

Potter Street Academy

Carters Mead, Harlow, Essex CM17 9EU

Inspection dates

20–21 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time varies too much across classes and subjects. The most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Staff turbulence has led to weak teaching in the past. As a result, current pupils have gaps in their skills and knowledge, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- There is too much variation in the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There is not enough emphasis on the measurement of pupil progress from individual pupil starting points.
- A minority of pupils feel uncomfortable at playtimes because of the boisterous behaviour of some of the older pupils.
- Low-level disruption is a feature of lessons where learning does not sufficiently challenge or interest the pupils.
- The quality of phonics teaching varies. Senior leaders do not always ensure that lower-ability pupils are provided with the most skilful teachers.
- The early years requires improvement. Children in the early years often spend too much time on literacy and numeracy tasks. As a result, they are not able to develop and practise their skills in other areas of learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have high aspirations for pupils. Staff share their vision and are supportive of senior leaders.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving as senior leaders have taken effective action to employ skilled teachers.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils benefit from a well-planned and interesting curriculum.
- This is a fully inclusive school. The support for pupils with social and emotional needs is a strength of the school. The success of all pupils is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect others.
- Middle leaders are having a positive impact on improving teaching and pupil progress.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school and provide a good level of challenge and support to senior leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of education and behaviour in key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - sharing the good practice that already exists in the school so teaching, learning and assessment are consistently at least good
 - reducing the number of incidents of low-level disruption in the classroom
 - continuing to be proactive in the recruitment and retention of quality teachers
 - further improving the attainment of pupils in phonics by ensuring that lower-ability pupils receive the best teaching
 - having a sharper focus on the measurement of pupil progress from their starting points, especially for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able
 - making sure the pupils are more aware of the possible effects of their boisterous behaviour on the feelings of others.
- Improve provision in the Reception class by:
 - ensuring that all curriculum areas provide opportunities for children to develop and practise basic skills
 - ensuring that learning activities are more sharply focused on the individual needs of the children and provide sufficient challenge
 - developing children's behaviour and learning skills so they are better able to manage their learning when working independently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders, including governors, are ambitious for all children to achieve their best academically and socially. Staff share this vision and work together as a team to help pupils develop into confident learners.
- The large turnover of staff and difficulties in recruiting teachers have prevented senior leaders from making the rapid changes needed to secure good teaching, learning and assessment across the school. With the support of the trust, the headteacher has recently recruited a number of skilled teachers. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved this year. However, leaders are aware that there is more to do to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Leaders make good use of the support provided by the local authority network to improve aspects of teaching. External advisers are used well to evaluate the impact of improvement actions and validate the judgements of senior leaders.
- New staff are well supported through training and coaching. As a result, they quickly establish themselves and support the development of teaching and learning in the school. New teachers appreciate this training.
- The school has benefited from the collaborative working across the trust schools which has, for example, resulted in the development of the curriculum, the sharing of good practice in teaching and the moderation of pupils' work. A specialist language teacher provided by the secondary school delivers quality language lessons.
- Middle leaders have developed their skills since the previous inspection. They have all taken part in a training course that has enabled them to understand how to monitor and improve the teaching and outcomes for pupils in their subject. Middle leaders are passionate about driving standards upwards and can demonstrate the impact of their work on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Regular reviews of pupils' achievement enable leaders to identify pupils who are not meeting the required standards of attainment. The school then provides identified pupils with well thought out support which leads to improved attainment for a high proportion of these pupils, especially in reading. However, the assessment information is not sufficiently focused on progress. Groups of pupils, especially the most able, are not sufficiently challenged as the school is concentrating on attainment rather than accelerating progress.
- Leaders have successfully identified the learning barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. They are using the pupil premium funding wisely to ensure that pupils gain full access to school activities, including trips and visits. Gaps in pupils' learning are addressed through a variety of methods including small group work and one-to-one help. Pupils also have access to a learning mentor. The impact of the spending is carefully checked by the governors.
- Leaders are not yet using the funding they receive to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to full effect. Funding is used well to provide in-class support, one-to-one or small group teaching and specialist teaching resources. Funding also provides a learning mentor and counselling services to support pupils'

emotional and social needs. As a result, all pupils have full access to learning in all curriculum areas. However, leaders are not measuring the steps of progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They do not have a precise measurement of progress in order to plan actions to accelerate pupils' progress.

- Pupils study a range of subjects through interesting topics. Science, creative, linguistic and humanities subjects are covered well. Learning is enriched by a range of trips and visits and topic days. For example, pupils were involved in setting up a restaurant. This enabled them to deepen their design technology abilities alongside using their problem-solving skills and English and mathematics in context. The curriculum provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and promotes an understanding of British values.
- Pupils enjoy and develop their physical and teamwork skills from the varied sporting activities on offer. The school uses the sports and physical educational funding effectively to provide high-quality sports lessons and clubs. Pupils appreciate the clubs and attendance is high.

