

Queen's Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114478
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311619
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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 on roll	
School	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Davies
Headteacher	Anne Cox
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Park Street Brighton BN2 0BN
Telephone number	01273 686822
Fax number	01273 603046

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this above average sized primary school come from White British backgrounds, though the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is increasing. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than nationally. The school has experienced significant staff changes, including some in key positions. The headteacher was appointed in January 2007. Classes are vertically grouped from Year 1, with children of two years within each class. Children's attainment when they first join the school is generally higher than expected. The school has a 50-place part-time Nursery class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The school's inclusive ethos and strong pastoral care encourage pupils' personal development and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school focuses equally upon pupils' personal and academic development. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, their behaviour is good and they are friendly, considerate and happy. Parental support is overwhelmingly positive. As one parent said, 'This is such a happy family school, my child loves learning.' Children make a very good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and achieve well. By the start of Year 1, most attain above average standards of work; they continue to build on this to reach significantly above average standards overall by Years 2 and 6. As a result, pupils' achievement is good. They achieve especially well in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In English, pupils achieve well, though their skills are markedly higher in reading than in writing. Results in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 were lower in 2007 and not typical of the school's good results over time. Subsequent actions have secured improvement with present work matching previous high standards.

The headteacher is providing good leadership with a clear vision to move the school forward. Since her arrival, assessment procedures have improved, and greater rigour is evident in all aspects of the school's work. The school's managers have achievable plans to increase its strengths and remedy its weaknesses. Good checks on pupils' progress have improved teachers' use of information to develop pupils' learning. Interesting lessons, effective teaching and substantially increased adult support in every class have improved the pace of learning. The curriculum is focused on developing pupils' skills through first-hand learning experiences. For example, in a Year 6 history lesson, a grandparent related wartime experiences, bringing alive wartime Brighton with shrapnel samples, a gas mask and a number of military helmets. In English lessons, pupils often write imaginatively, and at length, but their writing skills are not always transferred well in different subjects.

The school is inclusive, and adults' detailed knowledge of the needs of each pupil is the basis for strong personal care and support. However, attendance is below average and the school does not do enough with parents and children to improve it. Good quality support programmes, trained helpers and challenge ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those more able achieve well. Academic guidance is much improved, though some pupils are unclear about their targets. Some marking does not always indicate whether pupils have met their targets, or does not show clearly how they might improve their work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle well in the Nursery because they are happy and confident. The transition from Nursery to Reception Year is seamless. This is due to the determined efforts of staff to ensure that children's health and well-being are secure and the strong links with parents mean they are well informed. Teachers and teaching assistants form a close-knit team and they have created a stimulating learning environment. Consequently, children make significant progress in most areas of learning. Good and occasionally outstanding teaching nurtures children's personal, social and emotional skills well. The strong focus on speaking and listening supports children's relative weaker communication, language and literacy skills well. Children achieve above average levels for their age. They eagerly join in and learning is fun, as demonstrated

when learning about farm life. Children 'milked' artificial teats (rubber gloves filled with water) and 'sheared' imitation sheep-balloons covered in shaving foam. The school is rightly planning to further develop the outside learning area.

What the school should do to improve further

-
- Provide better opportunities to use writing skills in all subjects to raise the standard of pupils' writing.
- Work more closely with parents and pupils to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

A combination of factors contributed to the dip in pupils' achievement in 2007, such as: organisational changes; low teacher expectations; staff turbulence; and high pupil mobility. Swift action by the school has helped pupils get back on track to achieve well and meet their challenging targets. By the end of Years 2 and 6 standards are significantly above average. Children get off to a very good start in the Nursery and Reception, and most exceed the expected levels for their age by the time they start Year 1. In Years 1 to 6, pupils consolidate their skills. They have a good understanding of number and can solve mathematical problems well. Good opportunities for practical work and better access to resources have led to strong achievement in science, mathematics and in ICT. In English, pupils' reading skills are significantly above average. They write longer pieces of work in a variety of styles and their spelling and punctuation are generally accurate. Nonetheless, pupils' writing skills are not as well developed in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able make good progress from their starting points because of the good level of support and challenge provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour is consistently good, and they enjoy coming to school. Attendance is improving, but the school is not rigorous enough in focusing pupils and parents on the importance of regular attendance. Other aspects of pupils' personal development are strong. They feel safe at school, and report very few instances of bullying. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good. Opportunities for artistic and creative activities are very good, and the school has received the Artsmark gold award. Pupils show good understanding of a variety of cultures and religions and they participated in a Christmas production about the meaning of Christmas. An active pupil council and an eco-friends group have researched and selected a range of playground equipment and they recycle paper. Pupils participate in local community celebrations such as the Brighton Festival children's parade. They know the importance of healthy eating and, in recognition of its work, the school has achieved Healthy School's status. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities for which the school has received an Activemark award. Pupils are well prepared for adult life and are soon to collaborate in a financial project led by a major national bank.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Improved planning for different ability and ages in the same class, using information from assessments, underpins good learning. Teachers and teaching assistants give very good support for all groups of pupils. Foundation Stage teaching ensures a good variety of activities to motivate and broaden children's learning experiences. Relationships are consistently good. Many lessons include brisk question and answer sessions, but teachers rarely direct questions to individuals to sharpen their speaking and listening skills or to gauge their understanding. Writing skills, while used well in English lessons, are not always developed in other curriculum subjects. Worksheets in some subjects such as science do not require answers to be set out in sentences, and writing in topic based work is not always of good quality. Good use of computer skills, often within other subjects, extends their skills. Teachers' marking is variable; the best accurately assesses pupils' attainment, and clarifies next steps for improvement. However, some does not refer to pupils' individual targets or attainment levels.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

