

Park Lane Primary & Nursery School

Park Lane, Whittlesey, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE7 1JB

Inspection dates

4–5 October 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2 fluctuates year on year. Some pupils have not made enough progress in every year group, and have had too much catching up to do in Year 6.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils that met the expected standard in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 in 2016 was not high enough.
- The most able pupils are not consistently challenged as well as they could be. This results in these pupils not working hard or achieving the high standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not consistently implement the school's expectations of presentation of work. Consequently, some pupils do not take a pride in the work they produce. Some adults accept a poor quality of handwriting without correction.
- Teachers' skill in helping pupils improve their writing varies. This results in the younger pupils writing slowly and some of the most able pupils not reaching the higher standards.
- Pupils can at times lose focus easily and chat too much. This happens when activities are dull, poorly resourced and do not encourage a love of learning in different subjects.
- A number of leaders are new to post. While they have a clear understanding of the priorities for improving the school, it is too early to assess the impact of their improvement work.
- Adults do not routinely and regularly promote the application of phonics as well as they could. Pupils do not use their understanding of sounds to help improve their spelling skills as they get older.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. The new headteacher and senior leadership team have brought energy and clear direction. They have an accurate view of the school's performance.
- Children settle quickly and well into Nursery and Reception. They develop good attitudes to their learning and make good progress.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful. They are happy and proud of their school.
- Attendance is good. Most pupils are proud of their school and enjoy and excel when interesting opportunities are provided.
- Outcomes from the national phonics screening check in Year 1 have risen and are above national expectations for pupils' age.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - making sure that a larger proportion of the most able pupils reach the higher standard in writing by the end of key stage 2
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the progress of which they are capable, with greater proportions reaching the nationally expected standard or higher in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2
 - ensuring that more pupils make sufficient progress to enable them to achieve at least age-related expectations, particularly in writing in Year 2 and Year 3.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making better use of assessment information to provide pupils with work that has appropriate levels of challenge, and resources to support the different abilities in their class across the curriculum, including English and mathematics
 - providing regular and more frequent opportunities for pupils to write at length and apply their writing in a wider range of subjects
 - adults consistently expecting the best from pupils in terms of presentation and handwriting
 - providing precise guidance on how pupils can improve their writing and regular opportunities for pupils to redraft and edit their work
 - using time in lessons more effectively and productively so pupils develop and regularly use their phonics skills to impact their spelling.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that those adults who do not consistently apply the school's policies and expectations do so to ensure that pupils' progress accelerates
 - making sure that new leaders review the impact of their work consistently against the progress that pupils are making.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- There has been considerable change in the leadership of the school since it became an academy in January 2014. Since September 2015, following a period of turbulence, the new headteacher has brought a renewed sense of vision, values and clear direction. He is ensuring that the school improves at pace. Some parents commented that the school is now 'more organised since the new headteacher started'. This means that standards are improving across many year groups, although not yet consistently so.
- School leaders have a candid and accurate understanding of the school's current performance. Firm plans and actions are in place to raise the standards of education for all pupils more consistently at Park Lane Primary & Nursery School. Most staff are proud to work at the school and recognise that the new headteacher and senior leaders provide higher expectations and give greater clarity and direction than previously. Staff are improving the quality of their work as a result of these higher expectations.
- In a time when recruitment is challenging, the headteacher has been able to recruit and promote leaders to the school who bring a wide range of expertise and skills. Leaders demonstrate both the capacity and determination necessary to improve the school. They are taking effective action in their areas of responsibility, but it is too early to assess the sustained impact of their work.
- New phase leaders, who have responsibility for English and mathematics, are fully aware that the school has not kept fully up to date with changes to the national curriculum in recent years. Where changes have been made, these leaders are already having an impact. In the upper key stage 2 phase, teachers are now more adept at planning learning that interests and encourages pupils to explore and research. For example, in one lesson seen, pupils were finding out about artefacts by using the internet and then recording their ideas. They were fully absorbed in their learning.
- No disadvantaged pupil reached the higher standards in English or mathematics in 2016. Leaders have been swift in taking action to ensure that this is not the case in the future. The school receives a small amount of additional government funding to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders know the barriers to learning faced by these pupils and are now using this money to meet the needs of the individuals who require the support. Children who are considered looked after by the local authority achieve well in their time at school and are particularly well cared and catered for.
- Through robust performance management, staff are now held more fully to account for the progress that pupils make in all year groups. Where staff are more consistent in applying the new expectations of school leaders, pupils' achievement quickly rises. For example, in the last academic year, teachers were required to address the underachievement in phonics. Through a change in the approach used for teaching the pupils, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in Year 1 was above the national average for the first time. When provided with appropriate stretch and challenge, pupils achieve exceptionally well.
- Leaders have introduced a robust system for checking the progress and attainment of pupils in each year group. They regularly check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, giving appropriate challenge and support where the standard of teaching

