

Quarry Hill Academy

Bradleigh Avenue, Grays, RM17 5UT

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Good		2
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

- Pupils are making faster progress this year but they do not make consistently good progress in all classes.
- Some groups of pupils, such as those supported by the pupil premium, made less progress than their classmates in 2014.
- Pupils are now on target to achieve improved results this year, but their achievement has not been consistently secure since the opening of the academy.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2014 was below average in reading and mathematics, and pupils had not made enough progress in these subjects.
- Teaching has not been strong enough to promote consistently good progress for most pupils.
- Teachers do not always set work at the right level of difficulty. It is sometimes too hard for some pupils and too easy for others, particularly the most-able pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to think for themselves when solving problems or to work out how best to record and present the data and information they collect.
- In some classes, pupils are not writing with sufficient detail and depth.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has brought strong experience, ambition and high expectations to the academy.
- The headteacher and other leaders are making the key changes that are needed to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Pupils are now making faster progress.
- Leaders, governors and staff work well as a team to improve the academy.
- Pupils show a keen interest in their learning. They behave well in lessons and around the academy.
- The academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils demonstrate fairness, kindness, responsibility and respect for others. They are well prepared for life in the wider community.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are effective. Pupils feel safe and well looked after by the adults.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception years make a good start to their education and make good progress throughout the early years.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and analysed the academy's information about their attainment and progress.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, governors, representatives from the Catalyst Academies Trust and a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, for the information to be made available to inspectors. However, inspectors took account of the academy's own survey in March 2015, where there were 284 returns.
- Inspectors took account of 54 responses to a questionnaire for staff.
- A range of documents was examined, including school policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lucy Bates	Additional Inspector
John Croghan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- About half of the pupils are from White British background. Other pupils are from a wide range of different minority ethnic heritages.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The academy met the government's floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The children in Nursery attend part time, in morning or afternoon sessions. The children in the Reception classes attend full time.
- In July 2013, the school converted to an Academy sponsored by Dilkes Academy who formed Catalyst Academies Trust, a Multi-Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up the post in September 2014 and the deputy headteacher took up the post in January 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that pupils make good or better progress in all year groups, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that all work set is at the right level of difficulty for pupils so that is not too easy for the most-able pupils or too difficult for the others
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to solve problems for themselves, and to work out how best to record and present the data and information they collect
 - ensuring that pupils in all classes have opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing with detail and depth.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other leaders are taking decisive and effective action to improve the school. As a result, teaching is improving and pupils are making faster progress.
- The relatively new headteacher shows ambition and determination to improve the academy. He conveys high expectations and brings strong experience to his post. Senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and governors share his aspirations and high expectations.
- The headteacher has quickly developed a team of leaders and staff who are determined to move the academy forward. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. Leaders and staff place strong emphasis on improving teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders are making good gains in the improvement of teaching. Effective coaching, training and support have focused successfully on improving the engagement of pupils, increasing levels of challenge and improving marking and feedback.
- The academy's work to improve teaching in close partnership with Dilkes Academy has been beneficial. There has been a sharing of expertise and experience between staff in the two academies. The improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. However, the headteacher recognises that teaching is not yet consistently good in all classes.
- The headteacher's good management of teachers' performance is contributing well to the improvement of teaching. The targets set to improve teachers' skills are carefully linked to pupils' progress and to priorities in the academy's improvement plan.
- Subject leadership is effective. These leaders have received good guidance and support from senior leaders and from the trust. Leaders check pupils' progress systematically and are taking effective steps to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The academy has a welcoming and positive climate where pupils can learn and thrive. All leaders and staff ensure that the pupils are well behaved and safe. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The academy's core values, such as honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others, mirror those of British society as a whole and are widely shared by pupils. Pupils' show an appreciation and clear understanding of different cultures and faiths. Pupils at Quarry Hill are well prepared for life in the local and wider community and in modern Britain.
- The academy provides a broad and balanced range of subjects. Leaders have introduced a new reading and writing programme and have made a good start in implementing new arrangements for assessment. The number of additional activities such as clubs, educational visits and sport has been increased recently. These enrich pupils' learning and contribute well to their personal and social development.
- All pupils have full and equal access to the range of activities provided. The academy promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles all forms of discrimination well.
- Under the direction of the new headteacher, the academy has improved its use of the pupil premium and the way it assesses the needs of disadvantaged pupils. The academy's support for disadvantaged pupils is now well planned and increasingly effective, particularly in reading, writing and numeracy. As a result, most pupils are making faster progress.
- The academy uses the primary school physical education and sport premium well to promote pupils' physical development and to extend their sporting opportunities. Specialist coaches are employed to

provide quality teaching for pupils and training for staff. The range of sports clubs available and the number of opportunities for competitive tournaments have increased.

