

Potter Street Academy

Carters Mead, Harlow, CM17 9EU

Inspection dates 16–17 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Not all pupils are making consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Progress within some year groups has slowed. Leaders have not yet resolved this problem.
- Teachers do not carefully and accurately assess what pupils are doing in class. This means they do not adapt their teaching in the classroom to help pupils to make even better progress.
- Although the academy has strong systems to assess progress regularly, a few teachers do not use this information well enough to accelerate pupils' progress.
- New teachers to the academy are not supported well enough in becoming fully established.
- The management of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not yet good. As a result, these pupils are not yet making consistently good progress.
- The mathematics curriculum is not yet fully developed. It does not help pupils to use what they already know to solve mathematical problems or apply their skills and understanding across different subjects.
- Teachers do not plan carefully how to use all the adults working in the classroom so that all pupils benefit from their support.
- The academy does not effectively manage and evaluate the work of the large number of teaching assistants it employs.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the early years make good progress. This is because effective teaching helps them to learn through planned play that includes developing early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- The academy successfully manages the way it teaches phonics (the sounds that letters make). This is improving reading for the younger readers and for weaker readers across the academy.
- Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to the academy. Pupils know how to keep safe.
- The inspection and the academy's own records show that inadequate teaching has been eliminated.
- The academy sponsor provides useful support for the school that has improved, for example, learning for the most-able pupils. It has also strengthened the governance of the academy.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning during 13 visits to classrooms. They also observed support for small groups of pupils. The lead inspector made three joint observations with the headteacher. Pupils' work was scrutinised, and this was completed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Behaviour around the academy and at break time was observed. Inspectors spoke with pupils in class, around the school and at separate meetings.
- Inspectors heard pupils reading. The quality of phonics teaching was also observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with staff, members of the governing body, and with representatives of Passmores Co-operative Learning Community.
- A number of documents were examined, including: the academy's data on current pupils' progress; the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plan; monitoring records; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Account was taken of the 22 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The school's own survey of parents and pupils' views was also taken into account. Parents' views were also gathered from informal discussion as parents brought their children to the academy in the morning.
- The views of staff were analysed from 31 responses to a written questionnaire.

Inspection team

Teresa Kiely, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Potter Street Academy opened in September 2013. The academy's sponsor is Passmores Cooperative Learning Community.
- The academy is a little smaller than the average-sized primary school. There is a separate class for each age group, from Year 1 to Year 6. In September 2014, the academy expanded by taking on another Reception class. The two Reception classes offer full time-provision for children.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The academy runs a daily breakfast club on site.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement and improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers regularly check what pupils know in class and the work they produce, and adapt their teaching so that they help pupils to make better progress
 - teachers use the termly assessment information more effectively to enable all pupils to build successfully on their learning
 - teachers manage the work of all the adults helping pupils to learn in such a way that when pupils receive direct adult support they make accelerated progress
 - teachers plan for, and meet the needs of, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in their classes.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - supporting new teachers to settle quickly into the academy
 - monitoring the support given by all the teaching assistants working with the pupils, and providing training where necessary, so that they are all effective in helping pupils to make better progress
 - improving the quality of the management of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Develop the depth and breadth of the mathematics curriculum by:
 - enabling pupils to develop mastery in mathematics by increasing the ways in which pupils are encouraged to apply what they know through reasoning and problem solving
 - helping pupils to practise their mathematical skills across different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders, at all levels, have not acted quickly enough to move the academy forward from its opening in September 2013 so that teaching is consistently good. Under the leadership of the headteacher and the new deputy headteacher, some improvements have now been secured. Behaviour is carefully managed so that pupils are ready to learn when they are in the classroom.
- Leaders do not have strong enough systems to support new teachers so that they can quickly enable pupils to make consistently good progress. Although systems are in place, these do not always provide effective support quickly enough to new teachers.
- The headteacher knows what needs to be done to improve the academy, and the staff support this work well. He has already acted successfully to eradicate inadequate teaching.
- Leaders are beginning to review the effectiveness of teaching assistants, and already monitor the quality of their work in teaching phonics. They do not consistently monitor and evaluate the quality of their work in class and when supporting small groups of pupils. Leaders do not provide advice and support to teachers so that they are able to use teaching assistants consistently in an effective way.
- The academy has a system for managing the performance of teachers that is linked to its priorities to improve achievement for pupils. The strongest teachers are providing leadership and support to others. Where teaching is identified as needing improvement, the academy puts support in place, although not always quickly enough. The academy does not yet provide systematic training to its large numbers of teaching assistants.
- Leaders have set realistic plans to improve teaching and learning. This has already led to important gains for the academy. Improvements have been secured in literacy, marking and feedback by teachers, and developing learning for the youngest children. Leaders have identified the need to improve their work with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They have not acted quickly enough to bring about improvements yet.
- Equality of opportunity is effective. Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide disadvantaged pupils with additional support in English and mathematics when this is needed. Leaders and governors keep a close eye on how the funding is spent to ensure that the gaps are closing. Additional teaching interventions, such as literacy based 'Fresh Start' and 'Numbers Count', are helping to close the gap.
- Subject and phase leaders meet regularly with senior leaders and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of expertise. The early years leader has been successful in ensuring that children are now making good progress in the Reception class.
- The range of subjects is broad and balanced. Subjects are taught through themes and these have recently been revised to match pupils' own interests. The mathematics curriculum is not yet fully developed to enable pupils to acquire mastery because it not yet help pupils to think mathematically across a range of subjects, or use mathematical facts to reason and solve problems.
- The academy's values of responsibility, respect, fairness, caring and trustworthiness are taught directly through carefully planned assemblies and used to underpin pupils' understanding of British values and equality of opportunity. The academy prepares pupils effectively for life in modern Britain, and older pupils talk knowledgeably about their understanding of democracy and how members of parliament are elected in Britain. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The academy sponsor, Passmores Cooperative Learning Community, has strengthened the work of the academy in several clear ways. It has provided support through the governing body, and this has increased its effectiveness. The partner secondary academy has provided additional teaching support to increase the performance of the most able, particularly in their last year of primary school. The

