

# Victoria Primary Academy

Finedon Road, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 4NT

## Inspection dates

13–15 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Improvements have been slow and pupils do not yet make consistently good progress from their different starting points.
- The quality of teaching is improving but some teachers do not plan stimulating and challenging activities to engage pupils in their learning.
- Teaching assistants provide strong support for small groups of pupils but their contribution is less effective when pupils are taking part in whole-class learning.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving. However, they do not yet make as much progress as other pupils in the school. The most able pupils make good progress.
- The progress made by children in the early years is improving. However, the rate of this progress is not allowing them to catch up quickly enough to reach national expectations.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils' attitudes towards their lessons are inconsistent.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions, used by the school for pupils who have more challenging behaviour, remains high but is falling.
- Senior leaders' and governors' improvement plans reflect an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, the criteria they use to measure their success are not easy to quantify.
- New senior and middle leaders are taking effective action to improve their areas of responsibility. As yet, there has been insufficient time to demonstrate the sustainability of the impact of their actions.
- Access, via the school's website, to some school policies is cumbersome. Links to the academy trust's website make it difficult to find policies.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The actions taken to improve the quality of teaching are increasing the rate of pupils' progress.
- Some teaching is highly effective and where this is the case pupils make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
  - redefining the success criteria in the school improvement plan, so that actions taken by leaders to bring about improvements can be more accurately measured
  - continuing to develop the roles of the new senior and middle leaders so that the improvements they are making can be sustained
  - ensuring that parents and other stakeholders have easy access to the school's policies and other required information.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes, by:
  - ensuring that teachers' planning consistently provides stimulating and challenging activities so that all pupils are fully involved and engaged in their learning
  - developing the role of the teaching assistants, so that they contribute more effectively to increasing the rate of pupils' progress during teacher-led learning sessions
  - continuing to boost the support given to disadvantaged pupils so that the increasing rate of progress they are making allows them to catch up with other pupils nationally
  - monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's new programmes and teaching approaches so that they continue to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils, by:
  - ensuring that all staff have the highest expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and eliminate low-level disruption in lessons
  - continuing to support pupils who have more challenging behaviour and reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions so that they are in line with or below the national average.
- Improve the provision in the early years, by:
  - accelerating the rate of progress children make from their low starting points.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement because there is some way to go before all pupils make good progress.
- The dedicated headteacher and her supportive leadership team are ambitious for the pupils who attend Victoria Primary School. They have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and are driving forward initiatives to help pupils reach the high standards they set. The school has been through a turbulent time with many staff changes and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. New staff are embracing the higher expectations being demanded by leaders.
- Senior leaders' self-assessment is comprehensive and is candid in its interpretation of the work they do. It provides them with an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plan clearly identifies what the school needs to do next in order to improve. However, the success criteria used to show the impact of their work are not always measurable.
- Over the last year, new appointments have strengthened the senior leadership team. All leaders, including middle and subjects leaders, are playing a valuable role in improving the school in the areas they hold responsibility for. Leaders, at all levels, are actively involved in checking the work of their teams. This is leading to higher quality teaching, learning and assessment and to better outcomes for pupils overall. However, it is too early to say if these improvements can be sustained. Leaders and governors need to ensure that they monitor and evaluate the actions taken over time to ensure that the momentum can be maintained.
- Leaders track pupils' progress with the aid of a sophisticated electronic program. This system is used to provide accurate information so that leaders can pinpoint the areas where pupils need additional support when they fall behind. Pupils receive this support in a variety of ways.
- Monitoring of teaching is rigorous. Leaders are well informed about teaching practices through close and regular checks on all aspects of teachers' work. Staff are provided with pertinent training to help them improve their practice. This is delivered through the academy trust, a teaching alliance network and external consultants. Newly qualified teachers, and other teachers new to working in the school, are well supported in their development towards becoming effective practitioners. They are appreciative of the support they receive.
- The impact of leaders' actions to secure better outcomes for pupils can be seen in the improved 2016 results. The school's own tracking records indicate further improvements for pupils currently in the school. This is particularly true for the most able pupils. However, improvement in the quality of teaching is not yet widespread enough to remove the inconsistencies in outcomes which remain for some groups of pupils.