falls below their high expectations. Consequently, inconsistencies are being addressed and, although at an early stage, the evidence in pupils' books shows that they are making better progress as a result.

- The new leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been effective in identifying pupils who are in need of additional and at times external support. Her organisation of this provision is reaping rewards and pupils are now in receipt of the education, health and care plans that they need. Parents spoken to during the inspection were pleased with the support their children receive and the impact that the new leadership is having.
- Leaders ensure that the physical education and sport premium funding is used well. Money is used to develop teachers' skills and abilities, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to develop a love of sport and to try different activities such as tri-golf, multi-skills and crazy catch. Over 65% of pupils attend clubs and the rate of participation in competitive sports is increasing. For example, last year, the football team succeeded to the final of the Cambridge Football Cup. Through achieving the School Games Mark, the sports leader ensures that the sports curriculum is effective.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. The headteacher has instilled a sense of moral purpose through the school motto of 'expect the best'. In a Harvest assembly seen, the older pupils proudly collected food for a local church foodbank. The school orchestra accompanied the singing, together with high-quality presentations by different year groups. Positive relationships were evident between pupils and adults. The pupils' conduct was exemplary during this event. They demonstrated respect and valued the contribution of their peers.
- The school effectively promotes British values. Pupils learn about respect and tolerance as part of their school's values. When asked by inspectors, pupils could easily discuss how they learn about British values at school and what these values mean.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school requires improvement.
- Over the last academic year, the school has changed academy sponsor from Whittlesey Learning Trust to become part of the Aspire Learning Trust. Governors recognise that in the past, they have not spent enough time focusing on the progress that pupils make in each year group. Minutes of governors' meetings show that this is changing because they now receive useful and accurate information from the headteacher. They have a clear understanding of where the school currently is and the need for swift improvement so the school can be good.
- The new chair of governors is committed to raising standards for all pupils and ensures that governors visit the school to check that pupils are happy and safe. With new governors in key positions, the impact of their actions is still too early to fully assess.
- The governance of the school has been strengthened since July 2016. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined with the governors at Park Lane School, focusing on raising the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The chief executive officer of the Aspire Learning Trust provides guidance and expertise so governors ask more challenging questions of school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Processes and procedures are compliant with current legislation. Records of staff recruitment are meticulously kept, with many aspects of additional practice in place. The headteacher regularly checks these records to ensure compliance.
- Any concerns relating to pupils' safety and welfare are reported promptly and the necessary action is taken by designated staff. Staff are regularly trained and demonstrate an awareness of the 'Prevent' duty.
- The headteacher ensures that the culture of safeguarding is effective. The leader for e-safety is provided with time to take appropriate action and respond to any concerns that may arise about children keeping safe online. Effective work with parents and children is ensuring that the message of safety is communicated well, particularly around the use of mobile phones and cyber-bullying.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school. Adults teach pupils about keeping themselves and their peers safe through assemblies and in lessons. All pupils spoken to during the inspection spoke confidently about how they keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. Where inconsistencies remain, particularly in Years 2 and 3, this is because teachers are not using assessment information well enough to plan learning that meets the needs of different groups of pupils in their class. For some, particularly the most able pupils, the work is too easy and lacks opportunity for them to explore and grapple with activities. In classes where teachers use information effectively, the most able pupils relish the challenge to demonstrate their skills and abilities and make good progress over time.
- Some adults do not provide sufficient and varied opportunities for pupils to write at length. Although leaders have provided additional training for staff in the teaching of writing, inconsistencies still remain in how well adults implement new expectations. During the inspection, in some year groups pupils recorded their ideas on whiteboards. These ideas and sentences were not checked or revised before being wiped away, resulting in mistakes and errors not being addressed, while in other classes, pupils were researching their own information, recording their findings enthusiastically in a range of different ways. In these lessons, pupils were self-correcting their mistakes and using technical language appropriately and well to enhance their own writing.
- The teaching of reading for younger children in the early years and Year 1 is strong. Phonics is taught effectively and systematically. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who passed the phonics screening check was higher than the national figure as a result of the changes made to the teaching provision.
- Pupils read well and enjoy reading. From the records checked, parents are supportive of the school's work and listen to their children read regularly. Older pupils record their own reading meticulously well. Pupils who read to the inspectors did so fluently and with very good expression. As pupils move through the school, adults become less skilled at weaving the use of phonics into every lesson in order that pupils may become even better readers and particularly improve the standard of spelling. Consequently, the pupils do not use their secure use of sounds to improve their spelling when writing.