partnership between these schools helps pupils to prepare for their next stage in education.

- Safeguarding procedures are carried out well and meet requirements. Parents say that the academy keeps their children safe.
- The primary physical education and sport funding has supported teachers in developing their subject knowledge and teaching of physical education. It has improved pupils' health and well-being by providing a range of clubs and activities that promote competitive sports such as tag rugby, netball, football and basketball. Pupils say that they enjoy taking part in these activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors know the quality of the teaching and learning in the academy very well. They are aware of the need to make rapid improvements. Additional support is given by Passmores Cooperative Learning Community so that the support and challenge that the governors provide is good. Regular meetings are held to ask questions that will challenge the academy to improve.
 - Governors know where the strongest teaching is in the academy and which teaching still requires improvement. They have supported the academy leaders when they have needed to act decisively to improve teaching. They know of the link between teachers' performance and pupils' achievements. They manage the performance of the headteacher well.
 - The academy's own records of pupils' performance is regularly used by the governors to check how well the pupils are doing. Governors check carefully how well the academy is spending its funding to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In class, pupils listen carefully, and get down to their work quickly. When they are asked, they talk clearly and quietly about their learning with their friends. They take pride in how they present their work in their books.
- Pupils' behaviour around the academy at break and at lunchtime is good. Pupils say behaviour around the academy is good. Pupils of different ages play well together in breakfast club, when they are eating their lunch, and when they are playing outside during break times.
- Parents, pupils and staff generally say that behaviour is good. The academy keeps careful records of any incidents of poor behaviour, and follow up each incident. Their records show that behaviour has improved this year. A few parents commented that some poorer behaviour has occurred. This was followed up during the inspection and inspectors found that incidents are quickly acted upon if they do occur.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility in the school in a number of ways. The development of the school council is a good example of the way in which the school identifies and provides models of good behaviour for all the pupils. Pupils elected to the school council are able to talk confidently about the qualities that helped them to be elected, such as being trustworthy, working hard, and being responsible. They meet fortnightly and their work has included raising funds for charity.
- Occasionally pupils are not so quick to settle in class and, when this happens, learning slows.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the academy. The school checks pupils' absences carefully, and follows up any concerns with attendance quickly. Attendance is broadly average.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in the academy. Parents and staff agree with this viewpoint. The academy is rightly proud of its work to keep pupils' safe. Pupils and parents know who they can turn to when they have problems and worries, and value this support.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying, including racism and homophobic name calling. They

agree that bullying does sometimes happen, but say that when this happens they know where to go to get help.

