

Parker's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121101
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313876
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	96
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Sean Madeley
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pound Hill Saham Toney Thetford Norfolk IP25 7HP

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average sized, Church of England Voluntary Controlled school serves the village of Saham Toney and outlying communities. Virtually all of the pupils have White British backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Children's attainments on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are typical of those normally expected of four-year-olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is similar to that in schools nationally.

The school has received the Investors in People award and the Activemark for its work in promoting physical fitness.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parker's Church of England Primary is a good school. It provides good value for money and has outstanding strengths in the quality of the pastoral care it provides and in arrangements to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. These reflect strongly in aspects of pupils' personal development. The headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors, has successfully improved the school's premises and the quality of education that the school provides. As a result, both standards and pupils' achievements are considerably better than they were at the time of the previous inspection and the school has risen in parents' estimation. The comment, 'A brilliant school, I couldn't wish for better', sums up the views of many.

Children get a good start in Reception and build well on this when they transfer to Year 1. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are above average and represent good achievement through both key stages. However, writing develops more slowly than other basic skills and the school rightly identifies this as an area for improvement. Nevertheless, improving progress is evident in the current work of pupils throughout the school. Consequently, growing numbers of pupils are firmly on course to reach or exceed the expected standard for their age.

Pupils learn well because teaching and learning are effective and are supported by a good curriculum. Staff have high expectations and work hard to instil positive attitudes that improve the quality of pupils' learning. They plan lessons carefully and make provision for pupils with different abilities. However, when teaching is less successful, this matching of tasks to pupils' abilities is not so sharp and some pupils do not make the progress that they should. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants that enables pupils who find learning difficult to take a full part in lessons and make similar progress to others in the class. Excellent links with other schools and outside bodies enable the school to provide many opportunities for active, first-hand learning and a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. These promote safe and healthy lifestyles effectively and increase pupils' enjoyment. However, teachers do not always identify opportunities to reinforce pupils' writing skills through their work in other subjects.

Strong relationships and open channels of communication between home and school enable staff to respond sensitively to pupils' welfare needs. This quality of care results in good overall levels of personal development and well-being. Pupils know how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles and their good behaviour and relationships, along with the care they show for others, help the school to function as a caring community. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the wider community and develop respect for and understanding of people from different backgrounds and walks of life. Good basic skills and positive attitudes prepare pupils well for later life. Measures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous, thorough and fully meet current requirements. Most pupils receive good academic guidance. However, some of their personal targets do not focus on the essential 'next steps', and inconsistencies in teachers' marking mean that pupils do not always receive clear messages about how to improve their work.

The headteacher has done a good job in promoting school improvement. School self-evaluation, involving governors and staff at all levels, is accurate and forms a secure basis for forward planning. This whole-school approach, along with an impressive 'track record' since the last inspection, indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The teacher responsible for leading EYFS provision manages day-to-day arrangements effectively. The children have just started school but have already settled in well. The classroom and outside area are well organised and children already have a good understanding of daily routines. Staff organise a good range of purposeful activities to extend learning. Searching for snakes amongst the leaves gives good opportunities for developing numeracy, as children measure and compare the lengths of the snakes that they find. Doctors and nurses in the class surgery are polite to their patients and demonstrate good social skills, as well as a growing understanding of how to stay healthy. The daily phonics session helps children to extend their understanding of the sounds that letters represent. This gives them a solid foundation for developing early reading and writing skills. Children's good personal development is a strength of the provision. Staff encourage them to be independent and to express their ideas freely. Even the shyest children soon become self-assured and take a full part in play and in class activities. The EYFS leader is actively developing provision in line with current thinking on best practice. Consequently, there is an increasing emphasis on allowing children to develop and follow their own interests within an enabling environment, both in and out of doors. In this regard, the school is seeking to provide a covered area to allow full access to outdoor learning during times of bad weather. Staff pay good attention to children's welfare, health and safety.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take every opportunity to reinforce pupils' writing skills through their work in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Ensure that pupils' personal targets identify the skills that they need to strengthen and that they know how to attain them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The results of national tests and assessments in 2007 show that standards were considerably higher than at the time of the previous inspection. In Key Stage 1, standards declined from 2004 to 2006 but rose quite sharply to be above the national average in 2007. Contrary to the national trend, boys did extremely well; their average scores were exceptionally high in comparison with boys nationally. Girls, however, did less well in all core subjects than girls nationally.

In Key Stage 2, the overall trend in standards since 2004 has been upwards, though the picture is more varied in individual subjects. In 2007, standards in all core subjects were above average. This was a considerable improvement on the significantly below average standards in 2005.

Despite variations in actual standards, the gains in learning made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 have improved consistently over the last three years. In 2007, overall achievement was good, although it was considerably stronger in mathematics and science than in English. There was no evidence of underachievement but, in that year group, the more able pupils did somewhat less well than others.