- In some classes, teachers do not use enough resources to support pupils in their learning of mathematics. In classes where too many worksheets are used, they limit the stretch and challenge available to pupils. Pupils complete a number of calculations that require the same level of thought rather than deepening their mathematical reasoning skills. In other classes, where pupils are provided with challenge, they respond exceptionally well. For example, in one lesson in Year 6, pupils were presented with a mathematical code-breaking challenge. They were so absorbed they did not notice that the lunch bell had already gone as they grappled with the codes to unravel the answer.
- The stronger progress demonstrated in some English and mathematics work is not routinely replicated in other subject areas. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to practise and extend their skills in writing in subjects such as history. In lessons where teachers have planned learning that interests pupils, giving them opportunity to explore, pupils rise to the challenge. In one lesson seen, the teacher demonstrated high expectations and effective questioning skills. As a result, pupils were keen to use technical vocabulary to demonstrate their understanding of monasteries from the previous lesson.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending lessons.
- Attendance is good at Park Lane Primary & Nursery School. Pupils are punctual and arrive at school ready to learn. Parents who spoke with inspectors commented that their children are 'happy to come to school and do not like being away during holiday times'.
- Pupils demonstrate a mature approach to keeping safe. They told inspectors that they know how to stay safe online and look after themselves. Pupils speak confidently about the role of an e-cadet, and take their responsibilities seriously and maturely.
- Pupils are well supported to become good citizens. In the Harvest assembly, key stage 2 pupils demonstrated respect when they explained about collecting food for those who require the support of the local church foodbank. Pupils eagerly and skilfully took part in singing and playing their instruments in the orchestra. They clapped the performance from each class, showing genuine friendship for each other.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Adults and pupils state that behaviour is improving swiftly. Pupils respond well when teachers consistently use the school phrase of 'stop, drop, look this way'.
- Pupils' conduct around school is strong and at times exemplary. Pupils are polite, articulate and courteous to adults and each other. They welcome visitors and are keen to engage in conversations about their school and their work.
- New leaders have already ensured that new, positive behaviour management rewards and strategies are in place. Where these are used diligently by staff, these strategies are having a highly positive effect. Pupils enjoy collecting house points. Pupils told inspectors that 'everybody wants the points'.