- The school's feedback policy is used consistently by staff to help pupils improve their understanding in English and mathematics. Pupils respond to the advice given and say that it really helps them to improve what they are doing.
- The school's curriculum provides a wide variety of subjects, including science and French. Pupils from across the different year groups have the opportunity to play a musical instrument and take part in singing and songwriting projects. Leaders have identified the need to extend assessment and tracking procedures so that other subjects are given the same importance as English and mathematics.
- Homework is set in line with the school's policy and reinforces learning. Pupils' homework books, looked at by the inspectors, were well presented and displayed a variety of learning activities. However, how much pupils learn from completing homework is less clear because the feedback they receive does not always help them address any misunderstandings.
- Leaders make well-considered use of the school's physical education and sports premium funding. It is used effectively to motivate pupils to stay fit and healthy. Extra-curricular opportunities in sport are available and are well attended by the pupils. However, the lack of non-sport-based activities restricts opportunities for pupils to increase their knowledge and skills in other areas of interest.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils use the student council to vote democratically for events they would like to take place. The provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is integral to the curriculum and is also addressed through personal, social and health education lessons.
- Effective leadership of the special educational needs and/or disabilities provision ensures that pupils receive appropriate support and make good progress. Funding is used effectively to provide additional small-group and one-to-one teaching. However, special educational needs policies need to be made available to parents through the school's website.
- The pupil premium funding has brought about some improvements for disadvantaged pupils, but this has not been as rapid as it needs to be, especially in mathematics. A sharper focus on disadvantaged pupils has yet to be evaluated to show if the additional support provided can lead to improved progress over time.
- Senior leaders and trust directors have increased the level of accountability expected from teachers. Teachers' pay awards are now directly linked to pupils' progress.
- The academy trust has ensured that the school is generously staffed with teachers and teaching assistants. This has meant that pupils get lots of adult support and help with their work. This is particularly effective in helping pupils learn when they are working in small, focused groups, as in key stage 1 phonics lessons.
- Leaders work hard to maintain effective communication with parents. However, a few parents believe that it is not as effective as it could be and would like issues they raise dealt with more quickly.

## **Governance of the school**

- The academy trust's board of directors are currently acting as the school's governing body until this tier of leadership can be reconstituted. They have an accurate

understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there is a shared ambition among leaders and directors and a clear direction for the school.

- The directors display great confidence in the headteacher's and other senior leaders' abilities to drive the school forward. An appropriate level of support and challenge is provided by the directors to ensure that leaders are supported in their work but, equally, that they are accountable for raising pupils' attainment. However, it has taken time for the academy trust to secure this new leadership and improvements in pupils' outcomes have been slow.
- Directors and senior leaders have reviewed the school's practice for checking the work of teachers. Teachers' professional development targets are tailored so that they are specific in addressing the teachers' own needs. This has ensured that teachers are only rewarded when the quality of their teaching is good.
- The board of directors ask probing questions about pupils' outcomes using a range of available assessment information. However, there is still more to do in evaluating how pupils with different abilities are progressing from their various starting points.
- The directors evaluate how well the schools' pupil premium funding is used to help disadvantaged pupils catch up. While there has been an improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, the funding has not yet ensured that the differences between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally have been eliminated.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks to ensure the suitability of staff have been carried out correctly.
- Staff are trained effectively so that they understand the correct procedures to follow, including those associated with radicalisation and extremism. They are attentive in their daily practice and know who to speak to should they have a concern about the safety and/or well-being of pupils. Staff are kept up to date about safeguarding issues through a regular programme of updates and briefings.
- The designated teachers for child protection and safeguarding ensure that referrals are acted on in a timely manner and that concerns are followed up with rigour. Procedures are robust and leaders maintain meticulous records. The school has effective relationships with the local authority and a wide range of other agencies.
- Groups of pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in the school and that they know there is always someone they can talk to. The curriculum contributes to raising pupils' awareness of safe practices, such as e-safety and road safety.
- A large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own surveys agreed that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents who were spoken with during the inspection also agreed.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving, but it is not yet consistently good across the school. Numerous staff changes have hampered progress and variability remains in the

quality of teaching between different classes. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising. However, pupils' attitudes towards their learning are not as strong as they need to be to secure good outcomes across the school.

