

# The Park Community School

Park Lane, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 9AX

## Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over the last two years, pupils' progress across a range of GCSE subjects has been below the national average. Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is improving but is not yet good.
- Disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, make less progress than other pupils nationally.
- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good. For example, teachers do not use questioning well enough to deepen pupils' understanding effectively.
- Some teaching is not extending pupils' knowledge and understanding because teachers do not pay enough attention to pupils' starting points and capabilities. Consequently, they set work for pupils which is not challenging enough.
- Middle leaders are not as effective as they should be in raising the quality of teaching in the areas they are responsible for. As a result, differences in pupils' progress between subjects and within subjects persist.
- In the past, governors have not used information about pupils' progress to make comparisons with other schools nationally. Therefore, until recently, they have not provided sufficient challenge to senior leaders over the performance of the school.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively in recent years.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong, clear-sighted leadership. Since his appointment, he has raised expectations at the school and is challenging low aspirations.
- Staff give pupils strong pastoral care and support. This contributes to pupils' good attendance, well-being and safety.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered; they behave well in lessons and around the school site. Any disruption is rare.
- The new governing body has the expertise required to evaluate information about the progress of different pupil groups. Governors now demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
  - ensuring that teachers more consistently plan activities which closely match the abilities and prior attainment of pupils, particularly the most able
  - developing teachers' use of questioning to deepen pupils' understanding
  - extending the range of strategies used by teachers to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' progress improves.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that support for pupils funded by the pupil premium is targeted effectively to diminish the difference between the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
  - developing middle leaders' ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their departments and take action to improve the quality of teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- School leaders, including governors, have not evaluated the performance of the school accurately in the past. Low aspirations have led to complacency and an acceptance of low levels of progress from pupils' different starting points. Senior leaders now have higher expectations, but they have not yet secured consistently strong teaching so that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Over time, senior leaders have not maintained a clear focus on the impact of pupil premium spending on disadvantaged pupils' academic achievement. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has lagged well behind other pupils nationally. Evidence collected during the inspection shows that the renewed leadership of this area of the school's work is beginning to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- The quality of middle leadership is variable. Some middle leaders have not ensured that teaching improves rapidly in their subject areas. In some areas, such as history and art, teaching has improved quickly but in others change has been slow. This has resulted in uneven progress for pupils.
- Since his appointment, the headteacher has systematically challenged the culture of low aspiration at the school. He has raised the expectations of governors and senior leaders by providing a determined drive for high achievement for all pupils. He has managed the restructuring of the senior team well. Senior leaders now have clear roles and responsibilities which are well matched to improvement priorities.
- Senior leaders share the headteacher's vision for improvement. They now monitor the quality of teaching effectively through a more rigorous performance management process. Senior leaders provide training and coaching across the school to improve teachers' professional skills. These efforts are beginning to hit home. Teachers are increasingly willing to share good ideas and effective approaches with each other.
- Senior leaders keep the curriculum under review. They have improved the balance of subjects by rationalising the time allocations for each area of study. The curriculum is now well organised and pupils study a broad range of mainly GCSE subjects. The curriculum has been adapted at key stage 3 so that pupils are given a better grounding in the literacy and numeracy skills they need for key stage 4. Pupils appreciate the element of subject choice they are given in Year 9. Senior leaders invite past pupils back to speak to current pupils; this is helping to raise aspirations.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic well-being education programme provides a range of opportunities for pupils to think carefully about life in modern Britain. Pupils are respectful of different cultures and religions. They show a good understanding of democratic processes and the importance of the forthcoming general election.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through the curriculum and through a wide range of artistic and sporting extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils developed confidence by participating in the recent production of the musical 'We will rock you'.
- The additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

is used well to make sure that pupils receive appropriate support. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has re-organised support work and this is leading to improved outcomes for this group, especially in key stage 3.

- Pupils who arrive in Year 7 with weak literacy and numeracy skills are helped to catch up with their classmates because the funding allocated to help them is now being used shrewdly.
- Senior leaders communicate well with parents. Parents support the school strongly. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'The school does not hesitate to get in contact with parents when it is needed. This approach helps me as a parent to feel that the school is working with me to ensure that my children's needs are met.' The large majority of those parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to others.