- Some pupils' attitudes to learning are not yet good. This is because of the varying quality of teaching in some year groups. In these classes, pupils lose interest quickly and chatter too much. The noise level in a few classes is excessive and prevents pupils from working at their best. Adults accept this level of noise too readily without applying the school leaders' expectations and policies consistently and well.
- Not enough pupils display a pride in their work. In some year groups, adults expect pupils to present their work well and to a consistently high standard. In others, adults do not insist on the very best quality of work. In these classes, pencil grip and letter formation go unchecked. Pupils form poor habits as a result, which are difficult to change as they become older.
- Although pupils told inspectors that they enjoy the skipping and football at breaktimes, there is not enough to occupy pupils during these less structured times. Consequently, a number of pupils spend time running around, which results in frequent minor accidents. Some pupils said that they would like more to do when they cannot use the field at breaktime.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, from their different starting points, the proportions of pupils reaching the new expected national standard for reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 were lower than found nationally. Under the previous accountability measures, in 2015 and 2014, pupils left the school with fluctuating results. This is because too much has previously been expected of pupils when they reach Year 6, as they often have a great deal of ground to make up to achieve as well as they should.
- The school's own evidence from last year's Year 6 books demonstrates that in 2016, the older pupils made good and better progress in their learning during their final year at school, particularly in writing and mathematics. Some pupils had too much ground to catch up and not enough reached the standard required of pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2.
- The most able pupils did not attain the higher standard in writing in 2016 because the school had insufficient evidence to show that these pupils were regularly exposed to the higher expectations of the curriculum. From the exercise books seen during inspection, inconsistencies remain in the opportunities planned to enable the most able pupils to excel. They do not receive precise guidance to improve their writing to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable in every year group and their progress slows as a result. Where the most able pupils have the opportunity to extend their writing, they do so with enthusiasm and perseverance.
- Leaders have developed an accurate and rigorous system for checking and analysing the progress that pupils on roll are making. Pupils are now making better progress and catching up on previous underachievement. Inconsistencies remain in Years 2 and 3 where pupils' progress has slowed and misconceptions in learning are not addressed swiftly enough.
- Pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has improved and in 2016 was above the national average. Inspectors read with pupils who are in the early stages of reading and with the older very able readers. All pupils were confident readers. The younger ones used their skills effectively to blend and segment sounds when they read unfamiliar words. Older readers spoke enthusiastically about the books they are reading, demonstrating a mature understanding of the texts.

- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is closely tracked by the new special educational needs leader. However, the identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been as rigorous and consequently some pupils may not have received enough support for them to make better progress. Parents of pupils who receive additional support are pleased with the care and help their children receive.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils fluctuates. Although in 2015, disadvantaged pupils achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics when compared with other pupils nationally, this was not sustained in 2016. In 2016, these pupils had not caught up.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. From the very start of Nursery, children are safe and well cared for in a stimulating environment. Staff are well trained in keeping children safe and are vigilant. The new early years leader ensures that all welfare requirements are met.
- Children enter the Reception Year with skills and abilities that are expected for their age. Children from all groups, including the small numbers of disadvantaged children, make good progress from these starting points. This is because of the quality of care and teaching they receive. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been at least in line with national averages and continues to improve. Children are very well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- The quality of teaching across the early years is good. This is because teachers and support staff know the children well and have a good knowledge of how young children learn best. They ensure that assessments are accurate and that they plan learning activities that interest and capture the imagination of the children.
- The children are very settled and demonstrate that they feel safe and secure. The adults are quick to identify children who require additional support and are adept at intervening when necessary. Consequently, children in the early years are developing their independent skills exceptionally well.
- The most able children are provided with opportunities to develop and extend their skills further. For example, through effective teaching, these children receive the opportunity to write sentences and carefully form letters correctly. Adults ensure that children who are already reading texts well for their age are provided with reading texts that are appropriate.
- Teachers make effective use of both indoor and outdoor space to provide focused and interesting learning activities. The outdoor space is more suitable in the Nursery classes, but nevertheless, adults ensure that in Reception every opportunity is taken to extend the learning beyond the classroom. The children experience exciting and valuable learning opportunities. Adults' good use of questioning ensures that children extend their language skills.
- Adults consistently demonstrate respect and courtesy to children, who copy this with enthusiasm. Children play well together and effectively develop their social and friendship skills because of adults' encouragement.
- Parents were keen to tell inspectors that their children had started well in the early years. This is because staff take time and care to ensure that new children settle well and parents understand the expectations of school life.

School details

Unique reference number	140499
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10019176

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Goulbourne
Headteacher	Rob Litten
Telephone number	01733 203433
Website	www.parklane.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	head@parklane.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education (DfE) guidance on what academies should publish about policies for charging and remissions and complaints policy. Some aspects of identifying how decisions are made for spending the pupil premium grant are currently not available.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with senior leaders.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and scrutinised books to take account of the work that has been done and the progress that pupils make.
- The teaching of phonics was observed. Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read from Year 1 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and the chief executive officer of Aspire Academy Trust. The lead inspector also held a telephone meeting with the chair of governors of the school, together with a meeting with a representative of the governing body.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation around child protection and scrutinised the recruitment checks made by school leaders when employing staff. The arrangements for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were also considered.
- The inspectors spoke informally with parents to gather their views. 56 parental views were also considered from online responses to Ofsted’s Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspectors spoke to staff and took account of staff views through their responses to an online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Judith Sumner	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Allison	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Lake	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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