- Sometimes teachers use their subject knowledge well and provide activities which are stimulating and engage pupils. This was observed in a Year 3 mathematics lesson where pupils were using a variety of approaches and resources to help them understand factor pairs. However, this approach is not consistent across the school and inspectors observed lessons where pupils were working less enthusiastically to complete the tasks they had been set. For example, in a Year 4 writing lesson, pupils were off-task because learning resources were not being used well enough to engage them.
- Where teaching is weaker, the management of pupils' behaviour becomes less effective. Sometimes there is low-level disruption in lessons, such as fidgeting, poor concentration and pupils speaking when the teacher is talking.
- Sometimes, teaching, through the use of skilled questioning, helps pupils to think harder and deepen their understanding. Teachers use questioning carefully to unpick and tease out pupils' understanding and misconceptions. On other occasions, however, questioning is not targeted sufficiently well to address pupils' misunderstandings – leaving pupils with incorrect knowledge.
- Teachers work in teams and share best practice. They use prior assessment of pupils' learning and plan activities which match different levels of pupils' needs. This helps pupils to make rapid progress. For example, in some lessons pupils were able to work at different levels in a set activity, depending on which concepts they had already grasped.
- Pupils are successful in taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, inspectors saw pupils benefiting from opportunities for independent learning by choosing where to start their work and how much support they needed. Pupils made less progress when these opportunities were not as evident.
- The most able pupils are successfully challenged and provided with more demanding work. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils moved on quickly when they had mastered the task they were doing. However, this approach is not yet consistent across the school.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils who need additional help. Their impact is greatest during small-group and one-to-one tuition. However, when pupils take part in whole-class learning, led by a teacher, the teaching assistant's role is less effective in increasing the rate of progress that the pupils make.
- Historically, the teaching of phonics has not led to good progress over time. The most able pupils, who read to the inspectors, could explain their stories and read with emotion. Lower-attaining pupils struggled to apply their phonic knowledge successfully. Phonics teaching is now well organised to meet the needs of different ability groups. Inspectors observed good teaching of phonics.
- Leaders actively promote reading across the school. They have identified inference skills as a weakness in reading and have taken action to improve this element of pupils' understanding. The school's approach to teaching mathematics has been adjusted. A greater emphasis on fluency and the application of mathematics is improving pupils'

ability to retain the skills they are learning and to solve problems.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development benefits from the values-based curriculum adopted by the school. Pupils learn about respect, integrity and how different religions and faiths are observed. Displays around the school are used to promote and celebrate the pupils' contributions to, and understanding of, these areas of their development.
- Pupils are given a few opportunities to experience leadership roles and positions of responsibility such as becoming young leaders, lunch monitors and being a member of the school council. However, not all pupils are aware of such roles or understand how they can be used to develop their social skills and increase their contribution to society.
- Opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, other than sport, are limited. This does not allow pupils to participate in a range of different social or cultural settings. Nor does it allow pupils to take part in activities which may interest them.
- Most pupils believe that bullying is rare in the school. Those who spoke with inspectors said that should bullying occur they know it would be dealt with. The school's records confirm that bullying does not occur often. However, a small number of parents do not share this view.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe and told inspectors that they felt safe in the school. They know how to stay healthy, which food choices they should make and what exercise to take to keep themselves fit. The offer of free fruit at playtime encourages pupils to be healthy. The large majority of parents and pupils, and all staff, agree that the school is safe.
- Pupils take pride in being part of their school. They are confident and articulate. Pupils get on well together and there is a strong culture of tolerance and respect throughout the school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. When pupils are not fully engaged in the activities they are set, especially in the younger year groups, low-level disruption occurs.
- During playtime and lunchtime, pupils play cooperatively together. They are well supervised and behave sensibly and appropriately in the playground.
- The school's behaviour policy is consistently used by all staff and is understood clearly by the pupils. Behaviour tracking records show an improvement in the number of incidents over time. Pupils spoke to inspectors about how behaviour has improved.

