

# Parsons Down Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109875
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337387
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Parsons Down Infant School

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julia Payen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janice Schofield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Paynesdown Road Thatcham Berkshire RG19 3TE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 862475
<b>Fax number</b>	01635 874558
<b>Email address</b>	office.pdi@westberks.org

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at learning, visited 16 lessons and observed nine teaching staff. Meetings were held with governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors looked at school documentation, including development planning, recent monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures and pupils' books. They analysed 64 responses to the parents' and carers' questionnaire and took account of the views of parents talked to during the inspection.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which teaching promotes good progress for all groups of pupils, especially those who are more able
- the progress made by pupils in different year groups and subjects
- the success of changes made, particularly in writing and mathematics, and the extent to which these are established across the school.

## Information about the school

This is a slightly smaller-than-average school with nine classes. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below average. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, with these pupils mainly having literacy and numeracy needs. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught separately in a Foundation Stage Unit which contains three classes and has its own outside learning areas. The school is situated next to the junior school that most pupils go to in Year 3.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It has improved markedly since its last inspection. Pupils achieve well, and attainment is above average. Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They confidently make choices and decisions for themselves about their learning in the indoor and outdoor areas. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has moved the school forward with determination and drive. The most successful area of improvement has been in writing, which has resulted from improvements in the curriculum. Evidence from the standardised assessments in 2009 and from the work of current pupils shows that good progress is being made across Years 1 and 2. Current attainment in writing in Year 2 is above average. However, attainment in reading is average and this is because there are too few pupils on track to reach the higher Level 3.

Strong leadership has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection in all of the key development areas identified. Teaching and the curriculum have both been strengthened and are now good as a result of concerted and effective action taken by leaders. The strengthening of links between subjects is stimulating imaginative writing and pupils often use their mathematics skills to solve problems. Leaders work together well and their improving skills are enabling them to take an increasing role in planning and implementing improvement. Self-evaluation is good and leaders demonstrate an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved strongly and there are innovative plans in place to promote learning through the school's website. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Pupils behave well and play together sensibly during break and lunch times. They feel very safe because of the good quality care, guidance and support. Most have positive attitudes to learning and focus well on their work. However, there is a very small minority who find it difficult to maintain their concentration in lessons, and these pupils need regular prompts to maintain their concentration. Teaching is often lively and interesting and this helps to keep the pupils motivated and engaged. Good questioning often results in extended discussion and helps the teachers to gauge the learning taking place and reshape tasks during lessons. The school is a cohesive community. Pupils' good social development is shown in their cooperative working. Discussion in Year 2 about day and night, and about the Earth's rotation, captured pupils' imaginations. They raised questions showing a strong sense of curiosity and wonder. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of others from different ethnic backgrounds and this reflects the school's limited success in promoting stronger links in the wider community. The school council has enabled the pupils to have some influence on decision making.

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**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the provision in reading, particularly to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3, so that, by the summer of 2011, results are significantly above those achieved nationally.
- Develop pupils' understanding of living in a diverse community, particularly within the United Kingdom.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

During the inspection, learning in the great majority of lessons observed was good or better. The school's tracking and the samples of work seen show that pupils are making at least good and sometimes better progress in writing. In the current Year 2, a good proportion of pupils are on track to reach the higher Level 3 in writing. Attainment in mathematics is currently broadly average. However, lessons observed show this to be improving well. In reading, pupils are on track to reach average levels of attainment. Learning observed was satisfactory rather than good because some groups of pupils were not given clear enough instructions to guide them in independent work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils, often because of the good additional support provided by teaching assistants.

The Year 2 assessment results show a trend of improvement over the past four years. In the most recent assessments in 2009, attainment in reading and writing was significantly above average. This was mainly because a high proportion of pupils reached the expected Level 2. Mathematics results were only slightly lower than those in reading. Attainment in Year 1 is above average, reflecting the good progress the children made in Reception last year and over the past term.

Pupils say that lessons are fun and comment that their teachers are 'lovely' and 'helpful'. They know the playground rules and understand that they are there to help them. They had a great time playing sensibly together in the snow. Pupils say that they can always find a friend to play with. There is broad agreement among the pupils that any naughty behaviour is dealt with and stopped by adults. Most pupils have a good awareness about healthy eating and the need to take exercise. They enjoy using skipping ropes and hoops or playing on the trim trail during better weather. Although many pupils express their views and opinions clearly, quite a few of the older pupils are not sure about the work of the school council. Pupils' positive attitudes and good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT prepare them well for the future. In the assembly on the theme of working together, the pupils participated confidently and joined in well with the singing. Most responded appropriately when given time to reflect and join in with the prayer.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teaching and learning are good and work provided nearly always meets the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and during lessons learning is regularly checked. In whole-class sessions, questioning and discussion are used well to help the pupils develop their thinking. The pupils are given time to provide extended answers or to raise questions of their own. Good examples of this include discussion in science and working out how to solve word problems in mathematics. Teaching assistants are deployed well. They actively support pupils who find it difficult to concentrate and frequently manage pupils' learning in small groups. In a lesson to develop vocabulary for poetry a pupil commented, 'I try things but if I make a mistake I get help and learn new things.' The pupils have a clear knowledge and understanding of their targets in writing. Targets in mathematics are not used as frequently.

