

Park Community Academy

158 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY3 9HF

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Park Community Academy is an exceptional school and every aspect of its work is outstanding. The drive of leaders and highly effective teamwork has enabled the academy to continue to build on the school's previous excellent reputation.
- Leaders and managers have worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding overall. The professional development of staff at all levels is given the highest priority. Highly-skilled staff teams plan tasks and activities which are precisely matched to the differing and increasingly complex needs of the pupils.
- As a result, pupils make outstanding progress from their usually very low starting points. They achieve extremely well in their reading, writing and mathematics, and most are able to use the skills they learn in their everyday lives.
- All pupils gain qualifications before they leave. An increasing number of pupils gain GCSEs and other higher level awards, taught both in Park Community Academy and in lessons they attend in partner schools.
- Those children who enter the academy in the early years make very rapid progress because of the structured routines and excellent teaching which help them to settle quickly into the stimulating and warm environment.
- Pupils make great strides in their communication skills and in their personal and social development because of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive from all staff of the academy and the other professionals who work with them.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and a 'can-do' approach to their lessons because of the strong, supportive relationships they enjoy. All pupils and their parents say they are very safe and well cared for in the academy.
- Park is a very happy place. It is very obvious that pupils develop their self-esteem during their time in the academy and exude self-confidence. They gain a clear understanding of British moral values of tolerance and respect for each other's differences.
- This is accomplished not least through the outstanding curriculum, in particular the performing arts which are a strong feature of the academy's provision. Pupils love to participate in performance through drama, music and sport with many achieving individual and group success in competitions.
- Governance, leadership and management at all levels are exceptional. The headteacher and the extremely able staff team share a common purpose and direction. They have taken the school to academy status and from next term will be admitting both younger children and older students, extending the age range into the academy. The headteacher's dedication to pupils and staff shines through all that the school achieves in a continual drive for excellence.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in many different lessons across the academy. All teachers were observed. A number of the observations were undertaken jointly with the academy’s leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and with senior and middle leaders, with the academy’s improvement partner and with the headteacher from one of the primary schools in the multi-academy trust.
- Meetings took place with representatives of the governing body and with a group of parents as well as with groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally around the academy.
- The inspectors looked at the academy’s work and at a range of documentation including information about pupils’ progress, development planning, minutes of governing body meetings, information for parents and other stakeholders, behaviour logs and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took the views of parents into account through the academy’s own survey as well as the 55 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s on-line questionnaire and one phone call by a parent to the inspection contractor.
- Sixty-one staff questionnaires were returned and considered.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Ellwood	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Park Community Academy (PCA) converted to become an academy in September 2013. When its predecessor school, Park School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall. The academy is one of three founder members of the Blackpool Multi Academy Trust with two primary schools.
- PCA makes provision for pupils from across Blackpool and from outside the Borough, who have a statement of special educational needs for moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties. An increasing proportion of pupils have autism spectrum conditions or speech, language and communication needs. Some pupils have social, emotional and behavioural needs associated with their disabilities. Pupils may also have sensory impairments or medical conditions in addition to their learning difficulties.
- About two-thirds of pupils are disadvantaged and are supported by pupil premium funding. This proportion is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A much lower than average proportion of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage or speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils may be admitted or leave at other than the usual times due to the transient nature of Blackpool's population or to admission from other schools. There is a peak in admissions at Years 6 and 7.
- In September 2015, the academy will extend its age range for both the youngest and oldest pupils to take children from the age of two and to make sixth form provision up to 19 years of age.