- Pupils' attendance continues to improve and is now broadly average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. Leaders work hard to support pupils who have more challenging behavioural needs. The approach taken by leaders to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded from school is effective. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains high and is above the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In 2016, key stage 2 pupils made broadly average progress in reading and writing. This was not the case for mathematics, which remained below the national average. In both reading and mathematics, lower-attaining pupils and the most able pupils made better progress than the middle-attaining pupils in the school.
- In 2016, key stage 1 pupils' attainment was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. In this key stage, lower-attaining pupils did not achieve national averages in reading and writing.
- Attainment at key stage 2, and the number of pupils reaching age-related expectations, is improving. This is especially true in reading and mathematics, where attainment has been historically low.
- The school's own comprehensive tracking system indicates, for current pupils in the school, further improvements in reading and writing outcomes, and more rapid progress in mathematics, across all year groups.
- For the last two years, the number of pupils who passed the phonics screening checks, at the end of key stage 1, has been below national expectations. Leaders have taken action to address this weak area and have introduced targeted phonic skills development to improve pupils' attainment. However, the pace of improvement still needs to pick up if pupils are to reach national age-related expectations.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving. Leaders and governors have reviewed the provision and use of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and are taking action to bring about better outcomes for these pupils. The school's own tracking indicates that disadvantaged pupils, currently in the school, are making faster progress but are not yet keeping up with their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. They make good progress from their starting points. Many make better progress than others in the school.
- The high number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make better progress than other pupils in the school. This is because they are given effective support to develop the language skills they need to access their learning.
- Leaders track progress in science and this is improving for current pupils in the school. However, the school has highlighted the need to measure pupils' progress in different subjects to ensure that the curriculum contributes fully in developing all aspects of pupils' education.
- Pupils leaving Year 6 are becoming increasingly well prepared for their transition to secondary school.



## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- Leadership of the early years provision is not fully effective as it has been slow to bring about improvements in children's achievement. Children do not develop their literacy and numeracy skills well enough while in Reception and are not sufficiently well prepared for key stage 1, although this is improving.
- Children enter Reception with abilities well below those typical for their age. They make progress but their attainment remains below national expectations when they leave the early years. The rate of progress they make is not rapid enough to help them catch up quickly. Leaders now set targets for children that are increasingly ambitious to reflect the faster rate of progress needed. The school's tracking system indicates that more children in the current Reception class will achieve a good level of development this year.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of activities and is based on children's prior learning and assessment. It is planned to promote enjoyment and participation in learning. For example, children were seen to be motivated and engaged in the counting activities they were taking part in.
- Structured learning time is effective. Good questioning and use of resources develop children's counting and problem-solving skills. However, some learning is less well-structured and children do not make the progress they should.
- Challenge is evident in teachers' planning and adults move children on when they are ready. However, learning activities and teaching do not consistently provide sufficiently demanding activities to help children make rapid progress. The most able children are not extended enough to develop their learning to a higher level and reach age-related expectations.
- Positive language used by adults keeps children focused and on task. Low-level disruptive behaviour is tackled quickly by adults and children respond appropriately.
- Leaders meet the children and their families before they start in the Reception Year so that they settle quickly into school. Effective links with nursery schools help leaders to make accurate assessments of the children's abilities and any additional support they may need. Leaders track groups of children by the different needs they have. Disadvantaged children and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other children in the Reception class.
- Leaders and other adults take care to ensure that children are kept safe. Statutory requirements in the early years are met and safeguarding is effective.

## School details

Unique reference number	140193
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10019536

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Fergus Macdonald
Principal	Hayley Scargill
Telephone number	01933 223323
Website	<a href="http://www.victoria-pri.northants.sch.uk">www.victoria-pri.northants.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@victoriaprimaracademy.org.uk">head@victoriaprimaracademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet statutory requirements on the publication of information about the school's admission arrangements, its exam and assessment outcomes, the special educational needs and/or disabilities provision, or on up-to-date charging and remission information, on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is an academy, sponsored by The Hatton Academies Trust. Victoria Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year, including Reception.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since the school became an academy, including in leadership roles. New senior leadership has been in post since March 2015.

- A third of the pupils are White British, with the rest coming from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Just over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has a higher proportion of boys than most schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, supported by the pupil premium, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils in 2016, supported by the school, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 18 lessons. Some of this learning was observed together with senior leaders.
- Discussions took place with school staff and the academy trust directors.
- The inspectors met with three groups of pupils, talked to pupils informally and took account of the school's own questionnaire completed by pupils.
- Inspectors listened to Year 2 and Year 4 pupils reading.
- The 22 questionnaires completed by staff and the 32 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), including 21 free text responses, were taken into account. Inspectors spoke informally with a few parents at the beginning of the school day and reviewed the school's own parent surveys.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a broad range of evidence, including: the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; planning and monitoring documentation; the work in pupils' books; records relating to attendance and behaviour; and the school's own information on pupils' current attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Vondra Mays, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Burton	Ofsted Inspector

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