

The Parks School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120355
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	327257
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–6
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	16
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joanne Beaver
Headteacher	Ms Pia Kerridge and Mrs Dorothy Spence
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Barleythorpe Road Oakham Rutland LE15 6NR
Telephone number	01572 756747
Fax number	01572 722369

Age group	2–6
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Of the children on roll, 14 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and two are in Year 1. The school is currently establishing a Key Stage 1 base for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder in partnership with a local primary school. Five children, four with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and one with moderate learning difficulties and speech and language delay, who currently attend The Parks, are now either on the role of the proposed Key Stage 1 Autistic Spectrum Disorder unit or their receiving mainstream school. All children receive additional specialist support for a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and communication and language delays/disorders. Five of these children have a statement of special educational needs.

Most children come from Rutland, and a few come from Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. Nearly all are White British and from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. 10% of children are eligible for free school meals. As an extended school, they offer a variety of outreach and support services to mainstream schools, parents and families. Since the last inspection, the headship role has become one shared jointly by the substantive headteacher for three days and an acting headteacher for two days per week. The school's future remains uncertain and, as at the time of the last inspection, it continues to be under local authority re-organisation proposals.

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, which is highly valued by parents and the local community. In discussion, parents said that their children were extremely happy at school and more confident due to the excellent care and support provided for them by the staff. Children's personal development, including their spiritual moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding because care, guidance and support, and provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) are outstanding. The excellent work of the family centre, results in outstanding partnerships with parents and the local community.

Given the complex nature of children's learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are very low. However, children make good progress, particularly in social interaction and communication skills, because good teaching enables them to learn effectively and the good curriculum ensures activities are closely matched to their individual needs. They make excellent progress in their personal development as their self-image and confidence improves greatly as they move through the school.

Children's behaviour is good, often very good, and their attendance is outstanding, which reflects their excellent enjoyment of school. The school's procedures for safeguarding meet requirements and high levels of supervision, with detailed attention to health and safety, ensure that children feel very safe and secure in school. Staff provide excellent opportunities to promote children's health, not only through the work of health co-ordinator but by providing children with many opportunities for regular exercise in the hydrotherapy pool, in the exciting outdoor play area and through a variety of activities in the hall. Nearly all children choose healthy options at meal times. They make a good contribution to the community by considering the needs of others, for example, by learning to take turns and with support and participation in fund-raising to the best of their ability.

Good leadership by the joint headteachers has ensured good improvement since the last inspection. The areas identified for improvement at this time have been effectively addressed. A clearer system is now in place to track children's progress and the school makes good use of information to measure improvements and satisfaction with its services. Good leadership and good governance have ensured that the school continues to move forward, through, for example, the development of outreach provision, and various community initiatives such as the 'one o'clock club'. Additionally, close links with a school in Mauritius promote understanding, celebration and appreciation of diversity. The school has effectively implemented the learning and welfare requirements of the EYFS, although assessment and planning is not yet fully developed. Despite its uncertain future, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the EYFS, so that they make good progress in all areas of learning from their low starting points. Excellent levels of staff supervision at all times enable children to feel very safe during all their indoor and outdoor activities. Good teaching and effective use of assessment in small steps ensures that children learn effectively. However, while the recording of progress against each milestone of the child's development within the EYFS is effectively in place for the Autistic Spectrum Disorder group, it is not yet fully in place for other groups of children. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively

as a team, making good use of resources including pictures and signing to improve communication. The attractive classroom displays and resources, and the excellent outdoor environment, stimulate natural curiosity and exploration in learning. There is a good balance between staff-led and child-initiated activities. However, planning against the key stages of development in the EYFS is not yet fully developed. Excellent relationships between staff and children ensure they are very happy. Good leadership has ensured the continuation of outstanding partnerships with parents, appropriate staff training in the EYFS and continuous improvements in EYFS provision since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop planning and assessment in the EYFS so that activities of particular groups of children are more closely linked to their stages of development and progress is recorded against each stage of development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Nearly all children make good progress in learning, mostly meeting or exceeding their individual targets. Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder make the same progress as other groups. They make very good progress in social communication skills as a result of the highly effective use of structured methods and approaches for Autism. Good use of signing in lessons ensures children make good progress in speaking and listening. There is no difference in the rate of progress of any particular groups as children with more complex needs do as well as others because they is a good match of learning activities to individual needs. Children supported in their transition to mainstream schools, and those from mainstream schools who receive support from Parks staff, make at least satisfactory and often good progress, especially in literacy and personal development. Children at The Parks make excellent progress in their personal development because of the outstanding provision for PSHE and outstanding care, guidance and support for personal needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children make extremely good gains in confidence and in their self-esteem because of the outstanding nurturing ethos where every child is valued as a unique individual in the school. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted by the many opportunities to experience awe and wonder, to feel very good about themselves, to learn to behave well and take turns, and to develop their sense of right and wrong. Outstanding provision for health and safety and well-being contribute to children's excellent personal development. Children make a good contribution to the community and their good progress in learning and PSHE promotes successful inclusion in mainstream schooling. Children's very high rates of attendance, with no unauthorised absence, reflect their great enjoyment for learning. Strong links with Mauritius, well thought out multicultural days and activities such as drumming and dancing, and the provision of positive role models in school and from the community, enhances cultural diversity and awareness extremely well. Children also learn about other faiths through celebrations such as Chinese New Year and Diwali so they become increasingly aware of our culturally diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures that children nearly always learn effectively and make good progress. The strengths of teaching include good levels of challenge, excellent relationships and the close matching of work to needs, which ensure all groups of children make equally good progress. Good levels of staffing and effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants provide a highly structured learning environment where children feel safe and secure and remain focused on learning. Teachers manage behaviour extremely well and, as a result, children are always at least well behaved in lessons. Often behaviour is very good. Lessons are usually brisk and lively, although occasionally they get off to a slow start as children arrive steadily into school. Teachers make good use of resources including pictures, photographs, switches and objects of reference, and signing is used appropriately, to aid communication. This was seen to be particularly effective in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder group, which impacted extremely well on children's ability to listen, follow instructions and communicate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school effectively plans for, and provides, a range of balanced learning activities matched to the needs of particular groups of children. Excellent partnerships with parents and local schools enhance home school links for the benefit of the child and families. For example, the school provides full access to its hydrotherapy pool not only for the children and their families but also to local schools. The outstanding provision for PSHE, reflected in the highly nurturing family environment where children thrive, permeates the life of the school and considerably enhances personal development. Good improvements in the curriculum, such as outreach support to mainstream schools, the development of the successful 'one o'clock club' for children and their families within the local community and the introduction of further specialist programmes for autism contribute to a high and well-deserved reputation which the school enjoys. The school has rightly identified the need to develop planning further as a priority within the EYFS because learning activities are not yet planned effectively enough within each stage of children's development to enable progress within each area of learning to be systematically recorded.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding pastoral care, enshrined within the nurturing ethos of the school ensures children's personal development and well-being are excellent. Good academic guidance in the form of target setting, excellent six monthly reviews involving multi-professional agencies and parents, and very good tracking of progress using small steps are in place. The school does have a great deal of other detailed P Scale evidence, which leads to very appropriate targets being set and progress being monitored. Recording systems for the EYFS are well developed for the Autistic Spectrum Disorder group of pupils, but not as fully developed for other groups. Excellent procedures for ensuring children are safe, including the implementation of all safeguarding requirements, enable them to feel very secure and stay very safe in all their activities. Families receive outstanding guidance to support their children at home and the school goes the 'extra mile' through, for example, producing special focused books for children with autism who might

be scared of travelling by different modes of transport, to feel more secure and for their families to feel more confident. Parents cannot speak highly enough of the high quality of care and support their children receive from the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership has ensured continuous improvement since the last inspection. Governance has improved, under the excellent leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body so that it is now good and the school continues to have a very good and well-deserved reputation in the community. Leadership of outreach support and the EYFS are good as further developments are taking place. Leaders are effectively reducing the impact of low staff morale due to the uncertainty of the school's future, which is seen in the high levels of staff commitment to continuous improvement and strong teamwork amongst all staff. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and school self-evaluation is used effectively. However, the school's view of itself is sometimes a little ambitious, as the effectiveness of provision is not always judged sufficiently against the outcomes for the children. The school makes good use of resources and partnerships with parents, particularly through the excellent work of the outstanding family centre. Consequently, the school continues to provide good value for money. The school promotes diversity and appreciation of individuals in local, national and global communities effectively through celebrations of world faith festivals, links with a special school in Mauritius and through the work of the family centre and 'one o'clock club'.

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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?	1
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	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 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	1
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**

19 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of The Parks School, Oakham, LE15 6NR

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed seeing you all working hard and how well you behaved in school. Your school is a very happy place and it gives you a good education. Staff look after you extremely well and always help you to stay very safe in school. You love the staff, who always help you as much as they can.

Teaching is good and this helps you learn and make good progress. You have lots of interesting activities, which you enjoy. The school does lots of wonderful things to help your families and the community. The staff and your parents work very closely together to help you. You do your best to stay very healthy and your enjoyment of school is excellent. Your headteachers always make sure your school is managed well and looks for ways to continually improve it.

I have asked your headteachers to improve your school to make it even better by:

- planning activities closely linked to your stages of development and recording the progress you are making at each stage of your development through the EYFS.

Keep on trying your very best

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Lead inspector