- The academy has quickly gained the support of its parents, who hold positive views about the care and education provided for their children.

The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. The governing body has an accurate and realistic view of the academy's past and current performance. Governors interpret the data well and have a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The governors have high aspirations for the academy. They recognise the improvements that have been made since the school became an academy and continue to challenge leaders about pupils' achievement.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and how it is improving because of the action taken by leaders. Governors are aware of the requirements relating to the management of teachers' performance and ensure that teachers' salary increases are linked to their pupils making good or better progress. They check that effective action is taken to improve teaching that is less than good.
- Governors ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and question the impact of spending on pupils' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Throughout the academy, pupils show a keen interest in their learning. They respond well to their teachers' explanations, instructions and questioning.
- Pupils' behave well in lessons and this positive behaviour supports their learning. Behaviour is also good in the playground, on the field, in the dining room and around the academy.
- Occasionally, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour can be less positive when learning activities are not sufficient challenging to engage and inspire them, but they still behave well in lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate the same positive qualities and values modelled by leaders and staff. They are caring, courteous, cooperative, kind, friendly and respectful to others. Through their studies, pupils have developed an appreciation and a good understanding of different cultures and faiths.
- Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities to help the smooth running of the school. They serve on the school council, act as play leaders and the corridor crew support others around the school.
- Attendance levels were below average last year but have improved because of the action taken by the school. Leaders set challenging targets and the attendance is carefully checked. Swift action is taken follow up reasons for absence. Attendance is now closer to average.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Almost all of the parents who completed the academy's questionnaire stated that their children were happy at the academy, felt safe and well looked after.
- The headteacher, other leaders and staff take effective steps to ensure that all pupils are well cared for and protected.
- All staff have had recent training in safeguarding and child protection. The academy's effective systems for checking and recording safety matters ensure that any concerns are dealt with promptly. Leaders ensure that robust pre-employment checks are carried out before new staff are appointed.