- The school prepares pupils carefully so that they are safe when they are using the internet at home and at the academy. Pupils are able to easily explain how to stay safe when using technologies.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. The school regularly invites visitors from the community, including the local fire crew and police officers, to talk about what they do.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not carefully assess what pupils know when they are learning in class and adjust their teaching to help pupils to make better progress.
- Not all teachers build on new learning quickly enough to improve what pupils already show they can do. Sometimes the work set for pupils is too easy, and does not help them to make rapid progress. This is particularly evident in mathematics, where pupils repeat work that they can already do, without being challenged to work at a deeper level, or to think about mathematics by solving problems. They do not have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics in other subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not taught well enough. Teachers do not carefully plan and organise the activities they give these pupils in order for them to make better progress. Sometimes teaching assistants are not clear how to provide good support for these pupils.
- The quality of the work of the teaching assistants in the academy is inconsistent. The academy invests heavily in providing all teachers with assistants to improve the quality of learning, yet teachers do not manage their work well. Additional adults working in classrooms are not yet sharply focused on improving learning in all subject areas.
- The teaching of literacy is improving. Younger pupils have gained a better start because the adults working with them know how to help them to learn phonics. Teaching assistants are making a good contribution to learning here. Some of the youngest children are now beginning to read fluently. Older children who have had difficulties with reading in the past are now gaining from this approach too. They know how to sound out words, enjoy reading, and have favourite authors that they talk about with interest.
- Pupils are encouraged to write at length, not only when they are in literacy lessons but also when they are learning about other subjects. They are able to talk cooperatively with one another before they write and this further improves their learning. Teaching is improved by the good relationships seen between everyone in the class.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported through a range of additional approaches. The success of this support is seen, for example, in the school's investment in additional teaching to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up in their learning. Pupils say this is helping them to learn better. When teaching is weaker and requires improvement, disadvantaged pupils, like their peers, make less progress in their learning.
- When teaching is at its best, teachers listen carefully to what pupils are saying, and watch carefully what they are doing, and then give pupils further useful instructions.
- The academy sponsor has recently supported the learning of the most-able pupils in the school by providing additional teaching support. This is now helping identified pupils in Years 5 and 6 to achieve the highest standards, and learning for this group of pupils has improved from last year, particularly in mathematics.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Achievement in national assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2014 showed that standards in Key Stage 1 were below average. Some pupils made good progress from their different starting points, but not enough. Pupils achieved better in mathematics than reading and writing. The academy has now further developed the way in which it teaches literacy, and although there is still variability, has secured improvements here, particularly to the way that reading is taught. The 2014 Year 1 phonics check showed that the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard was broadly average.
- National Curriculum test results and assessments for Year 6 pupils in 2014 showed that standards were below average. Fewer pupils reached the higher levels in reading. Pupils' progress from their different starting points was in line with those of pupils nationally. However, it was not as strong in reading as it was in mathematics and writing. This year, weaker readers across the academy are gaining from improvements to the teaching of reading.
- The academy's own records show that pupils are on track to make better progress this year. In some year groups, more rapid progress has been made.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils requires improvement. Their progress varies from class to class. Recent improvements to the way that these pupils are taught means that the academy is on track to secure better achievement for its oldest most-able pupils this year.
- Although disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs left the academy with achievement in line with their peers, progress for these pupils is very uneven, and requires improvement. The education provided by the school is not always matched to their needs and this slows pupils' progress.
- The academy's work to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils shows variable results across subjects. There were too few pupils in Year 6 to comment on gaps between disadvantaged pupils and the others in 2014. The school's own results show that, in some year groups, there is still a gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in each of the subject areas. Since September 2014, the school's own records show that the gap has narrowed overall, and closed in some year groups. Key Stage 1 results in 2014 showed a gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and the others in reading and writing, but was most evident in mathematics.

The early years provision**is good**

- Children in the early years are making rapid gains in their learning because the quality of teaching is good. Classes are well organised. Children learn through a wide range of activities inside and outside. Teaching assistants know how to help children when they work with them directly, but they do not often contribute to the concise and accurate assessments that teachers make.
- The quality of the early years provision has improved considerably from last year's class, who had not made enough progress in reading and writing. Provision and progress are better in the early years than in the main academy because teaching is more sharply focused on improving children's skills and understanding. Adults carefully plan the activities they offer children.
- Children enter the academy with a variety of skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age, particularly in speaking, reading and writing. This year, considerably more children are on track to reach a good level of development by the end of Reception.
- Children have help to explore numbers further when adults and children read number books together. Adults question children effectively to help them to think about their learning. This was seen outside when adults helped children to talk about their learning, as they played together with coloured ice outside and watched it slowly melt. Teachers and teaching assistants are providing children with appropriate teaching to develop their early reading, writing and mathematics skills and this is helping them to be ready for Year 1.

- There is a stimulating learning environment in each of the classes and in the outside area. Children develop their understanding of the world by growing plants. They show stamina in tackling physical challenges outside. They behave well and are cooperative and friendly to one another. They are developing a strong sense of curiosity and confidence.

- There is good leadership in the early years. Children’s progress is carefully monitored and evaluated. This support for learning includes useful workshops for parents, for example in phonics and mathematics.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139802
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	450152

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Kirk
Headteacher	Tim West
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01279 866504
Email address	admin@potterstreet.essex.sch.uk

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