Governance of the school

- Both the local governing body and the trust board have set high expectations for senior leaders. They are determined that each pupil shall have the best possible opportunity to succeed in a fully inclusive school. They have provided high levels of challenge to the headteacher alongside effective support. The trustees and governors have been proactive in supporting the headteacher in recruiting staff.
- Governors know the school well and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They carefully monitor the spending of additional funds such as the impact of the pupil premium grant on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors understand pupil achievement information and how the different groups of pupils in the school are performing. Through planned visits to the school, governors have the opportunity to see the school at work and talk to teachers and pupils. Governors therefore have an accurate understanding of the impact the quality of teaching and the effective use of resources have on helping to increase pupils' progress. This enables them to ask leaders challenging questions and provide the support needed to continue to improve pupil outcomes.
- Governors are well trained and carry out their statutory duties effectively. Their work to ensure that safeguarding practices and policies are robust and being followed is rigorous.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained and up to date with the latest national safeguarding guidance. Leaders make sure that the appropriate checks are carried out on all adults before they work with pupils. There is an ethos of vigilance rooted in the work of the school. Staff know the pupils well. They are watchful for the signs that might indicate a child is at

risk and follow the school's policy and procedures. Records relating to child protection concerns are accurate and kept securely.

- Leaders go the extra mile to ensure that the needs of particularly vulnerable pupils are met. The school works in partnership with the relevant agencies and families to ensure that pupils are safe and provides high levels of support so that pupils are able to settle into school and access the full curriculum.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe through a programme of lessons and assemblies. They have a good understanding of the risks involved when using social media and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are also taught about road safety, risks to their health through substance abuse and when using fireworks. Pupils told the inspectors, 'The headteacher and all staff do their best to keep us safe.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning over time has been too variable to secure good outcomes for pupils in all year groups. The high turnover of staff in some classes means that pupils have gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Staff training and the appointment of new teachers are leading to improved teaching.
- There is a variation in the quality of phonics teaching. Some groups of pupils are making rapid progress as the teacher has the appropriate skills to meet the needs of the class. In other groups, pupils' progress is much slower because leaders have not accurately matched the teacher's skills to the class.
- Where teaching is more successful, teachers plan interesting activities that build upon previous learning. Teachers carefully check pupil progress throughout the lesson and provide additional support or move pupils on to harder work in order to deepen their understanding.
- The most able pupils are expected to move quickly to the more demanding learning activities in all subjects. However, activities are not always sufficiently challenging to accelerate pupil progress so more reach the higher levels of attainment.
- The quality of mathematics teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils cover interesting topics and there is a strong emphasis on pupils mastering calculation skills which they use to solve mathematical problems that develop their reasoning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by skilled teaching assistants who have a good understanding of the specific needs of the pupils they are supporting. Teaching assistants manage the behaviour of pupils with challenging behaviour well so they are able to participate in the lesson and minimise the disruption to whole-class learning.
- Most teachers consistently follow the school's assessment and marking policy. When pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work, progress is evident.
- Homework is set regularly according to the school policy. Homework is a combination of practising basic numeracy and literacy skills or preparation for new learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are very energetic and many enjoy playing physical games and sports at playtime. They rush around with little awareness of other pupils, which often results in pupils being pushed or hit with a ball. The pupils' actions are not deliberate but they do make some pupils feel uncomfortable. Pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the effect of their boisterous play on others.
- Most pupils say they are safe and well cared for in school. Pupils understand the difference between bullying and 'falling out' with friends. Pupils indicated that bullying happens on occasions, but it is less common than it was. All the pupils spoken to said there was an adult in the school who would listen to them and act to stop any bullying. Pupils gave examples of how bullying had ended as a result of adult actions. A large majority of parents feel that bullying is dealt with appropriately.
- The school's values are thoroughly embedded in the life of the school. Pupils understand the importance of respecting the views, culture and religion of others. They understand that some pupils need more support than others. As a result, pupils are generally respectful towards adults and other children. Pupils appreciate the respect adults show them and describe adults as caring. Most pupils are polite and courteous, and develop into self-confident young people who are well prepared for secondary school.
- The support provided for pupils with emotional and social needs is a real strength. The school works closely with the appropriate agencies and the child's family to ensure that the child receives the appropriate support. The range of support is varied and includes accessing part-time alternative provision at the Aspire Academy, counselling and modifications to their curriculum.
- Pupil success and achievement is publicly celebrated throughout the school. Pupils are proud of the awards they receive. Pupils also appreciate the opportunity to participate in leadership opportunities such as school counsellors, house captain and play leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Across the school, the majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and are keen to do their best. However, when lessons are not sufficiently interesting or work is not demanding enough pupils often quickly lose concentration, leading to off-task behaviour and low-level disruption. At times, this disturbs the learning of others.
- Younger pupils often find it difficult to concentrate and listen to adults. A major reason for this is because pupils have not been adequately supported in developing resilience when working.

