

# Park School

Park Road, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6EQ

## Inspection dates

10–12 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Staff put pupils at the heart of all they do. They successfully provide pupils with exciting learning opportunities through their highly developed and diverse curriculum.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Pupils are developing into learners who are inquisitive and want to do well. Leadership of the early years is strong. As a result, children get off to a good start developing their skills across all areas of learning. This ensures that they are well prepared for Year 1.
- An exceptionally strong feature of the school is the way pupils are encouraged to take calculated risks, solve problems and find things out for themselves.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of what acceptable behaviour is. They are kind and caring, working and playing harmoniously together.
- Fundamental British values are promoted in a seamless and age-appropriate way. This work is underpinned through the three guiding principles: to take care of yourself, to take care of others and to take care of the place you are in.
- The council of management knows the school well. They use their professional expertise to good effect to support the school.
- The well-being of every pupil is of utmost importance to staff. Pupils feel safe and staff are vigilant in their approach to the welfare of the pupils and safeguard them effectively.
- Most parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are delighted with the quality of education their children receive.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- School improvement plans do not incorporate sufficiently precise and measurable objectives. This does not enable leaders and school councillors to check frequently and precisely the impact of the actions taken to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently provide enough challenge for pupils to ensure that they make the best possible progress, especially in their writing.
- Staff do not always have sufficient opportunity to develop their own teaching practice and expertise.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - plans for improvement include short-term and measurable targets so that leaders, including members of the council of management, can precisely check the impact the school's actions are having on pupils' outcomes
  - all staff receive high-quality training and development to improve further their own teaching practice and expertise.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that pupils are sufficiently challenged in their learning to make the best possible progress, especially in their writing

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The drive, passion and resilience of the teacher in charge have led to the continued success of this school. She is well supported by a team of dedicated staff who share her commitment to the 'Human Scale' philosophy of education. Staff questionnaires clearly demonstrate that the teacher in charge has the support of staff. 'I love working at Park, and feel supported and valued' was a typical comment made.
- The three guiding principles (to take care of yourself, to take care of others and to take care of the place you are in) are securely rooted in all aspects of the school's work. Even the youngest children can demonstrate how they need to look after themselves, others and the environment in which they work and play. This was seen countless times during the inspection, confirming that these principles are part of the fabric of the school. For example, pupils savour the freedoms they are given to explore the extensive grounds. However, they are fully aware of the boundaries set by the school and respect these in order that they keep themselves and their friends safe.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It has been carefully designed to ensure that it excites, inspires and enthuses pupils. They describe how they enjoy their learning as the work is interesting and fun. As a result of the diverse curriculum, combined with good teaching, pupils achieve well across a broad range of subjects.
- The school provides pupils with a wealth of enrichment activities. Pupils talk excitedly about the many experiences they receive. For example, during the inspection older pupils went canoeing and kayaking. They relished this opportunity, which was reflected in the high-quality work they produced on their return, their information leaflets clearly demonstrating all the skills they had learned on the trip, combined with their good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of this style of writing.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school and is rooted throughout the curriculum. Pupils are able to talk with a good understanding about other beliefs and cultures. For example, in studying Buddhism pupils are knowledgeable about the four noble truths, the eightfold path and the importance of meditation to Buddhists. Pupils understand what it means to be different from those around them. They are highly respectful of cultures and religions other than their own.
- Pupils have a growing awareness of what it means to live in Britain today. For example, they have a good understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Pupils describe how they are involved in decision-making in the school. Weekly whole-school meetings provide opportunities for staff and pupils to discuss and agree actions together. Consequently, pupils are confident that they have a voice and that their views and opinions are listened to by staff.
- Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. They know that any acts of discrimination are not tolerated in the school. Pupils spoke spiritedly to the inspector about the concept of equality. They know that although everyone is different, all should be treated equally and with respect.
- Staff work effectively together in identifying areas of weakness in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, they have identified that greater focus needs to be given to accelerate pupils' progress in writing so that they make the best progress, including the quality of handwriting and presentation in their work. Decisive action is being taken to ensure that this quickly improves.
- Targets are set for teachers to develop and improve their practice. However, staff describe that they would welcome greater opportunity to share ideas and observe teaching more widely to allow them to gather an independent view of how well the school is providing for its pupils.
- The school's capacity to improve further is strong. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest. Development plans clearly identify those areas in which improvements need to be made. However, leaders do not always sufficiently check the impact of actions to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The council of management is ambitious for the school and shares the passion and determination of the teacher in charge. They use their considerable expertise to support the school. Through visits to the school, talking to pupils and meeting with the teacher in charge, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
  - The council ensures that the financial stability of the school through careful monitoring. They also ensure that financial documents are meticulously kept and routinely monitored by auditors.
  - The council is aware that members need to monitor more precisely and with greater rigour the impact of