### **Governance of the school**

- Historically, the governing body did not fully understand the progress of different groups of pupils within the school. This led to an inaccurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and an inability to challenge senior leaders effectively.
- The governing body has undergone significant change in the last year. A new chair of the governing body took up her role in September 2016 and several new governors have been appointed. Governors now hold senior leaders stringently to account for the performance of the school because they have the expertise necessary to evaluate assessment information accurately. Hence, working closely with senior leaders, they have been able to formulate an insightful school improvement strategy for the future.
- Governors have ensured that the performance management of staff is now robust, and any salary progression is fully merited. They have taken action to change the way additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up is spent. Governors now have a good understanding of the impact of this additional funding. The governing body ensures that staff are well trained and the school meets the requirements for safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are appropriately trained and receive regular updates on safeguarding issues. As a result, they are confident to respond to a wide range of concerns about pupils' welfare.
- Leaders make timely referrals to social services when appropriate. Detailed records are kept of concerns and the actions taken. Consequently, leaders' collaboration with outside agencies is effective in ensuring that all children are kept safe and secure.
- All staff recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and so a culture of vigilance permeates the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent within and across subjects. Although raised expectations are leading to improvement, teaching is still not strong enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not made good progress in the past because they have not received the support they need. Teachers are becoming better at recognising the individual needs of these pupils; however, there are still wide variations in the effectiveness of the support these pupils receive in different subject areas.
- Teachers are well-qualified subject specialists who apply their knowledge to plan activities which meet the requirements of examinations and the national curriculum. However, some pupils, especially in key stage 4, are not sufficiently motivated by lesson activities and so do not push themselves to extend their knowledge.
- Teachers are often reluctant to change their plans in the light of pupils' responses. Some pupils are, therefore, given insufficiently challenging work because they master ideas quickly and are not prompted to go further. Teachers do not consistently use questioning to provoke thought and help pupils synthesise new understanding.
- Teachers gather assessment information about pupils, including information about pupils' attitudes. Senior leaders are careful to calibrate pupils' targets at a suitably aspirational level. Where teachers actively use this information it has raised expectations and improved pupils' progress. In many cases, however, teachers do not use assessment information to match work accurately enough to the abilities of different pupils, particularly the most able.
- Subject teachers recognise their responsibility to develop pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most, but not all, teachers follow the school's policy for providing written feedback to pupils about their work. The school's work to develop literacy skills in key stage 3 is increasingly effective.
- Teaching assistants are used well to help pupils. They encourage pupils' independence by providing a good balance of challenge and support.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are well looked after by pastoral care staff. The house system helps pupils understand and respect the school's history. They share a sense of pride in their school and wear their uniform smartly.
- Pupils are aware of their responsibilities as citizens and demonstrate this by their involvement in the life of the school. For example, they played an active part in developing the school values statement last year. Pupils are also active at a local and national level. One pupil was recently elected to represent North Devon in the UK Youth Parliament.
- Pupils report that they feel safe. They are taught well about e-safety and the dangers

of radicalisation. Pupils have a good awareness of the threats posed by drugs, alcohol and other potential risks.

- Bullying in any form is not common at the school. Pupils express confidence in their teachers to deal with it promptly and effectively if it does occur. The majority of parents agree that the school deals with any bullying well.
- Many pupils are involved in outdoor programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and the annual 'Ten Tors' event. Through these activities and others, pupils are encouraged to maintain their physical and mental health.
- Where teaching is not well matched to pupils' abilities, a minority of pupils do not show an active interest in their work. They do not question their own understanding closely enough and so miss out on learning.
- Pupils receive effective advice about their career options because specialist help is provided for them. The school has good links with local businesses, and consequently pupils develop a good understanding of a range of different occupations.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are well supervised and kept safe at all times. As a result of the extra help they are given, they develop greater confidence, and are often able to re-integrate back into school life quickly.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and well mannered. This contributes strongly to the calm atmosphere in the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and respectful.
- The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis because pupils know and adhere to the high expectations of staff. Pupils move around the school sensibly between lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. The large campus is well maintained; there is little litter or graffiti.
- Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. In the few cases where pupils cross boundaries, teachers use the school's new behaviour policy consistently. Pupils generally respond quickly to guidance and so learning is able to proceed unhindered.
- Rates of attendance are above average. Fewer pupils than seen nationally are persistently absent from school. However, disadvantaged pupils' attendance was not as good as that of other pupils in 2016. School leaders have successfully taken action to improve the attendance of this group.
- The rate of pupil exclusions was above average in 2015. Subsequently, it has fallen as the school's efforts to help pupils who find it difficult to behave well have begun to take effect. Off-site alternative provision and better in-house support are giving these pupils more confidence and helping them make better progress.
- Parents believe that pupils behave well. The great majority of parents who replied to the Parent View survey said the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. Where concerns are raised, they believe the school responds well.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Requires improvement**