- The schools in the multi-academy trust currently sponsor Revoe Learning Academy and PCA also provides support and guidance to other schools in the Borough, regarding their pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, on request.
- Park Community Academy was designated as a national support school in July 2013.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure senior leaders, including governors, have clear procedures in place to monitor the new, extended provisions in nursery and the sixth form to check they match the same high standards in the rest of the academy.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptionally effective leadership. Staff and parents are keen to express their appreciation of his commitment to pupils and support for themselves. They speak of his vision and drive to ensure that the provision in the academy is consistently of the very best. Over many years the headteacher has developed the leadership team to be a highly effective force in driving improvement.
- PCA's governors are equally ambitious for the academy. Together with the academy's leaders and the local authority they have been planning extended provision to meet the needs of older students and younger children, and took the steps to become part of a multi-academy trust.
- The headteacher ensures that the professional development of staff meets the increasingly complex needs of the academy's pupils. Great attention is paid to the development of middle managers who take highly effective responsibility for their areas.
- As a result of the attention to the professional development of staff, the quality of teaching has improved so that it is now outstanding overall. Best practice is shared across the academy and with partner providers. Many staff spoke warmly about the coaching, training and mentoring they receive and of the support to achieve advanced teaching awards.
- Since the previous inspection, the academy has developed an excellent assessment and target-setting model. Leaders, including governors, are able to closely check simple-to-understand data on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils so that action can be taken quickly to close any gaps.
- Behaviour is monitored extremely well to identify any trends or areas of concern so that the academy is a calm and orderly place to learn in which support is very well targeted.
- All staff share a commitment to equality of opportunity. Mutually respectful relationships ensure that discrimination is not tolerated at any level. Every pupil is given an equal opportunity to be the best they possibly can be because their individual needs are so well met. Pupils learn the British moral values of tolerance and respect and appreciation of each other's differences, and demonstrate these through their excellent caring attitudes towards each other on a daily basis.
- The curriculum is outstanding. Great attention is paid to ensuring that subjects are provided which motivate pupils to want to participate and achieve, not least in the performing arts which are a huge strength of the curriculum on offer. Taking part in music, drama, art, other performance sessions and sport contributes enormously to building self-esteem and confidence in pupils who have often experienced difficulties in previous settings. Pupils develop a strong awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values through all aspects of the curriculum.
- The academy has developed excellent partnerships, not only with the other academies in the Trust but by offering support and guidance to other schools in the local authority. These partnerships are providing increased opportunities for pupils, especially the most able, to access additional subjects which interest, and enthuse them and to gain higher level awards.
- Older pupils are extremely well prepared for their move on from the academy. All pupils enjoy work experience placements and college courses so that they can make informed choices about their futures. Careers advice is an important part of the Year 11 curriculum.
- Additional funding is used extremely well. The Year 7 catch up funding and the pupil premium ensure that disadvantaged pupils make at least equally as good progress from their starting points as others, both in the school and nationally. Funding enables all pupils to access the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer including attending residentials and the two week summer school during the holidays.
- Primary sports funding provides pupils with extended opportunities to try different sports and develops staff's skills to deliver them. Pupils engage highly successfully in a variety of competitive sports during and outside the school day to which staff willingly give of their own time.
- The school improvement partner from the local authority provides light touch support to the academy. Support is given to the governing body for the headteacher's performance management and moderation of the academy's performance.
- PCA ensures safeguarding procedures are highly effective and parents are hugely appreciative of the care the academy takes for their children's well-being and safety. Many parents also talk enthusiastically about the support staff provide for them. Risk assessments of external trips are carried out thoroughly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors under the excellent leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, provides outstanding support and challenge to the academy's leaders.
 - Governors are very active in the academy and knowledgeable about its every day work through the highly-effective links each governor has with the academy. Governors undertake a skills audit annually