- Pupils say that although behaviour in lessons is mostly good it can vary. Pupils understand the behaviour code and say that teachers apply it consistently. Pupils enjoy the rewards they receive for good behaviour and understand the reasons for sanctions.
- The school has a high proportion of pupils who, due to their additional needs, find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Their behaviour can be extremely challenging despite the efforts of the school, which include obtaining the support of behaviour specialists. In order to ensure the safety of these pupils and their classmates the school has reluctantly used short-term exclusions. This has led to an above-average number of fixed-term exclusions. For some pupils, this has had the desired impact and their behaviour has improved.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has led to a rise in the persistent absence of some groups of pupils. Attendance for most groups of pupils meets the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are well behaved. They are polite to adults and one another and extremely welcoming to visitors. Pupils understand right from wrong and that they are responsible for their actions. A group of pupils told inspectors that teachers are 'very fair with their decisions about behaviour consequences'. Pupils are loyal to the school and most say they enjoy coming to school. The majority of parents say behaviour is good but a minority felt behaviour could be improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because, despite the rise in standards since the previous inspection, progress across subjects and year groups is still variable. This is a result of the inconsistency in teaching during this period.
- The small number of most-able pupils across the school make expected progress in all subjects. However, the proportion making good progress is too low.
- Work in pupils' books across a range of subjects indicates that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable. Pupils who have been subject to a high turnover of staff have gaps in their skills and knowledge. For example, the progress for Year 5 and 6 pupils is less rapid than other year groups. The school is taking action by providing booster lessons for these pupils but it is too soon to judge the impact on the progress for pupils in Year 6.
- The very small number of most-able disadvantaged pupils are making expected rates of progress in all subjects across all year groups. The proportion making accelerated progress varies.
- Effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to access the curriculum. However, the school is not focused sufficiently on measuring the small steps of progress made by these pupils in order to plan work that will accelerate their progress. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is therefore variable.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the phonics threshold at the end of Year 1 has been below average for the last three years. However, since changes have been made to the way pupils are taught, results have steadily improved. In 2016, the gap between the number of pupils meeting the threshold and the national average narrowed. Less-able

pupils are able to use their phonics skills to read unfamiliar words.

- Most-able readers read books that are suitable for their age. The pupils who read to the inspectors were fluent and read with expression. Pupils read regularly at home and in school.
- The quality of work in subjects other than English and mathematics is improving. Pupils are given the opportunity to practise their mathematics and English across subjects. Progress in science is improving as pupils are developing their enquiry skills.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the early years has not ensured that children have a balanced curriculum. Children typically enter the early years with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. As a result of highly focused literacy and numeracy teaching, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development in 2016 met the national average. This represents excellent progress. However, this intensive teaching results in children not being sufficiently challenged or directed to appropriate learning activities in other areas of learning. The early years leader understands what needs to be done to improve provision.
- Children are not good at managing their behaviour, listening and concentration. This is because they have not had enough opportunity to develop these skills through free-choice activities. Children's lack of concentration skills can slow their progress in whole-class activities as adults often spend too much time getting children to concentrate.
- Teachers plan a wide range of interesting activities for the children and make good use of the well-resourced area. For example, a group of children were experimenting with drainpipes and guttering to build a ramp for rolling balls. This activity maintained their attention and provided the opportunity for them to solve problems and work together.
- Children learn in a safe and nurturing environment. There are rigorous procedures to ensure that children are protected and that any issues are identified and monitored by the early years leader.
- Teachers and other adults are skilled and are totally committed to the children in their care. Relationships between adults and children are very positive. Adults provide a good role model of behaviour and high levels of behaviour support are provided for children. Most children are able to work well together.

School details

Unique reference number	139802
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10031356

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	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Kirk
Headteacher	Tim West
Telephone number	01279 866504
Website	www.potterstreetacademy.com
Email address	office@potterstreetacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	16–17 April 2015

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specific information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is below average. Most children are of White British heritage.
- An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The proportion of pupils that enter or leave the school at times other than the start of

the year is higher than the national average.

- The early years provision comprises two full-time Reception classes.
- The school met the 2016 floor standards for primary schools. These are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is part of the Passmores Co-operative Learning Community Trust. This comprises Passmores Academy and Purford Green Academy.
- Three pupils currently attend the Aspire Alternative Education Academy in Harlow part time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gained a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in all years and talked to pupils about their work. Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books to examine learning and progress over the year. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the inspectors for some of these observations.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, four members of the governing body, middle leaders, the early years leader, the chief executive officer of the trust and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to two groups of pupils about their reading and listened to them read.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils and visited an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school's analysis of its own work and its improvement plan, information on pupils' academic progress, and documents relating to the quality of teaching, staff training, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector considered the 56 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 24 text responses. She also took into account the 30 responses from the school's own parent questionnaire.
- The views of the 31 staff who completed questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Bell-Cook	Ofsted Inspector
James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector

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