All classes include two different year groups. Good planning ensures that work is not repeated in the two-year cycle. Recent measures to lift pupils' achievement have had a positive effect. Activities are better focused on refining pupils' basic skills and the weaker aspects of pupils' mathematical skills have been rectified. Following advice from the local authority, improvements in staff training and class groupings have significantly improved pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. Improvements do not yet extend to ensuring good opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects. The new primary strategies for English and mathematics are developing well. The local area is used effectively to enrich learning. Pupils enjoy visiting The Royal Pavilion and Queen's Park. Pupils also enjoy 'One World Week', when visitors from a variety of cultures and the local community lead workshops from art to African drumming. The curriculum is strengthened by the strong focus on pupils' personal development. They enjoy French and numerous sports and extra-curricular clubs that enrich their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Right from the Nursery, the school provides outstanding care and many parents and pupils comment on the strength of the school 'family'. Good links with external agencies benefit pupils' achievement and well-being. Vulnerable pupils and their families are particularly well supported. Adults in the school know the children very well, and pupils confidently ask for support when in any difficulty. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their concerns and emotions in nurture groups and in personal, social and health education sessions. They are proud to be appointed 'buddies' to each other. Pupils with special gifts or talents are encouraged to take part in additional activities, such as 'bridge weekends' and tournaments. Academic guidance is improving. Good systems check and record pupils' progress, and pupils are generally clear about what they have learned. All have targets for improvement, but pupils have a variable understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear and effective commitment to improvement. She confidently delegates responsibilities, and is supported by a good senior team and a committed governing body. The management team has successfully identified areas of strength, and is working diligently in areas requiring improvement. Recent actions have developed teachers' assessment skills. Leaders of core subjects are increasingly confident of their skills in leading staff training, increasing links between subjects and sharing good teaching practices. Managers at all levels are now fully involved in the monitoring of pupils' learning and progress. New systems are tracking pupils' progress each term, and the information collected is used well by teachers to identify those pupils not progressing as quickly as they could. However, these have not yet had sufficient time to be fully effective.

Governance is good. An extensive training programme helps governors to fulfill their roles and their wide professional expertise brings additional benefits to the school. Governors are developing classroom links to increase their understanding of the teaching and learning processes. Self-evaluation procedures and improvement planning are good and prompted a quick response to a recent fall in standards. Given these factors the school has good capacity to make further improvement. Good links are established with parents and most parents have high regard for the school, although a few believe that their views are not sufficiently influential.

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Annex A

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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Queen's Park Primary School, Brighton and Hove, BN2 0BN

Thank you for your warm welcome on our recent visit, especially those of you who met with us and talked with us at lunchtime. The school can be proud of your friendly and positive attitudes. We are pleased to tell you that yours is a good school.

These are some important things we found out about your school.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a very good start because teaching and support are good and often excellent.
- Teachers and their assistants are doing a really good job in helping you to learn and you told us what fun you had in lessons.
- Your results have gone up and you are making good progress.
- You are considerate, healthy and are well prepared for your future lives, and are proud to be school/eco councillors and buddies and you look after each other so well. You told us school was like a big family!
- The school is well run and your headteacher, staff, governors and parents are working hard together to make it even better than it is now.
- You have so many exciting things to do with visits, visitors and lots of clubs. You told us how much you like them all and that you are especially looking forward to using the climbing wall when it is finished.

This is what we have asked the school to do to make it even better.

- Make sure you use your writing skills in other subjects as well as you do in literacy.
- Work more closely with you and your parents to make sure you attend regularly.

You can help by keeping up the good work and by making sure that you realise how important it is to come to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning Lead inspector