

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Palfreyman
Headteacher
Parkfield Primary School
Harold Street
Middleton
Manchester
M24 4AF

Dear Mrs Palfreyman

Short inspection of Parkfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve the consistency with which teachers challenged the most able pupils and deepened pupils' understanding of their learning. You have addressed these recommendations well. From their different starting points, all groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make strong progress across the curriculum. Many children begin Reception with skills below those typical for their age. However, by the time pupils leave Year 6 the proportion reaching the expected standard and the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics is above average. Good-quality teaching throughout the school ensures that pupils are well prepared for secondary school. Importantly, pupils' good achievement is not the result of a narrow curriculum focused only on the basics. Your conviction that learning should be interesting, meaningful and exciting is a very obvious feature of the school's ethos and culture. The wide variety of rich learning experiences provided for pupils, across all the subjects they study, successfully develops their knowledge and skills and deepens their understanding.

The school's motto of 'Believe, Achieve and Succeed' is an ideal that pupils know well and aspire to. The pupils I spoke to said that they like and trust their teachers. They recognise and appreciate teachers' efforts to make lessons interesting and fun. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about 'Fabulous Fridays', when they work with

pupils from different year groups. Pupils commented how much they enjoy the numerous visits and visitors that are arranged to enhance their learning. One pupil's comment summed up the views of many: 'We get a good education here and the trips just make things more real.'

Pupils are equally positive about behaviour, which most consider is good. Pupils' clear understanding of right and wrong is articulated well in terms of what it means to be a good 'Parkfielder'. For example, in explaining about bullying, pupils said that this hardly ever happens because 'Parkfielders don't bully.' Pupils spoke with the same certainty about other types of behaviour, including incidents of teasing and name-calling that are occasionally prejudicial. Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They explained how staff in the playground look after them at breaktimes and the things they are taught to help keep themselves safe. Pupils have a very good understanding of the dangers they need to be aware of when using the internet.

You have established a strong and effective leadership team. Your deputy headteacher very capably leads a number of important aspects of the school's work and makes a worthy contribution to the school's effectiveness. Other senior leaders are equally effective in their roles. Subject leaders check on the quality of provision and its impact on pupils' outcomes. You, and your leadership team, have shared your expertise with other local schools. Governors are a committed team and ask probing questions about pupils' achievement, personal development and the impact of the school's spending on pupils' outcomes.

The school has recently gone through a difficult staff restructuring process. This has, understandably, affected staff morale. Notwithstanding, staff response to the online survey, while reflecting this issue, was very positive. This reflects well on the working climate at the school over time. Parents' views are extremely positive. Leaders regularly canvass parents' views and provide parents with comprehensive information about what their children are learning. Parents appreciate the opportunities to visit lessons and the workshops that have been provided to help them support their children's learning at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school provides a safe learning environment and has appropriate systems to keep pupils safe. Checks to ensure that all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors are suitable people to work with children are robust. All staff have received child protection training and have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. As the designated safeguarding leader, you act swiftly and decisively in response to any concerns about pupils' safety. Your records of child protection referrals and communications with professional agencies are detailed. Where professional support is not speedily forthcoming, you are resolute and persistent in pursuing this to ensure pupils' safety. The school's strong safeguarding practice and culture are reflected in the highly positive responses from pupils, parents and staff to the survey questions about safety. Despite this strong practice, however, governors have not ensured that the school's policy documents about safeguarding reflect all

current legislation.

Inspection findings

- Attendance is monitored rigorously and the importance of good attendance is regularly promoted. Parents are made aware of the learning time lost when attendance falls below average and of the impact this can have on their children's achievement. Creative use of pupil awards and rewards, plus a free daily breakfast club, contribute well to the good attendance and punctuality of most pupils. Improving the low attendance of a small number of pupils receives significant attention. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make up most of this group. Considerable time and funding is invested in maintaining frequent communication with pupils' parents. This includes meetings to provide practical support for families who struggle to get their children to school. The positive involvement of pupils, many of whom have no control over their attendance, is also a notable feature of the school's work. The determined efforts to improve the attendance of persistently absent pupils have not been unsuccessful. However, by the time some pupils arrive registration has often closed so pupils are, rightly, marked absent. You and your business manager do everything possible to improve attendance for this group of pupils, including working with the local authority educational welfare officer. Nevertheless, you recognise that this remains a priority for improvement.
- A success story has been the improvement this year in the achievement of disadvantaged children in the early years. For the last three years, less than half of the children in this group have attained the good level of development needed to be ready for Year 1. This year, good use of the pupil premium funding has enabled more support to promote children's personal, social and emotional development and their communication and language skills. In addition, the investment made to improve outdoor provision has enabled staff to better develop children's physical skills and offer many more opportunities for the children to be creative and engage in problem-solving activities. The proportion of disadvantaged children attaining a good level of development this year has risen sharply and is now much closer to that of non-disadvantaged children nationally.
- At Parkfield, the curriculum is the engine that drives the school's work. As good as it is, however, you and your senior leaders are committed to ensuring that it remains current in meeting pupils' needs and the school's priorities. Everyone is excited about the curriculum and your deputy headteacher enthusiastically explained the imminent review. While staying true to the school's philosophy for how pupils should experience learning, you are refining topics and themes. Extending opportunities for more purposeful and challenging reading, writing and mathematics activities is a particular focus to increase the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in their learning. Nonetheless, pupils already have many good experiences to this end. In mathematics, for example, during the inspection, pupils used and applied their knowledge of angles to plan and make wooden memory boxes. Relishing the challenge, pupils considered the size of items going into their boxes and the different ways they might open. The expectation that the most able pupils challenge themselves was very evident in

their decisions to make more complex eight-sided and ten-sided boxes.

- A particularly strong aspect of the curriculum is how well it prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures, considering similarities with and differences from their own experiences. They learn about the achievements of notable men and women, different types of families and relationships, and the impact of prejudice-based behaviour. In discussion, older pupils explained the strong message they learned about equal marriage from a visiting playgroup. Pupils learn a lot about British values. Recently, for example, pupils have considered the role of politics, the concept of democracy, why Britain needs a legal system and the difference between criminal and civil law.
- The governing board has, unavoidably, lost a number of its members and is finding it difficult to fill the vacancies. The board has the necessary number of people to make decisions but governors are understandably feeling the strain of the reduction in membership. This situation means that governors' capacity to support school improvement is not as strong as it might be. Inconsistencies and omissions in some school policy documents and on the school's website reflect this. The planned skills audit to inform the governors' recruitment drive and training requirements is an appropriate action.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improves so that it at least equals the national average
- the capacity of governors to support all areas of school improvement is maximised by:
 - ensuring that information from the governors' skills audit informs the recruitment of new governors and governors' training needs
 - ensuring that governors meet their legal duties so that school policies reflect current legislation and so that the school's website meets statutory requirements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I met, separately, with two governors and with the school's business manager, who is also the governor for safeguarding. I had a telephone discussion with a representative from Rochdale local authority. You and I observed learning and behaviour in a sample of lessons and I observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes and in the dining hall. I had a discussion with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others informally at breaktimes. I listened to some pupils read, reviewed samples of pupils' work and analysed the school's assessments of pupils' achievements in a range of subjects. I reviewed a range of school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, and spoke to a number of staff about safeguarding. I considered records of governors' meetings and leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning. There were too few responses to the online parent questionnaire to view. However, I spoke to some parents as they brought their children to school, considered a letter from one parent and took account of a recent school survey of parents' views, to which 80 parents responded. I considered 44 responses to the online pupil survey and 18 responses to the online staff survey.