actions taken to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. Inspection evidence found that members of the council, many of whom are new to the post and therefore new to the 'Human Scale' philosophy, are taking swift action to develop this aspect of their role.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established a strong culture of keeping children safe. They are relentless in their determination to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place where pupils can learn effectively. Council members are assiduous in carrying out the appropriate checks on staff before they take up their appointments. These checks ensure that staff are recruited safely. Training for all staff is frequent, detailed and timely, enabling them to carry out their duties effectively. The teacher in charge ensures that all staff receive up-to-date information regarding current government legislation. For example, training on the government's 'Prevent' duty provides staff with a good understanding of how to keep pupils safe from the risk of exposure to extreme views. As a result of the school's effective safeguarding procedures, staff are confident in the actions to take if any concerns arise. This enables them to act swiftly and minimise risk to pupils.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good**

- Inspection evidence, including joint observations with the teacher in charge and discussions with pupils, combined with an analysis of the monitoring records, confirms that teaching is good. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and are typically making good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers know each individual pupil extremely well. This enables them to plan activities that interest and excite pupils and build on their previous learning. Teachers give careful consideration to the activities they set for pupils and ensure that they meet the needs of pupils' differing abilities. This includes those pupils whom the school has identified as requiring some additional support.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Specialist teachers are used effectively in a range of subjects. These include science, art and music. Pupils benefit widely from this expertise, which results in them achieving well.
- Teachers plan activities which develop skills across a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils recently planned, wrote and staged a production of 'Peter Pan'. They were able to demonstrate their high-quality skills and confidence in all aspects of the production, including script writing, stage management and costume and scenery design, alongside the skill of performance.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively. They ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding and deepen their thinking. For example, in an English lesson with the older pupils, the questioning by the teacher made pupils think deeply about the important features they needed to include on their safety leaflet linked to canoeing and kayaking. This activity was meaningful to the pupils as they were speaking from real-life experience following a trip earlier in the day. As a result of this challenge by the teacher, pupils produced high-quality work demonstrating their good understanding of this style of writing.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and a strength of the school. This results in pupils being confident learners who are not afraid to seek clarification to increase their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' assessment of what pupils can and cannot do is accurate. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their work. The school's marking and feedback policy is making an effective contribution to pupils' progress. It is not, however, always consistently applied to ensure that pupils can learn from their mistakes and make the very best progress, especially in their writing.
- Pupils are making good progress in their learning. However, teachers do not consistently provide sufficient challenge for pupils in their day-to-day learning. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of, especially in their writing. Leaders have identified the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school could be challenged more effectively and have plans in place to do so, but as yet these are in an early stage of application.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils feel safe and secure and, according to their age and stage of development, have a good understanding of risks in and out of school.

- Staff know each individual pupil extremely well. They are swift in sharing any concerns they may have about a pupil and continually seek new ways to support them. As a result, pupils feel cherished and nurtured.
- Risk assessments for a wide range of activities are in place and are monitored carefully by the teacher in charge. For example, risk assessments for outside learning are comprehensive and rigorously applied. Consequently, pupils have the freedom and opportunity to enjoy their outside learning and recreation time, including the climbing of trees and other climbing equipment.
- Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety. For example, they know the boundaries within the grounds that they are not to go beyond. They also learn not to approach or talk to people they do not know.
- Pupils say there is little bullying in the school and describe how rapidly it is sorted out when it does occur. They place absolute trust in the staff and know they can share any worries or concerns they may have, being confident in the knowledge that they will be tackled swiftly.
- Pupils thrive because they feel respected, valued and extremely well supported by staff. Pupils are evidently proud of their school and the freedoms it allows them to grow and develop into confident young people.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the education and care their children receive. They welcome 'being part of a community where pupils, teachers and children are involved in making the school a wonderful and dynamic place' was a typical example of the views held by parents.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are courteous and polite. They are extremely caring of others around them. Staff manage behaviour well. They set clear expectations and model the behaviour they expect. As a result, there is a strong culture of mutual respect and behaviour is good and at times outstanding.
- School records show very few incidents of poor behaviour over time. There have been no reported racist or homophobic incidents.
- Breaks and lunchtimes are happy and sociable occasions where pupils and adults have the opportunity to talk informally and eat lunch together. For example, in the early years, children and staff sit and eat together. The use of tablecloths and flowers with music quietly playing in the background provides a café-style atmosphere. Children can select their own food from a range of healthy options, much of which has been grown by pupils on the school allotment. Adults provide good role models for pupils, helping to further develop children's positive social skills.
- The teacher in charge insists on good attendance. She works well with families where necessary to ensure that they understand the importance of attending school each day. Consequently, attendance is around the national average and is improving.
- Pupils enjoy their learning. However, there are occasions when their learning behaviours could be better so that they make the very best of every learning opportunity they are given. For example, pupils' handwriting and presentation are not consistently of a high enough quality. Staff are aware of this and are taking rapid action to tackle it.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **are good**

- Children start nursery at the age of three with a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result of the strong relationships with adults and well-planned activities, children quickly learn to build their skills across all areas of learning. Consequently, children in the nursery make good progress.
- Children quickly become confident and inquisitive learners, questioning and exploring what is going on around them. For example, children playing with the train track were engrossed in a discussion about how they were going to build a tunnel for their train to travel through. They demonstrated a wide range of impressive skills, including their perseverance and determination to be successful in their construction, their listening and social skills in sharing their ideas, and turn-taking in trying to solve the conundrum. Children in the Reception class make good progress as a result of good teaching. By the time they leave the early years, children have skills that are typical of, or above, what is expected for their age, especially in communication and language and their personal and social development. As a result, they transfer successfully into Year 1.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are typically making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders keep a careful track on the progress of each individual pupil. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of what pupils can and cannot do and plan learning which effectively meets their needs.

- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils quickly develop a love of reading. For example, their reading ages are typically above and at times well above those expected for their age. The majority of pupils are confident in using their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to read unfamiliar words. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to read and enjoy many reading challenges, such as extreme reading, where they read upside down or walking. This instils a love of reading for pupils.
- Current progress information shows that pupils are able to use their strong phonics knowledge to good effect when reading. Pupils of all ages were able to read confidently to the inspector from a wide range of texts. They talk with animation and enjoyment about their reading, commenting how it gives them an opportunity to 'escape into another world'.
- Pupils are making good progress in their writing. Work in pupils' books, class books and displays across a range of subjects and in all years confirms that pupils are given activities to develop and apply skills learned in English in other subjects. For example, their writing about aboriginal people not only demonstrates their skills in sentence construction and the use of interesting and varied vocabulary choices, but also illustrates their deepening understanding of the culture. However, teachers do not always provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to write at length to practise and hone their writing skills. Consequently, not all pupils are making the best possible progress in their writing.
- Progress across the school in mathematics is good. Teachers plan activities for pupils which excite and challenge them. There is a clear focus on the practical application of mathematics to ensure that pupils have a deep understanding and master basic mathematical skills. For example, pupils learning how to make a den measure how far apart the planks need to be.
- Pupils identified as requiring extra support with their learning typically make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to the personalised activities which teachers plan, which effectively meet their needs. The use of a specialist teacher to provide support and guidance to teachers for those pupils who find learning challenging ensures that these pupils are well supported.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making good progress in their learning, especially in their reading and comprehension skills. This is as a result of teachers knowing their pupils well and adjusting their teaching styles to meet their needs.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Leadership and management in the early years are good. Leadership is effective in meeting the independent school standards in this provision.
- The early years leader is passionate about the quality of education the children receive and she is constantly reviewing and amending her practice to ensure that children get the very best start to their education.
- The early years leader provides children with rich and varied learning experiences. There is a strong focus on speaking and listening alongside instilling a love of books. For example, children happily sit together and share 'big books'. They are able to retell the stories in their own words, remembering the names of characters and the sequence of the story. Early reading skills are evident as some of the children can read parts of the story with confidence.
- Relationships between the children and staff are a strength. This enables children to thrive and develop in an environment where they feel safe and secure. Consequently, children are happy and confident in their learning, quickly acquiring the necessary skills to become independent learners. This makes them well prepared as they start in Year 1.
- Areas of learning are well organised, providing children with a range of activities to make links in their learning and stimulate creativity. For example, children became fascinated with a conversation about lambs and were asking well-considered questions such as why the farmer uses electrified fences. Consequently, children develop into inquisitive learners.
- Behaviour is good. Children quickly learn the boundaries of what they can and cannot do, both inside the classroom and outside. For example, they are able to climb trees but they are fully aware of the limit to how high they can climb through the markings provided on the trees. This level of freedom and opportunity to explore is providing children with a wealth of skills to become effective learners, including resilience, taking measured risks and keeping themselves safe.
- Staff are well trained in all aspects of keeping children safe. They watch children carefully and know how to report any concerns they may have. As a result, children feel safe and secure.
- Parents are delighted with how quickly their children settle in the early years and with the quality of

education their children are receiving. They welcome the opportunities they have to talk with staff, effectively linking learning at home and school. A typical comment made by parents with children in the early years was, 'the start my child has had since starting school has been amazing.'

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113617
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008562
<b>DfE registration number</b>	878/6040

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	62
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	25
<b>Proprietor</b>	The council of management of Park School
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Rowe
<b>Teacher in Charge</b>	Amanda Bellamy
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£5,430 to £8,094
<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 864588
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.parkschoolonline.com">www.parkschoolonline.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:park@parkschoolonline.com">park@parkschoolonline.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11–12 May 2010

## Information about this school

- Park School is an independent primary school for boys and girls aged between three and 11.
- The school aims to provide an education 'at a human scale and geared to the holistic development of all its pupils, in an environment where learning is fun, relevant and lifelong and children grow to be self-aware and confident individuals.'
- The school was last inspected in May 2010, when it was judged to be good. At that time, the school did not meet the independent school standard paragraph 6(3)(e) ensuring that parents are aware that they can request particulars of pupils' academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations.
- The nursery offers places to children from the age of three. They are taught on a part-time basis in one class.
- Children in Reception are taught in one class on a full-time basis.
- Almost all pupils are of White British background.
- There is a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is well below the national average. This is additional government funding for those eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The school is not in receipt of the sports funding provided by the government.
- The proprietors have responsibility for the governance of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons in every class, all of which were conducted jointly with the teacher in charge. The quality of work in pupils' books was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the teacher in charge, staff and members of the council of management. A telephone conversation took place with an independent external adviser. The inspector took into consideration the responses of 12 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector talked with a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, play and lunchtimes. The responses from two pupil questionnaires were also considered. The inspector listened to pupils read.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plan, records relating to behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, and data relating to pupils' achievement and progress.
- The 48 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector considered comments provided in correspondence submitted during the inspection. She also spoke to parents informally at the start and end of the day.
- The inspector checked how effectively the school meets the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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