Leaders give high priority to the care and safety of the pupils. Learning takes place in a secure climate where pupils feel confident to contribute and give their opinions. There are good links with the neighbouring junior school and pupils in Reception are well prepared for the transition to Year 1. The targeted support and guidance for vulnerable pupils is based on a good understanding of their needs. Incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with promptly and sensitively. Attendance is tracked carefully and any unexplained absence followed up promptly.

The curriculum is relevant and effective in meeting the needs of the pupils. A strength of the curriculum is the provision for vulnerable pupils, who are often supported individually or in small groups. Enrichment is good. There are regular visits to places in the locality and several visitors come into the school to help with pupils' learning. The

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pupils say that they particularly enjoy the clubs and using ICT. A range of strategies to improve writing are now established, such as widening opportunities to write in different subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils write reports about hatching eggs from direct experience. Programmes to develop basic reading skills have been particularly successful. However, there is more to do to promote higher-level reading skills.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

There is a strong team spirit and shared understanding about how to move the school forward. The 2009 results exceeded the targets set and leaders are in the process of resetting targets for 2010 in the light of good improvements in teaching and learning. Teaching is monitored well and data about progress are used effectively by leaders to inform them about the impact of changes made. Leaders are aware that pupils' progress in guided reading lessons is not as strong as in other areas. Communication with parents is good, particularly through the school's website. The school has taken action to address the concerns of a very small minority from its own surveys. Leaders have used external support well to guide improvement. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination for all pupils is good, with the gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils closing. Governors have helped to shape the direction of the school and provide both support and challenge. The school's strategy to promote community cohesion is at an early stage of development. There is currently a stronger emphasis on the local and global aspects of diversity than on aspects within the United Kingdom. There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among governors and staff. Sensible approaches to dealing with the potential hazards of snow and ice were observed during the inspection. Safeguarding training for staff is fully up to date and regular.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children come into school with knowledge and skills which are broadly in line with expectations. Aspects of communication, language and literacy are weaker areas. Children make good progress across all areas of learning and enter Year 1 with levels of attainment that are above average. The current Early Years Foundation Stage children have made good progress over the past term. During the inspection they loved playing in the snow and ice outdoors on the 'building site', and selling plants at the 'garden centre'. Indoors, they have a wide range of stimulating activities which they can choose to do. They cooperate with each other well, taking turns and sharing. Children's confidence shows that they feel very safe. A major strength of the provision is the way in which the adults work together to ensure that the children achieve as well as they can during independent learning. Adults frequently intervene at just the right moment to support the children, particularly to help develop their reading and writing skills. Good records of progress are kept through the 'learning journeys' and parents are beginning to contribute to these. More formal teaching arrangements are good. However, there is only one interactive whiteboard between the three classes and some children are yet to develop good listening habits when working together as a large group.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The outcomes of the questionnaire and discussions with parents and carers during the inspection show that the school has a very positive relationship with nearly all parents



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and carers. While communication between parents and carers and the school is effective, a few parents and carers comment that they would like better information about their children's progress. Leaders are aware of this and have a range of measures planned to strengthen this aspect of the partnership. Parents and carers comment on the nurturing ethos which enables their children to thrive. They say that the staff sort out issues such as any misbehaviour. 'Fantastic' and 'really pleased' typify several comments about the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents and carers say their children settle well and quickly gain in confidence.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Parsons Down Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	64	21	33	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	63	22	34	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	41	31	48	3	5	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	56	26	41	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	59	22	34	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	47	26	41	4	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	42	33	52	3	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	34	29	45	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	45	29	45	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	36	33	52	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	34	35	55	1	2	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	29	45	32	50	1	2	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	59	22	34	2	3	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



18 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Parsons Down Infant School, Thatcham RG19 3TE

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and were very impressed with your friendliness and how confidently you told us about the school. You go to a good school. Adults in the school care for you well. Teaching is good and helps you to learn and achieve well. We were impressed by the very positive attitudes that most of you have to learning. Your teachers are making changes which are helping you to make even better progress. The school has excellent arrangements in place to keep you safe.

This is what we found:

- you get off to a good start in Reception
- your headteacher, other adults and your considerate behaviour ensure that the school is a happy and welcoming place of which you are rightly proud
- your teachers provide you with interesting and challenging activities to help you to learn. Other adults support your learning well
- you have told us that you enjoy school a lot and we agree that you have a good range of learning activities and experiences in school
- your teachers have introduced changes which are helping you to improve your writing. These have made a difference in the standards of your work
- you develop good learning skills which prepare you well for junior school.

We have asked your headteacher and the other adults to do two things:

- improve how you are taught to read so that all of you can do as well as possible
  - give you a better understanding of others from different backgrounds and cultures.
- You can help by always coming to school unless you are unwell and by concentrating hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead Inspector

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