to ensure that all governors are up to date with training and that there are a varied range of skills and expertise on the board. Parents are well represented on the governing body and highly effective. Governors know their own strengths and areas for development and equally know those of the academy so that they provide meaningful support and challenge.

- Governors are knowledgeable about pupils' progress and achievements and ask insightful questions of senior and middle leaders. They are frequent visitors at celebration events and pupils know who the governors are and what they do. Governors effectively monitor staff performance and ensure that any pay increases are related to high-quality performance. They are extremely supportive of the professional development programme which has done much continually to raise standards in the quality of teaching.
- Governors ensure that additional funding is spent appropriately and is having the desired effect of closing any gaps in attainment. Governors have undertaken a range of safeguarding and safer recruitment training to ensure that statutory requirements are more than met. They are very proud of their academy and actively share in the celebration of its successes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils clearly want to achieve well and their attitudes to learning are excellent. Teachers and teaching assistants instil a love of learning and ensure that work is enjoyable but challenging.
- Lessons are calm and purposeful. Any behavioural difficulties are managed exceptionally well so that they rarely disrupt learning. From the early years, children quickly learn routines which help them to feel happy and settled and ready to learn.
- A notable feature of PCA is the care and support pupils show for each other and the mutual respect of staff and pupils. As a result, pupils' self-worth grows. Their confidence and ability to express their views is remarkable. Pupils thoroughly enjoy performing to wide audiences in the brass band, choir and theatrical performances. They are rightly proud of their sporting achievements, often against mainstream schools or community teams. During the inspection, a number of pupils attended the Lancashire special schools cross-country running competition and came away with both the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 first prizes.
- Pupils develop strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness by taking on responsibilities such as eco-ambassadors, membership of the school council, as playground pals or computer champions. The academy supports the development and understanding of the British moral values of tolerance, respect and the rule of law exceptionally well and pupils demonstrate they value each other's differences. Even the youngest pupils were encouraged to understand how democracy works by taking part in mini-elections at the time of the general election.
- Incidents of bullying or unkindness are very rare but pupils are clear that they know they will be listened to and issues will be resolved by adults they trust.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Record keeping is rigorous and the academy leads pupil centred reviews to aid the development of education, health and care plans so that they match the needs and wishes of the young people for their future lives. Parents commented 'Health and care plans are always up to date and parents have confidence in the care offered to their children.' Parents, staff and pupils are all clear that the academy is a very safe place to be.
- Staff across the school, including non-teaching staff, are all involved in safeguarding training which is regularly updated. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff so that they feel able to 'tell' if they have any concerns.
- Pupils learn as well as they can how to keep themselves safe on the internet or when using other forms of technology. They understand and follow health and safety rules in the workshops.
- When pupils attend college or other schools they are often supported by PCA staff to ensure that their needs are met and that they are kept safe. The academy encourages and teaches pupils to travel to and from school independently, and some pupils attend other schools without PCA support but always with carefully considered risk assessments.
- Attendance is above average and higher than other similar schools which is a reflection of the pupils' desire to be in school. Classes and pupils enjoy earning the best attendance awards.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching meets individual and group needs across all phases of the academy exceptionally well. Standards of teaching are high in all areas of the academy and have risen since the previous inspection as a result of extensive professional development.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work as highly effective teams. They use a range of communication, including sign and symbol as well as imaginative visual resources, to support pupils' learning. Those pupils who need them are provided with technological aids to communicate and great attention has been paid to developing staff skills in all aspects of communication.
- The extensive curriculum engages pupils well because there is always something on offer for every pupil to enjoy. Lessons are often very practical, for example, in a science lesson on body temperature Year 10 pupils put their hands in hot and cold water and were surprised when the hand which had been in cold water was warmer afterwards. The experiment helped them to understand how their bodies react to changes in temperature.
- Tasks and activities are extremely well matched to pupils' abilities because teachers constantly assess pupils' achievements. They plan the next steps of learning to ensure pupils are always making progress, however, small the steps might be. Staff have very high expectations for what their pupils can achieve and ensure an appropriate level of challenge for each one. Marking and verbal feedback help pupils to know how to improve their work.
- Questioning is used particularly well to deepen pupils' thinking. For example in a Year 6 lesson, questioning helped pupils to express how they might feel in a strange environment and how people might respond to loud noises and bright lights in the town and to quietness and the dark in the country. For some pupils using their imaginations in this way was difficult but the skilful questioning helped them to understand their feelings and those of other people.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) across the whole school has improved pupils' reading and writing skills in all areas of the curriculum. In turn this has led to an increase in the range and level of awards pupils achieve.
- Teaching assistants take part in all the professional development sessions provided for teachers. They are very knowledgeable about the needs of different groups and ensure pupils' learning support, as well as their welfare needs, are met exceptionally well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very generous with their time at the vast range of lunchtime and after-school clubs on offer and pupils take full advantage of the rich variety of sessions they can attend such as street dance, Let's Get Cooking, health and fitness as well as the many musical, theatre and sports clubs.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children who join the academy in the Reception Year and Year 1 do so with knowledge and skills generally well below those expected for their age. They quickly settle into the nurturing environment and with an individualised approach, focused on the development of communication, their progress is rapid.
- Pupils who join when they are older have often experienced failure and disruptions to their learning, which have slowed their progress. However, the care and guidance they receive and the stimulating curriculum quickly gets them back on track.
- Progress across all key stages is outstanding. Pupils make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their low starting points so that, by the time they leave the academy, pupils have narrowed the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally.
- A very high proportion of pupils reaches or exceeds the targets set for them. The most able pupils make more than the progress expected nationally from their different starting points.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is high compared to that of pupils in other similar schools. An increasing number of the most able pupils are gaining an ever-increasing range of GCSE passes and other external awards.
- Teaching ensures pupils practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in all lessons. As a result, pupils are able to use these skills competently in other subjects. For example in a Year 11 careers lesson pupils were writing their own CVs and planning for interviews.
- Progress in reading is exceptional and the majority of pupils gain a love of books and are able to use their reading skills to find information for themselves using books or technology.
- Progress in mathematics results in similar, high levels of achievement. Typically, pupils find problem-solving difficult but are given support to practise this skill in everyday situations such as weighing

