

# The Park Education Support Centre

High Street, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 5AB

## Inspection dates

24–25 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The school is failing to give pupils a reasonable standard of education. Leaders and governors are not collectively exhibiting the necessary capacity to improve provision in the school.
- The management committee and local authority have failed to stem the decline in standards. The new headteacher has not been given adequate support to overcome the many issues facing the school.
- Teaching, learning and behaviour are inadequate. Most notably, the support for pupils at key stage 3 to improve their behaviours is not having a sustained or significant impact. As a result, too much learning is disturbed by poor behaviour.
- Despite efforts by leaders, there are too often occasions when pupils, ready for next-step provision, are kept waiting for local placements. This is especially true for a significant minority of pupils who require specialist provision.
- Too many pupils do not achieve well at both key stages 3 and 4. Despite recent efforts by new leaders, pupils' attendance is low, often impacted by high exclusion rates. Pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Too few pupils are accessing full-time education rapidly enough. This problem is being exacerbated by difficulties with transportation for a number of pupils and the location of the sites.
- Leadership is not yet effective. While many leaders are still developing their roles, there is no shared understanding between leaders about the strategic vision of the school.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is not well developed or embedded in lessons. Teaching does not meet the needs of these pupils well enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since her appointment, the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, has restructured staffing and monitoring so that leaders can begin to address the issues facing the school.
- The headteacher has started to increase the welfare support that pupils receive.
- The curriculum is beginning to widen and improve, and the quality of teaching is starting to improve for key stage 4 pupils.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Urgently improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that there is a clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the management committee and the local authority, so that they work together effectively to support the headteacher and her senior team to rapidly improve standards
  - formally clarifying the purpose of the school with all stakeholders, including local providers, so that there are shared expectations about the admission and reintegration of pupils back into mainstream provision
  - continuing to work with the local authority on the backlog of pupils who require specialist education so that these pupils swiftly get appropriate provision that meets their needs
  - continuing to work with the local authority on developing appropriate transportation for pupils to the key stage 3 site to support pupils' good attendance
  - further ensuring that pupils receive a tailored, well-monitored pathway that suits their needs, aspirations and interests, so that more access full-time education on a systematic and sustained basis
  - ensuring that all leaders and staff understand and engage with the school's strategic vision and improve their work with the required urgency.
- Continue to develop pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - further developing attendance strategies so that the attendance of pupils increases more rapidly and the rate of persistent absence reduces significantly
  - continuing to increase the provision for the social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils, as well as for their complex learning needs, so that pupils develop better relationships and interact more effectively
  - establishing greater consistency between staff in how they deal with and improve pupils' poorer behaviours and inappropriate language.
- Raise the quality of teaching and improve pupils' learning and achievement by:
  - further establishing and embedding the support and strategic monitoring of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - embedding the ongoing work in the key stage 3 short-term provision, so that interventions support pupils to improve their behaviour, attend full-time provision and learn effectively
  - further developing the ongoing monitoring, support and intervention for pupils so

that they make better progress, catch up rapidly and, subsequently, achieve appropriate qualifications.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management

## Inadequate

- Staffing and leadership turbulence since the previous inspection, coupled with poor-quality governance, has meant that standards in the provision have declined considerably. It is not until more recently, under the new leadership of the headteacher, that the decline in standards has started to be tackled. As a result, the school's standard of education is inadequate.
- Leadership and governance are not collectively bringing about rapid enough improvement. Since her appointment a year ago, the insightful headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, is attempting to address the many weaknesses in the school in a sustained way. However, the sheer volume of issues that they face, and the lack of well-coordinated support from the management committee and local authority, mean that their efforts are being significantly hindered.
- There is no locally agreed vision and purpose for the school. Despite efforts by the headteacher to create a fair agreement with local schools, this has never been signed, agreed or upheld. As a result, admissions to the school are often 'ad hoc' and not well thought out. This is not helping leaders to provide the delicate care and provision that pupils need.
- Despite the efforts of leaders to find places in the locality, too many pupils who are ready to be reintegrated back into mainstream education are not able to do so. Many pupils from key stage 3 stay at the school for a number of years rather than for the short-term supportive provision that is intended. Equally, a number of pupils do not sustain their new places in local schools, and so are even less likely to re-engage positively in education at The Park Education Support Centre.
- Leadership is not yet fully effective across the school. Many leaders are new to their positions and are developing their monitoring responsibilities. While these are showing early signs of bringing improvements to the quality of teaching, these leaders are not consistently clear about the strategic direction of the school, nor aware of the urgency that is required.
- The additional funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used appropriately. Although leaders' evaluation of this is not sharp, there is clear internal monitoring evidence that they use this money to support the significant needs of these pupils. The tenacious work of the deputy headteacher means that the school is now more successful at obtaining this funding from the pupils' school of origin.
- The headteacher has brought much-needed stability since her appointment in September 2016. Her senior team has a secure understanding of most of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. The urgent work that they have undertaken thus far has been to establish the basic systems and processes so desperately needed. This is showing very early signs of making a difference to attendance, behaviour and teaching.
- The deputy headteacher has started work on ensuring that the curriculum provision for all pupils is more appropriate. He is adamant that pupils at the school should access a wealth of high-quality key stage 4 qualifications, and alternative provision or work placements that suit their needs, aspirations or interests. Pupils are now starting to

access a range of qualifications, alternative provision and/or work placements which generally suit their interests and aspirations.

