

The Parkland Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120080
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313507
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Darkins
Headteacher	Jane Windsor
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	St Thomas' Road South Wigston Wigston LE18 4TA
Telephone number	01162 782142
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Age group	4-10
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Parkland is an above average-sized primary school. Pupils leave to attend secondary school at the end of Year 5. Children start school with attainment that is below that expected for their age. Their attainment in communication, language and literacy is lower than in the other areas of learning. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational need is higher than in most schools. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Approximately 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A few of these pupils are at the early stages of speaking English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post two terms. She is the third headteacher in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Parkland is a satisfactory school. Following a significant period of disruption, the school has made recent improvements and it has the capacity to move forward and do even better. The strong vision and direction of the headteacher has brought staff and governors together with a clear sense of purpose. Already, standards in reading and mathematics have risen, although standards in writing have remained stubbornly lower. A recent review has resulted in a curriculum that is widening pupils' learning opportunities and beginning to stimulate their interest. Pupils say that work this term is more interesting than previously but they also suggest that writing activities could be more exciting. This is because in some subjects, the overuse of worksheets and the themes chosen for some writing lack appeal for pupils.

The satisfactory teaching does not always provide a consistent level of challenge to enable all pupils to do their best. This is because teachers do not always use assessment information sufficiently well to identify the next steps in learning, particularly for the more able. This, however, is not the case for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Well-focused support and the sensitive approach of learning support assistants mean that these pupils grow in confidence and experience success in their work. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and the level of care that pupils receive leads to a calm and supportive learning environment. Teachers value pupils' efforts and praise their achievements but teachers' marking and the present target setting arrangements do not provide sufficient information for pupils about how they can improve their work and do even better.

The different systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have identified the right priorities for development but the action taken is not always proving successful. Not all teachers make sufficiently good use of agreed strategies which are intended to improve pupils' learning. The monitoring of teaching, particularly by middle managers, does not always focus sharply enough on the successful implementation of these strategies and whether they are working effectively. These features lead to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

Parents are right to feel their children are well cared for and pupils say they feel safe within school. Pupils make good use of the wide range of activities the school provides. Many participate in sporting clubs because they know exercise helps to keep them fit and healthy. Enterprise activities help pupils to develop a clear understanding of the world of work, and their satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy prepares them adequately for the future. The school council is increasingly effective in making their school a better place to be. However, pupils generally feel they have more to offer, especially in relation to what they like to learn.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Reception Year. Staff pay close attention to children's personal and welfare needs. Children are happy and relationships are good. Recent strategies to improve children's skills in communication, language and literacy are having mixed success. This is because children sometimes spend too much time listening to adults rather than the adults engaging children in discussion. In addition, there is not always enough scope for children to develop independent writing through a variety of play and role-play situations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more stimulating writing opportunities across the curriculum.
- Make sure that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning, especially for the more able.
- Make sure that pupils are more involved in their learning and that they know how they can improve their work even further.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels check the implementation and effectiveness of whole-school strategies, especially those intended to improve teaching and learning.

A small proportion of 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below those expected by Year 5, although pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Standards by Year 2, though below average, are higher than at the last inspection. In the 2007 national tests, the school attained the highest results in reading and mathematics of the last five years. Recent developments are beginning to take effect, most notably in raising standards in reading. Many pupils say how much better the choice of reading books is now and that they like reading and they are beginning to make better progress. In mathematics and science, the range of investigative work increases pupils' interest and spurs them on to do better. In spite of this, the challenge for the more able pupils is not always high enough. This is because sometimes they complete the same work as the average-attaining pupils do. This is not helping them to make good progress and is a reason why standards are not higher by Years 2 and 5.