ingredients in food technology and working out areas in design technology.

- A focus on the needs of each individual pupil ensures that all groups of pupils achieve equally well over time. There is no gap between the attainment or progress rates of disadvantaged pupils and others in the academy in reading, writing and mathematics. Because this is a special school it would be inappropriate to comment on the performance of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 and Year 11, compared to national data.
- Children who join the school in the early years make particularly good progress in their personal and social development and in their communication skills, which are given top priority throughout the school day. For example, in a joyful music and drama session, early years children and Key Stage 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed singing greeting songs and older pupils helped the younger ones to join in the actions.
- The stimulating, rich and varied curriculum supports pupils' personal development exceptionally well. There is a clear enjoyment for learning and pupils are aspirational and determined to achieve well.
- Pupils become increasingly independent learners with many travelling to and from school on their own. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years provision is led and managed exceptionally well by a very knowledgeable and experienced manager. Plans for admission are undertaken very carefully with the full involvement of parents. Visits to the school mean that children are familiar with the setting before they start.
- Activities are planned around the needs of individual children. There is an underlying focus on children's emotional health and ensuring various communication strategies are used in all activities, so children quickly learn to express their needs and wishes, and feel comfortable and happy.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is outstanding. Adults model early literacy and numeracy skills using rich and well-thought-out resources which stimulate children's thinking and learning.
- The environment is full of exciting resources to develop all areas of the children's learning. Close attention is paid to the development of early social skills at snack time and when taking turns, waiting and working with others in music, drama and physical education sessions. Children have ample opportunity to develop their physical strength and ability in the safe outdoor play area.
- Children quickly settle into the routines of the day. They learn to behave well and those who sometimes find it difficult to manage their behaviour are given clear and positive strategies and guidance so that they can quickly calm down and join in, and their behaviour improves over time.
- Close attention is paid to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this was evident in the mixed-age group where children who had been in the school the longest demonstrated great care and concern for the newer children.
- Liaison with parents is exceptional. Parents say they feel very well-informed about what their children are learning and the progress they are making. They have no doubts that their children are safe and extremely well cared for, and that any concerns will be shared between parents and staff.

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	140143
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	464153

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4–16 at the time of the inspection
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Fielder
Headteacher	Keith Berry
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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