- The headteacher's restructure of the school, which took considerable effort and time, is making it more financially viable, with a clearer focus on how funding supports pupils. For example, her reorganisation of pastoral care is starting to target better support for pupils' transition into new schools when they are able and ready.

## **Governance of the school**

- There is a serious lack of coordination between the local authority and the management committee to support leaders and raise standards in this community school. There is not a mutual shared understanding of roles and responsibilities between the two bodies to ensure that leaders are being well supported, or that pupils are accessing appropriate provision. Consequently, governance is ineffective.
- The local authority provides a school improvement partner to work with the school who has routinely identified that attendance and pupils' access to full-time education is a real concern. However, the local authority has not been precise, rigorous or rapid in its response to these ongoing issues, nor has it worked alongside the management committee to bring about improvements.
- The management committee does not demonstrate sufficient diligence about the effectiveness of its work to support leaders. The committee does not ensure that the provision is used appropriately by other local schools. In particular, there is not enough routine checking that the management committee members themselves are held to account for their own school's use of the provision.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Despite the significant issues facing the school, leaders have made safeguarding a priority. When the headteacher arrived, she and her deputy headteacher worked successfully to tighten the school's processes and systems for checking on the most vulnerable pupils.
- Staff training is up to date with the most recent statutory guidance, including guidance about how to ensure that pupils are not vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff use this guidance to make appropriate referrals when they have concerns about pupils.
- The implementation of the school's new online system means that leaders are ever-vigilant to the routine referrals made by staff. Leaders work appropriately, and often at length, with outside agencies in child protection.
- Leaders also ensure that they undertake and record the routine checks that they make on pupils who do not attend regularly. This ensures that where there are ongoing concerns about poorer attendance, the local authority is aware of where the most vulnerable pupils may need support.
- Pupils who access alternative provision or work experience are routinely checked and, more often than not, are supervised or transported to and from their placements.

- The single central record of the suitability of staff to work with young people meets requirements.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is constantly reviewed to meet the ever-changing needs of pupils and their understanding of how to stay safe. Most pupils say that they feel safe and are well looked after by staff.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Inadequate

- Although starting to improve, the quality of teaching and learning is still too severely impacted by the poor behaviour and low attendance of pupils.
- In key stage 3, teachers do not use effective strategies to engage pupils in their learning and to encourage them to behave appropriately. As a result, pupils' behaviour prohibits the effective development of skills and knowledge across subjects. Many pupils complete tasks with little understanding of what skills they are learning or knowledge they are developing, most notably in the core subjects of mathematics and English.
- Teachers are only just starting to use assessment to plan work which caters for pupils' different abilities. For example, in key stage 4, poor attendance means that too often pupils miss sessions. This creates gaps in their learning. Teachers do not use this knowledge to fully address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- On occasion, where teachers are struggling to assess pupils because of poor behaviour or low attendance, they set work that is too easy. This is more apparent in key stage 3, where pupils are simply undertaking activities rather than well-planned sequences of learning. Therefore, these pupils do not learn well over time or make the progress of which they are capable.
- At both sites, teachers are too often ineffective in getting pupils to learn cooperatively in lessons in order to develop a positive learning atmosphere. Staff do not always address the poor language or inappropriate comments made by pupils in lessons.
- Leaders have identified and are addressing inconsistencies in the support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in lessons. They are planning to improve the quality of guidance given to staff about specific strategies to support the learning needs of pupils.
- Where teaching and learning are more effective, teachers know what pupils understand and can do, and plan to make sure that they make the best use of the learning time. Where this is happening, teachers use questions and creative activities to support pupils to develop their answers and engage in their learning. This is particularly the case in business studies, art and food technology.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Too often, pupils who have been at the provision longest have not sustained any

improvements in how they behave and interact. Many pupils who arrive at the school require significant support to re-engage with their learning. Support for pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs has not made a positive difference. Leaders have identified this and have increased their capacity this year to support young people, including through the work of the new assistant headteacher, pastoral support workers and onsite counselling.