Writing skills are weaker on entry to the Reception Year. This weakness persists and shows in the lower standards in writing through the school. Strategies to improve writing are not as successful as they are in reading. This is because teachers do not use these strategies consistently and, generally, writing activities are not sufficiently appealing to all pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory choices to support healthy lifestyles. They are aware of healthy eating but some still knowingly choose snacks that are bad for their teeth and state preferences for unhealthy foods. Their choices about exercise are more positive and many take part in sporting events in and out of school. Pupils act safely; most feel safe, although a small number justifiably express concern about boisterous behaviour at playtimes. Behaviour is satisfactory and classrooms are calm and orderly. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. They raise charitable funds because they recognise that there are others less fortunate than they are. Increasingly, they are playing a greater part in decision-making but they feel they should be more involved in making decisions about their learning. Activities such as costing materials, making items to sell and managing stalls at fundraising events contribute successfully to pupils' future economic well-being. Pupils' enjoyment of school is satisfactory. Pupils find some lessons more fun than others and some older, more able pupils express a wish for greater independence in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Positive relationships and a friendly working atmosphere help lessons to run smoothly. Teachers plan lessons to have a balance of providing information for pupils, with pupils finding things out for themselves and, at the end of the lesson, a chance for them to discuss their learning. In some lessons, this works well and there is a lively pace to learning but in other lessons, teachers' explanations go on for too long. Pupils find this frustrating, especially the more able who say this leaves too little time for them to complete their work. Some rather mundane worksheets across a range of subjects, especially in Years 3 and 4, also reduce the opportunities for pupils to write about what they know and understand. Using discussion as a platform for pupils to harness their ideas and formulate their thoughts before they write is a key priority for all the school. Some good work is underway but this is still not a strong feature in all classes, including classes in the Foundation Stage. Marking celebrates pupils' achievements but is not yet fully effective in all classes because it does not give pupils enough information about how they can do better. Teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of assessments but some are still not using assessment information well enough to plan activities that challenge, in particular, the more able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improved curriculum planning is providing greater coherence in the teaching of key skills from one year to the next. Themes that link different subjects of the curriculum together are beginning to result in pupils' increased interest. Many pupils say the curriculum is more enjoyable but they also say that themes for writing are sometimes lacking in excitement and they would like more stimulating topics to write about, based on their own experiences. The good range of enrichment activities outside normal lessons, including sporting clubs and residential experiences, promote some aspects of pupils' personal development well. Music and drama feature strongly, contributing well to a flourishing orchestra and choir, as well as school productions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are pleased with the level of care their children receive. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and staff are fully trained in child protection procedures. Staff know the pupils well and routinely remind pupils how to stay safe and keep healthy. They provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One-to-one talks enable pupils with emotional difficulties to discuss their frustrations and to develop strategies to help them get on with others. Increased use of outside agencies is focusing some good support for pupils from minority ethnic groups who are at the early stages of speaking English. Target setting is in its infancy and not all pupils are sure about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parents and governors are very pleased with the start the headteacher has made in bringing about improvement. Since her appointment, the school has put in place a number of key policies and systems. These have given consistency, for example, in how staff manage pupils' behaviour and how they include pupils with learning difficulties in lessons. Evaluation systems identify the correct priorities for improvement, placing governors in a stronger position to raise questions about the school's performance. Exclusions have fallen significantly over the past ten months, standards are rising and the pupils' attendance rate has improved. However, the monitoring of teaching is not yet rigorous enough. Subject and year group leaders do not check closely enough whether the strategies intended to improve pupils' learning are working effectively. This means they are not picking up soon enough on differences in the quality of teaching and this allows inconsistencies to persist and slows the rate of learning in some classes.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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	3
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	3
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

2 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parkland Primary School, South Wigston LE18 4TA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and hearing about all the different things you like to do. The people in charge and your teachers do a satisfactory job and this is helping you to make satisfactory progress. The standards you attain by the time you leave school are below average.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school.

- You know how important it is to grow up fit and healthy and so you take plenty of exercise.
- You are polite and friendly and get on well together.
- You have many interesting clubs outside normal lessons and many of you make good use of these.
- Adults give good support to children who sometimes struggle with their work or find it difficult to get on with others and this helps them to behave and grow in confidence.
- You feel well cared for because teachers look out for you and you know how to keep safe and free from harm.

To improve the school still further we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on four things.

- Find ways to make writing activities more exciting so that you enjoy your learning and do even better in your work.
- Make sure that your teachers use the information they have about how well you are doing to plan work that helps you all to do your very best.
- Give you more say about what you are learning and to make sure you know how you can improve your work further.
- Make sure that the plans to help you improve are really working well and that all teachers are using these plans effectively to help you with your learning.

With best wishes for the future,

Fran Gillam Lead inspector