- Leaders and other staff carry out regular risk assessments and make sure that the buildings and grounds are safe places for pupils to learn and develop. Security is good and pupils say that they feel safe at the academy and are well looked after by the staff. They show a good understanding of e-safety when using computers and the internet.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and the different forms that it might take. They told inspectors that there is very little bullying in the academy. They are confident that should any bullying occur, it would be dealt with straight away by staff and successfully resolved.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving because of the actions taken by the school's leaders. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. Pupils are more engaged in their learning and there have been improvements to marking and feedback. However, there are still some weaknesses to be overcome before teaching and pupils' progress are consistently good in all classes.
- At times, the work is not set at the right level of difficulty for pupils. It can be too easy for some, particularly those who are the most able, and too difficult for others. When this happens, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. In some classes, the writing tasks set do not match pupils' existing skills and do not stretch their thinking. This means pupils' writing does not contain sufficient detail or depth.
- In some mathematics lessons involving problem solving, the tasks are over-directed by the teacher and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to think for themselves and to solve the problem. Additionally, they do not have the opportunity and to decide for themselves how to record and present their data, and this restricts their problem-solving skills.
- Teachers establish good relationships with the pupils. Pupils respond well to the teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Teachers use questioning effectively to explore pupils' ideas and to check that they have understood new learning. Teachers provide clear oral feedback to pupils to help them improve.
- In most cases, learning support assistants are well deployed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is improving and pupils are making faster progress in acquiring early reading skills. Teachers provide relevant opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills.
- Most teachers provide clear guidance on writing techniques to help pupils develop their writing skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 made good gains in writing a structured argument because of the specific guidance and indicators provided by the teacher.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Pupils are taught calculation and mathematical operations effectively. Pupils benefit from teachers' clear demonstrations and explanations. There are good examples of teachers providing challenging and relevant opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- Teachers set clear learning targets for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics so they know and understand the next steps of their learning.
- The marking of pupils' work has been strengthened. Most teachers identify good work and provide helpful pointers to guide improvement. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils are making faster progress this year than in the past, but they do not make consistently good progress in all classes. In some classes, pupils are not making good progress in writing and mathematics. In the current Year 2 and Year 6, pupils are now on target to achieve improved results this year, but their achievement has not been consistently secure since the opening of the academy.
- In 2014, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was average in writing but below average in reading and mathematics because this group of pupils had not made enough progress in these subjects. In the same year, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was below average in reading, writing and mathematics, again because pupils had not made enough progress in these areas.
- Some groups of pupils in last year's Year 6, including disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding, achieved less well than the others. The school has taken decisive action to remedy this situation. With improved teaching and well-planned support, disadvantaged pupils are now making faster progress and the gaps between the attainment of different groups are now closing.
- In 2014, the pupils in Year 6 supported by the pupil premium reached lower standards than other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The disadvantaged pupils were about a year behind their peers in mathematics, nine months in writing and six months in reading. When compared with other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils at Quarry Hill were about 18 months behind in mathematics, about a year behind in reading and about eight months behind in writing. These pupils had not made enough progress.
- The headteacher, other leaders and staff are taking effective steps to raise pupils' achievement. The school's own assessments, pupils' work and learning in lessons show that pupils are now making faster progress. However, this improved progress is not consistently good in all classes. Pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 are on course to attain standards closer to average.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils is improving but is not consistently good. In 2014, a below average proportion of Year 2 pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, an average proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in writing, but the proportions reaching the higher levels in reading and mathematics were below average. In the current Year 2 and Year 6, more pupils are on track to attain the higher levels. However, there are times in lessons where learning activities are not sufficiently demanding to extend the most able.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving because of stronger teaching. Pupils receive well-planned and specific support that meets their needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do as well as or better than other pupils in all subjects.
- Achievement in reading is improving. The proportion of pupils that reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below average in 2014. More recent assessments show that pupils in the current Year 1 are making faster progress in phonics and more are on course to meet the required standard.
- Pupils' achievement in writing has been stronger than in reading and mathematics. Pupils are able to write for a range of purposes and in different styles. Their grammar, punctuation and spelling are developing well. However, in some classes, pupils are not writing in sufficient detail and depth. There are good examples of pupils applying their writing skills in different subjects.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. Most pupils show a clear knowledge and understanding of how to make calculations and carry out mathematical operations. In a number of classes, pupils apply their numeracy skills well in investigation and in problems solving activities. However, in some classes, pupils' problem solving skills are underdeveloped.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills that are broadly typically for their age. Some children have weaknesses in their communication, language and reading skills.
- Good leadership and management have resulted in clear improvements to the early years. Teachers and support staff work well together in providing for the children. Children's attainment is regularly checked and the information is used well to plan teaching and learning activities.
- By the end of the Reception year in 2014, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below average. Children are now making good progress because of good teaching and the interesting activities provided. An above-average proportion is now on course to reach a good level of development by the end of the summer term 2015.
- Children make good gains in early reading skills and enjoy the range of books available. The teaching of phonics is well organised and structured. Children show a good understanding of letters and their sounds.
- Children make good progress in mark making and in the formation of letters. In the Reception year, they know how to write the names of different minibeasts such as spider, snail and worm. They are beginning to write simple sentences about their learning experiences.
- Children make good progress in mathematics. They practise their number bonds to 10 and are confident in doubling numbers less than five. They use their observations skills well in hunting for minibeasts and use a tally chart to record the animals found.
- In the Nursery and Reception years, children make good progress in their personal and social development. The adults have developed high-quality relationships with the children and make sure that they are well cared for and safe. Children respond well to the adults. Their good behaviour and positive rapport with other children supports their learning well. Children in the Reception year are well prepared for Year 1.
- The academy has well thought-out plans to extend children's outdoor learning activities. There are also plans to increase the levels of challenge in children's writing.

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	139576
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	449895

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	559
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Williams
Headteacher	Tony Parfett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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