- Although there is a clear programme for pupils to study healthy lifestyles, too often pupils do not actively take on board these messages. When pupils make unhealthy lifestyle choices, leaders and staff have varying degrees of expectation about how to address this. They do not take consistently rapid action to make a meaningful difference to pupils.
- Although leaders have made the indoor space welcoming, the opportunities for pupils to use outdoor space, especially at the key stage 4 site, are not appropriate. Key stage 4 pupils are using local shops and a public area during their breaktimes, and for their physical education lessons. Although use of these spaces is well supervised, this is not an appropriate environment for their many complex and challenging social and emotional needs.
- Many of the youngest pupils have very long journeys to reach the key stage 3 site. Despite leaders' efforts to support pupils and their families in accessing additional funding to finance this travel, this is impacting negatively on their rates of attendance and punctuality.
- Leaders have reviewed mechanisms to support pupils' induction to the school and reintegration into mainstream provision, most notably through the support of their reorganised outreach team. This work is still developing.
- Most pupils say that they feel safe. They say that staff take their concerns seriously. Pupils are confident that staff will support them, and deal with rare cases of bullying effectively.
- The school's outreach work to support pupils in mainstream schools while still on roll in their respective schools is very well regarded in the local area.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils do not value their education enough to attend well. The attendance of pupils is very low and has been for some time. The persistent absence rate of pupils in the school is exceptionally high. Recent actions to reduce pupils' absence are not embedded enough to be making a rapid and sustained difference to pupils' attendance at school.
- Behaviour at the key stage 3 site is inadequate. Too much time is lost to persistent disruptive behaviour. In response, leaders have significantly reduced these pupils' time on site in order to begin to address their individual needs. Consequently, all the youngest pupils do not currently have access to full-time provision.
- Pupils' pastoral support plans are not reviewed sharply enough so as to ensure that pupils are receiving the right intervention and support that make a real difference to their behaviour over time. Too often, reducing pupils' access to provision has been

used as a method by which to overcome poorer behaviours, rather than focusing on how to rebuild their engagement in lessons. Equally, the use of more extreme consequences, such as fixed-term exclusion, remains high.

- Pupils are generally positive about the improvements brought about by the new headteacher, whom they feel is 'putting her foot down' and raising expectations about how pupils should behave. Leaders' own internal information about behaviour in the school indicates that these raised expectations are starting to bring some early signs of improved behaviour among pupils in key stage 4, especially in reducing physically aggressive behaviour.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, too many pupils have left the school without qualifications at the end of key stage 4. Leaders acknowledge that too many pupils have left the school in Year 11 without having essential basic skills.
- A large proportion of pupils do not attend school regularly and have high levels of absence, which means that they cannot achieve as well as they should. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are the most able.
- The inadequate behaviour, most notably in the key stage 3 short-term provision, means that there are many gaps in pupils' knowledge and these are not being addressed effectively. As a result, too many pupils are not making effective progress over time, particularly in mathematics and English.
- A large proportion of pupils do not have regular full-time provision. A significant number of pupils only access part-time education, and some attend very few lessons at all. Leaders are not securing a sustained increase in pupils' timetables. Current leaders have identified the significant weaknesses in achievement, and have started to try to address these. The deputy headteacher is widening the curriculum offered to pupils, both on site and through alternative provision and work experience. This work is still in the early stages of development.
- Leaders now have a more accurate baseline for current pupils, a system for measuring pupils' starting points and their progress over time, and an assessment process that staff understand. Leaders continue to check the accuracy of this assessment. This is helping staff to better identify where pupils require further support.
- Despite the underperformance of pupils in 2016/17, most have secured a post-16 destination in either further education or employment. The school does not monitor the destinations of pupils and is awaiting information from the local authority. Leaders work closely with an impartial careers adviser to ensure that pupils have thorough guidance about their post-16 options.



## School details

Unique reference number	130348
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10041946

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	Pupil referral unit
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of the management committee	Peter Brown
Headteacher	Julie Porter
Telephone number	01707 346 170
Website	<a href="http://www.theparkesc.herts.sch.uk">www.theparkesc.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head591@theparkesc.herts.sch.uk">head591@theparkesc.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average school. It is currently oversubscribed.
- The school provides short-term education and support to pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion or who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools in key stage 3. It provides longer-term support for similar pupils in key stage 4.
- The school is comprised of two sites. The key stage 3 site provides education for a small number of pupils in Years 7 to 9, a number of whom have SEN and/or disabilities. The key stage 4 site provides education for a larger cohort of pupils in Years 10 to 11.
- Pupils typically enter the school with achievement significantly below the national average or after an extended period without formal education.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for additional funding is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- Some pupils access alternative provision at Oaklands College. A number of pupils also undertake accredited courses and work experience in mechanics, plastering, and health and fitness, or engage with local community youth projects.
- The information about the school on the Department for Education website (Get information about schools, or GIAS) states that the school has children on its admissions register aged 5 to16. This is incorrect and should state 11 to16.
- The school provides an outreach service in other primary and secondary schools in the local area. These pupils are not on the school's admissions register.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook learning walks at both the key stage 3 and key stage 4 sites, and reviewed pupils' work. Some lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and other senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with a representative from the management committee and the school improvement partner from Herts for Learning. The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with the chair of the management committee and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- There were not enough responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be able to use these during the inspection. Instead, inspectors spoke to parents on site. Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff survey for 13 staff, and the pupil survey for seven pupils. Inspectors also met with a small group of pupils while on site.
- Inspectors observed pupils' arrival at the school and their conduct at breaktime as well as between lessons.

## Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Walker

Ofsted Inspector

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