos is founded upon outstanding care, guidance and support that contribute directly to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Pupils are rewarded for showing care and consideration for others and regular assemblies allow them to celebrate achievement and share their talents with others. Form tutors and pastoral leaders reinforce the school's high expectations of all pupils. They work closely with parents to ensure pupils remain on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them. Parents comment favourably on the recently introduced arrangements for extended homework tasks and better communication with teachers via email. All safeguarding arrangements are in place. The learning support team provides an exceptional level of care and support for disabled and vulnerable pupils. A small number of pupils with hearing impairments receive expert help and are fully included in the life of the school. Many parents comment favourably on the number of teachers who 'go the extra mile' to ensure that their child is happy in school.

Leadership and management, including governance, is outstanding. An excellent headteacher and his team of senior leaders are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have acted decisively to raise standards and achievement. All staff constantly strive to maintain the school's high standards and to seek further improvement. Middle leaders are fully accountable for monitoring and evaluating how well pupils in their care are doing. The support and challenge provided by governors have been invaluable in helping to resolve the issues raised in the previous inspection and ensure that outstanding value for money is achieved. All leaders, managers, teachers and support staff show that the school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the strategies used to promote achievement in English, mathematics and science into ICT
- Ensure sufficient time is allocated to technology in Key Stage 3.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

6 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parkfields Middle School, Toddington, Bedfordshire LU5 6AB.

Earlier this week I visited your school and found it to be outstanding. Your input was vital in helping me to make this judgement, so thank you for allowing me to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you, particularly the group of pupils who met with me in the Moot. I also spent time with some of your teachers in lessons, met the chair of governors and read many letters from parents. Throughout all of this, your behaviour was exceptional and you made me very welcome.

I was impressed with almost every aspect of your school. It is exceptionally well-led by your headteacher and his senior managers. They, and your teachers, provide you with an outstanding range of curricular and enrichment opportunities and look after you well. It was particularly pleasing to see so many of you practising on the field at lunchtime. I know from talking with you and reading the comments made by your parents that sport, music and drama clubs are highly valued and greatly appreciated. The school creates the right environment for you and your friends to learn in and attain exceptionally high results. In return, you respond by behaving very well, applying yourselves to your studies and volunteering your time to help others.

I have asked your teachers to make a couple of minor improvements:

- Ensure that you achieve as well in ICT as you do in English, mathematics and science.
- Allocate at least one hour a week to technology lessons in Key Stage 3.

Your governors and senior leaders are committed to seeking further improvements to your school. You can help them by contributing your views and ideas to your school council representative and asking them to share them at school council meetings.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson Her Majesty's Inspector.