- Year 11 pupils' progress in 2016, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was lower than the national average. Consequently, pupils left school with average attainment at GCSE, even though many started in Year 7 with high attainment.
- Pupils' progress in both GCSE English and GCSE mathematics was below average in 2015 and 2016. Fewer pupils attain a GCSE in both English and mathematics than could be expected. A greater proportion of current pupils are now making the progress they are capable of. However, gaps in their knowledge and understanding still persist because of previous weaker teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress in English, mathematics and several other subjects was below average last year. The most able disadvantaged pupils, in particular, did not achieve well. Senior leaders have changed the way that extra funding to support these pupils is used. For example, staff who support pupils' welfare needs are now providing academic help as well. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving; however, it is still well below that of other pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils have not been stretched sufficiently in recent years. Across a range of subjects in 2016, a smaller proportion of these pupils attained the top grades at GCSE than nationally. The work in pupils' books shows that the most able pupils currently in the school are responding well to better teaching.
- Historically, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not achieved as well as they should. New leadership within the special educational needs department has ensured that more effective support is in place for these pupils and their progress, especially in key stage 3, is improving.
- Pupils who have low levels of attainment when they join the school are supported well with Year 7 catch-up funding and develop their basic skills in English and mathematics quickly. Staff have worked hard to build pupils' enjoyment and ability in reading and their efforts have been successful. For example, inspectors saw several examples of pupils reading confidently in front of their peers in key stages 3 and 4.
- In key stage 3, pupils make good progress in art, physical education and philosophy, theology and ethics. In one philosophy, theology and ethics class, Year 7 pupils' use of sophisticated language to weigh up different beliefs about creation was impressive.
- Outcomes for lower-ability pupils are better than for other groups in the school. The progress of these pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is as good as that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Pupils who attend off-site provision at 'The LINC' make good progress towards their learning goals because teaching is tailored to their needs.
- The school provides good-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance and so pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. For example, representatives from the engineering sector were presenting to pupils on the day of the inspection. A high proportion of pupils find places in education, employment or training when they leave.

## School details

Unique reference number	113514
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10025105

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kim Baker
Headteacher	Gareth Roscoe
Telephone number	01271 373131
Website	<a href="http://www.parkcommunity.devon.sch.uk">http://www.parkcommunity.devon.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@theparkschool.org.uk">admin@theparkschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2013

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection a new chair of the governing body and several new governors have been appointed. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2015.
- This is a foundation school with The Park Community Co-operative Learning Trust as the foundation trust. It is the only school in the trust.
- This school is much larger than the average secondary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is below average.



- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- A small number of pupils with emotional or behavioural needs attend off-site provision run by the school called 'The LINC'.
- The school is involved in the North Devon Teaching School Alliance and the Dartmoor Teaching School Alliance, which provide initial teacher training.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and one other governor, senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils in key stages 3 and 4.
- Inspectors observed learning jointly with senior staff across a range of age groups and subjects. Inspectors scrutinised samples of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with the school adviser who works with senior leaders on the school's development planning.
- Inspectors took account of 150 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 46 responses to the pupil questionnaire. In addition, inspectors took account of 80 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Neville Coles	Ofsted Inspector
Shelagh Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Thompson	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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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