Preliminary results from 2008 and the work of current pupils show standards holding up in both key stages. The overall picture is one of gains in the number of pupils attaining the above-average levels in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 and in English at the end of

Year 6. Tracking indicates that good progress is evident throughout the school. Girls are now doing equally as well as boys in Years 1 and 2 and higher-attaining pupils throughout the school are firmly on course to achieve their potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They are well motivated to succeed and their attendance is above the national average. Most pupils behave well, both in and around the school, although a small number can be lively at times and still need firm control. Outstanding spiritual, social and cultural development underpins excellent relationships at all levels. Buddy groups work well, bringing pupils of different ages together in social and work-related settings. Pupils respond extremely well to staff and treat one another with courtesy and respect. Pupils are also sensitive to things of beauty, such as the wonders of nature. Through the work of the school council, their involvement in local church and village events, like the Art Group's exhibition, and their sponsoring of a child in the third world, pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and to the local and wider communities. They are well versed in the importance of healthy lifestyles and have an exceptionally clear understanding of how to be safe, because a local community support officer is a regular visitor who provides expert guidance in this area. Good academic standards and positive attitudes to learning are a secure foundation for pupils' future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are both challenging and enjoyable. Practical activities engage pupils' interest and bring out the best in them. High expectations serve to instil effective learning behaviour. As a result, most pupils are attentive and strive to succeed. Pupils are managed well. Teachers deal effectively with occasional over-enthusiasm and inappropriate behaviour so that it does not impede the learning of others. In the best lessons, teachers use information from formal and on-going assessments to plan work for pupils of different abilities and to inform the personal targets that they set for pupils. However, these targets do not always focus on the skills that pupils most need to develop or reinforce. Furthermore, inconsistencies in marking mean that some pupils are unclear about how to improve the standard of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum accords with the National Curriculum and is forward looking in providing modern language learning in Years 3 to 6. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education, supported by residential visits for older pupils, is a strong element. Similarly, provision for art and music features prominently in school life and results in work of a good standard. However, arrangements for reinforcing pupils' writing skills through work across the whole curriculum are at an early stage of development and have yet to impact fully on pupils' learning and achievement. The school enriches its curriculum with a good range of educational visits. For example, visits to the Imperial War Museum, to Norwich cathedral and to the Norfolk Broads bring pupils' learning to life. Similarly, participation in the World Festival and One World week,

along with a speaker from the 'Rainbow Nation' and a visit from the 'Rocket Man', make learning fun, promote community cohesion effectively and strengthen pupils' understanding and respect for peoples from other cultures and walks of life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is exceptionally strong. Christian values underpin all of the school's work. Parents describe Parker's as 'a warm and welcoming school' where 'staff know each child individually and can cater for their needs'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are extremely thorough. Pupils have confidence in the staff who care for them. They are adamant that bullying is not a problem and know exactly who to turn to if problems arise. Checks on the suitability of all adults who work with the pupils fully meet government requirements. Academic guidance is good. Pupils have personal targets to guide their progress in English and mathematics. However, despite constructive marking and on-going dialogue, targets do not always focus pupils on the essential areas for reinforcement and some pupils remain unclear about how to progress to the next higher level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher brings a wealth of experience and a steady hand to all aspects of leadership and management. Her passion for the school is passed on to all who work there and so team spirit and mutual support are strong. The headteacher's measured approach gives clear direction to the drive for school improvement that has already paid substantial dividends. Extensions to the premises now provide a better working environment for staff and pupils alike. A more systematic approach to monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning has strengthened teaching throughout the school and has improved the progress of pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds. Subject leaders and governors are, rightly, keen to extend their roles. However, they already play a key part and their contribution is reflected in the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1
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 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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parker's Church of England Primary School, Saham Toney, Thetford, IP25 7HP

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago. Thank you for making me so welcome and for taking time to talk to me and to answer my questions. I particularly enjoyed blowing bubbles with children in Reception, although I did get rather wet!

I thought that you would like to hear what I found out about your school.

There are many good things happening in your school.

- Almost all of you make good progress in English, mathematics and science and overall standards are above average.
- You like school because teachers, educational visits, visitors and special events make learning interesting and enjoyable.
- You get on wonderfully well with one another and most of you behave well.
- Your teachers and other adults give you excellent help and support you when you have problems and make absolutely sure that you are safe.
- Mrs Phillips, the staff, governors and pupils work hard to make your school a better place.

There is not much that needs to be improved at Parker's but Mrs Phillips would like everything to be perfect. That is why your school is so good. Therefore, I have suggested that your teachers should give you every possible opportunity to practise your writing, no matter what subject you are actually working on. I have also asked them to make sure that your personal targets really do focus on the things that you most need to improve. If they give you tips on how to make your work better when they mark your work, you can help by trying really hard to follow their advice in your next piece of work.

I hope that you will all continue to work hard and enjoy your time at Parker's Church of England Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector