

Parkgate Primary School

Brooklands Road, Parkgate, Neston, Cheshire CH64 6SW

Inspection dates

7–8 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not successfully tackled all areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- Leadership of subjects, other than English and mathematics, is underdeveloped.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's work has been overgenerous and lacks accurate analysis of its impact on pupils.
- The curriculum is narrow and insufficient time is spent on teaching the range of foundation subjects in sufficient depth.
- The quality of teaching is still inconsistent across classes and subjects.
- Most-able pupils are not consistently challenged and, as a result, too few make more than expected progress, especially in writing.
- Writing across the curriculum is poorly developed.
- Teachers lack the confidence or subject knowledge to teach the full range of foundation subjects to sufficient depth. As a result, pupils make limited progress in these subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making sufficient progress across a range of subjects. The attainment gap in mathematics and writing is not closing quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- There is greater accountability than during the last inspection which is informed by more rigorous monitoring procedures.
- Behaviour has improved and pupils exhibit a strong work ethic.
- Children get off to a good start to their education in the Reception class.
- The culture of the school has changed and there is now a positive outlook.
- Attendance is improving because poor attendance is being challenged rigorously.
- Governance has improved and governors offer school leaders challenge and support in equal measure.
- Reading is a strength of the school and mathematics is showing signs of improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the role of middle leaders to ensure that they:
 - are accountable for improvements in the areas that they lead
 - develop the expertise of teachers through the acquisition of appropriate resources and training to enable them to teach the full range of subjects with increasing confidence
 - monitor provision and use this information to plan for future improvements in their subjects and areas in which they lead.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that they improve the quality of their writing skills
 - providing more quality opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across a range of subjects
 - making sure that intervention strategies are managed and evaluated effectively to provide the most appropriate support in order to close the gap for disadvantaged pupils, especially in writing and mathematics
 - making sure that the most able pupils are given more opportunities to think deeply in order to extend their learning and understanding across all subjects.
- Develop a curriculum that is broad and balanced, meets the needs of all pupils with sufficient time allocated to ensure that it can be taught in sufficient depth.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- This is an improving school, but it is not yet good because, although much has been achieved in terms of ensuring essential management processes are more robust and effective, several issues remain unresolved. For example, the school has failed to sufficiently address weaknesses in writing which were also identified as needing improvement at the previous inspection.
- The great majority of parents who were interviewed at the end of the school day and those who responded to the online survey were positive and complimentary about the work of the school. A significant minority, however, expressed some concerns about the quality of teaching, the progress their children are making and the narrowness of the curriculum.
- In the short time that he has been in post, the headteacher has begun to transform the school from one which had become insular into an outward-looking establishment. The school is undergoing a period of transition. Two parents remarked that, in their opinion, 'The new head has transformed this school in less than a year. It now has a more welcoming feel. The teachers seem happier and are much more approachable', and 'The school has been transformed into a happy and encouraging learning environment in which children's imagination can thrive.'
- A new senior leadership team has been established and responsibilities have been reallocated with clear lines of accountability. There is evidence to show that the capacity to improve the school is being nurtured but as yet is not fully effective.
- Leadership of subjects, other than English and mathematics, is at an early stage of development and is currently limited in its effectiveness. Although subject leaders in these areas have produced plans, most of these have not yet been implemented. The school recognises that this area needs further development.
- More rigorous and frequent monitoring of provision has been established and is well supported by local authority officers. The impact has been positive in mathematics where it has been linked to specific classroom strategies to improve aspects such as reasoning and problem solving. It has been less successful in improving writing because it has not been used to inform and adjust teaching to bring about specific impact in the classroom.
- A new assessment system for tracking pupils' progress is being established. Pupils' individual progress in reading, writing and mathematics is visually displayed in a room set aside for this purpose and known as the 'Engine Room'. Teachers are developing a better understanding of the progress of individual pupils in their care. However, this is not yet impacting sufficiently on intervention and personalised support.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of the school's work has been overgenerous. Reports are not always sufficiently evaluative and backed up with evidence linked to outcomes for pupils. Analysis of data has not always been accurate. Some policies do not fully meet current requirements. For example, the safeguarding policy makes no reference to forced marriage or female genital mutilation.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide intervention programmes to develop the reading, writing and language skills of disadvantaged pupils as well as increasing their participation in enrichment activities. These interventions are not always addressing the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils to enable them to catch up with other pupils, especially in writing and mathematics. There is a lack of data showing how the extra funding actually benefits those it is intended for (as opposed to how it has been spent).
- Similarly, for the few pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities, although there is a strong culture of care, targets are vague and often non-specific which makes them difficult to measure and adjust.
- Effective mechanisms are now in place to manage the performance of teachers and teaching assistants. These inform pay progression and are linked to pupils' progress and a programme of ongoing professional development. Teachers have been involved in a wide variety of training and support and this has raised awareness. Training has focused primarily on improving English and mathematics but the impact of this training has not been checked well enough and has led to continued inconsistencies across the school.
- The school uses the physical education and sports funding to employ coaches to enhance sports sessions and after-school activities. Pupils enjoy a wide range of sports and activities as well as opportunities provided to develop their techniques. They and their parents are positive about the improved provision. However, the school has not assessed the impact of this increased participation in competitive sport and after-school activities. Equally, teachers have not regularly used the opportunity to participate in sessions taken by coaches in order to improve their own expertise, as was intended through the funding.

- The curriculum is not sufficiently broad and balanced and insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of a number of subjects. This was identified by several parents and one commented, 'I have noticed an increasingly relentless focus on mathematics and English to the detriment of a wider and more varied curriculum. ... This is having a dampening effect on one of my children's enthusiasm for learning which is sad to see.' Pupils themselves informed inspectors that they 'would like to do more art, history, geography, etc. and not just mathematics and English.'
- The increasing use of visits and visitors is having a beneficial impact on improving the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils look forward to the trips planned for them and during the inspection Year 3 and Year 5 pupils visited a number of places of worship, including a mosque and synagogue in Liverpool. Music is a relative strength of the school with many pupils enjoying being in the school choir and having the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. These activities enrich pupils' learning, broaden pupils' understanding of other beliefs and cultures, and support British values well.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is beginning to put this into practice. Parents are generally supportive, appreciate his 'enthusiastic and infectious personality' and are pleased that he is 'approachable and accessible and welcomes families at the gate most mornings and is often in the playground at the end of the day... come rain or shine'. Some positive improvements and changes have already been made but there is still more that needs to be done.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has been reconstituted with several new governors on board. Governors have a broad and well-balanced range of skills and appropriate expertise. They participate in an ongoing programme of professional development, including safeguarding.
 - They are developing a good understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. They are very knowledgeable about the areas they have specific responsibilities for and are highly committed to ensuring that the school improves.
 - A positive and productive relationship is being developed with the new school leadership team and governors who visit the school regularly to meet with leaders and gain a better understanding of the work of the school.
 - They provide support and challenge. For example, recently they have requested that the headteacher provides evidence of impact regarding the allocation of funding for disadvantaged pupils.
 - Governors understand the link between teachers' salary progression and pupils' progress and are active in ensuring that teachers' appraisals and the headteacher's performance management are carried out fairly and effectively.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have had relevant training and updates. The school responds quickly to any concerns, and seeks advice and liaises effectively with the local authority and relevant external agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, while improving in some areas such as mathematics, is inconsistent and has not led to good progress across the range of subjects.
- Work is planned in detail but expected learning outcomes are not always reflected in the tasks set. This is particularly noticeable in subjects other than English and mathematics where teachers lack the subject knowledge or resources to challenge pupils and teach effectively.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and inspectors observed a good work ethic in all the classrooms. Pupils are engaged in most lessons. Questioning is often effective, although in some classes individuals can dominate, sometimes by being overenthusiastic and shouting out.
- The local authority has provided regular support and advice for teachers to improve their practice, especially in writing as well as mathematics. Teachers have been encouraged to attend a wide range of training and observe best practice both in school and externally. Parents are aware of the efforts being made. One commented, 'There have been lots of new initiatives... in particular I can see the benefit of the daily three-minute times table test and the weekly spelling test.' However, it is evident that these has not yet had sufficient impact across all classes and subjects.

- There is good evidence to show recent improvement in progression and challenge in the teaching of mathematics with pupils in many lessons given lots of problem-solving and reasoning challenges. Most-able pupils are given more challenging calculations and they are allowed to apply their knowledge in a range of different contexts. This approach strongly suggests that the ideas behind the new national curriculum for mathematics are being fully implemented. Unfortunately, this is less evident in writing.
- Teachers are not confident in teaching the full range of subjects. Work in books shows that teachers lack secure subject knowledge which at times results in misconceptions not being challenged. In subjects such as science, history, geography etc., low-level and often inappropriate tasks limit the challenge, especially for the most able pupils. This also restricts opportunities for pupils to write confidently at length in subjects such as history because they lack the subject knowledge to make their writing realistic.
- The good teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) promotes pupils' abilities to read well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read to adults and to develop their comprehension skills.
- Teachers are becoming more familiar with the new assessment system but as yet this has not been fully cascaded to ensure that pupils are better aware of their targets. Day-to-day marking, following the school's policy, indicates what they need to do to improve in the short term, but there remains a lack clarity about their longer-term goals.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are very friendly, inquisitive, polite and welcoming, and are very proud of their school. As one parent remarked, 'My children go into school each day happy and enthusiastic.'
- Pupils, and the majority of parents, identified the school as a caring and safe community. For example, a number of parents remarked that the recent Year 6 end-of-key-stage tests were 'handled in a very positive manner by the school'. Another identified that their child was 'relaxed through the tests and I am grateful for the school in providing a positive exam experience'.
- Pupils feel safe in school. The new improved fencing, installed this year, has improved security and pupils commented positively about the new arrangements for break and lunchtime which makes playtime safer and a more positive experience. Pupils are aware of the risks involved when using computers, including the internet, and are able to explain how to use it safely.
- There is a strong focus on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which encourages pupils to respect one another, act responsibly and contribute positively to the life of the school.
- Overall, the majority of parents are happy with the help and support their children receive. As one parent summarised, 'I feel all the staff are approachable and want the best for both of my children. Staff are always available to talk to about any issues.' This reflects the changing culture of the school which has been introduced by the headteacher since September.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The overall attitudes of pupils are very positive and pupils exhibit a strong work ethic. They identify that lessons are rarely disturbed by poor behaviour and relations with staff are very positive.
- Pupils are adamant that, since September, the most significant improvement has been in the overall behaviour around the school. 'Clear boundaries have been established', and teachers are much 'stricter'. They are positive that the recently introduced reward system of 'dojos' has also contributed to the more purposeful atmosphere around the school.
- Pupils say there is very little bullying or name-calling and that they are confident any misdemeanour would be quickly dealt with by staff. They exhibit great maturity by reflecting on how their behaviour may affect others.
- Poor attendance, especially persistent absenteeism, is being more rigorously challenged and good attendance is being rewarded. Attendance has improved and current data shows that this year attendance will be above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because their progress is not consistently good and there is variability across subjects and from year group to year group. Progress in reading is good and is improving in mathematics, but writing continues to be an issue.
- Despite the good start made by pupils in Reception, attainment at the end of key stage 1 is broadly average. At key stage 2, although overall standards remain above the national average, outcomes in writing are weaker. Pupils generally make expected progress from their starting points in mathematics and reading but this has not been the case for writing over the last three years.
- At the last inspection, the school was challenged to raise standards in mathematics and writing. Although there is evidence of some improvement in mathematics, this has not been the case for writing and standards in 2015 were no higher than in 2013.
- The school's own tracking data shows that significantly more pupils are now working to age-related expectations than at the start of the year. However, there are inconsistencies across classes and subjects with a significant minority of pupils below the standard expected in writing or mathematics. Similar variations are apparent in the progress of most-able pupils who do not consistently make more than expected progress. This does not represent good progress overall.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics reveals evidence of progression and improvement. Basic concepts secured in the autumn term are applied to problem solving and reasoning, and further broadened in the spring and summer to include other concepts.
- It is more difficult to pinpoint progress in writing apart from obvious differences in presentation, quality of script and use of punctuation, etc. For example, in terms of quality of writing, higher- and lower-ability pupils may use the same paragraph openers and the quality of composition in terms of vocabulary choices and sentence construction shows little variation across different ability groups.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils read regularly for pleasure both in school and at home. They can name prominent and favourite authors and their reading is checked on a regular basis.
- Disadvantaged pupils, although comprising only a small percentage of the school, are not making sufficient progress across a range of subjects. The attainment gap between disadvantaged and other pupils nationally has closed in reading but a significant gap remains in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar, mathematics and writing and this gap is not closing. The in-school gap between these pupils and their peers is even wider.
- Pupils make poor progress across a range of subjects because tasks set do not provide sufficient quality opportunities for pupils to develop good knowledge skills and understanding in subjects such as science, geography and history. As a result, the quality of writing across the curriculum is weak.

Early years provision

is good

- Pupils enter the Reception class with the large majority having knowledge and skills at least typical for their age. As a result of effective teaching and regular support at home, all children make good progress. A significant number leave the class at the end of the year with skills and knowledge that exceed those typical for their age. This represents good progress and ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage of learning. Provision is well managed and led.
- Although higher than the national average, there is a recognition that writing remains the area of lowest attainment. There is a strong focus on improving this aspect with mark-making materials available both indoors and outside. The great majority of children can form recognisable letters and words and the most able show they can write for a purpose, frequently using capital letters and full stops accurately. One boy proudly read out a story he had written about Darth Vader, much of which was legible even if phonetically spelt.
- Mathematical concepts are well explored, frequently through play. The inspector observed children being challenged not only to count but also to add and subtract.
- Children's natural curiosity supports their learning well. Their language and physical development are especially well promoted through activities which are well planned and which make full use of both the indoor and outdoor environment. One girl developed her scientific reasoning by testing the boat she had made. 'It floats', she proudly announced to the inspector, 'because it is made of plastic.'

- Good links have been established between home, nearby nursery settings and childminders. This helps children to settle quickly into school. They become effective learners because expectations are clear and routines are quickly established. As a result, children work and play well together.
- Parents value the provision in the Reception class and are kept well informed of how their children are progressing. There is good engagement between home and school. Teachers record and make accurate and regular checks on children's learning, understanding and development. Information and exemplars of children's work are stored electronically and parents receive an alert which invites them to view these online. This encourages them to participate in, and celebrate, their child's learning on a regular day-to-day basis.
- Children's personal development is well promoted in a safe and secure environment. As one parent summarised, 'Children in Reception are nurtured as individuals and are given lots of opportunities to explore the world. The teaching staff are confident and children are well led and looked after.'

School details

Unique reference number	111126
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10012177

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Eady
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Andrew Hutchings
Telephone number	0151 338 2082
Website	www.parkgateprimary.org.uk
Email address	admin@parkgate.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 April 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than other schools nationally.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is low. The pupil premium is funding for pupils who are, or have been, eligible for free school meals, or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. A large majority of staff are new to the school, including the headteacher who took up post at the start of this academic year.
- Pre-school provision is available on site. This is not managed by the governing body and was not part of the inspection. A separate report is available on the Ofsted website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the curriculum and the effect of pupil premium expenditure on the educational attainment of those pupils at the school in respect of whom grant funding was allocated.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups in the school. They looked at phonics (the sounds that letters make) teaching, guided reading and observed pupils at break, lunchtime and around the school. There were two joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised and evaluated pupils' work across a range of subjects, especially English, mathematics and topic work, which included science, history and geography.
- A wide range of documentation including school policies, assessments and records of pupils' progress, local authority reports, monitoring files on the quality of teaching, self-evaluation and procedures to safeguard pupils was looked at. Documentation from the school's website was also considered.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, staff and on two occasions with governors. Discussions were also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of pupils to discuss their work, how safe they feel and what they think about the school. Inspectors also talked to many other pupils during lessons and around the school.
- During day 2 of the inspection, the Year 3 and Year 5 classes were off-site on an educational visit to places of worship in Liverpool.
- Inspectors considered the 52 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a handwritten letter from one parent. Her Majesty's Inspector also talked briefly to a number of parents who were collecting their children from school at the end of the school day. There were no responses from the pupil or staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Leszek Iwaskow, lead inspector

David Deane

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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