

Park Lane Primary School

School Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG31 5BD

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a good and improving school. Leaders have made many improvements to the quality of teaching. Standards are rising, and current pupils are making good progress throughout the school.
- Senior leaders work well together. They sustain a culture of ambition and a strong sense of purpose.
- Middle leaders are driving improvements in their areas of responsibility and this is raising standards across subjects.
- Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress. Lessons are well planned, and many include a rich variety of activities.
- Leaders keep a very careful and close check on how well pupils are learning.
- Children make a good start in the early years. As a result of effective teaching and support, children make good progress. Children are confident, enjoy school and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Parents and carers greatly appreciate the outstanding attention to their children's care and welfare.
- Leaders have taken effective action to address the recent dip in standards in key stage 2. As a result, pupils' attainment is improving.
- The engaging curriculum captures pupils' interest. A wealth of experiences in art, music and sport enrich pupils' experiences and contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.
- The support for vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is highly effective and nurturing.
- Governors are fully committed to sustaining improvements. They provide insightful guidance and hold leaders to account effectively for pupils' achievement.
- Some pupils do not apply their punctuation and grammar knowledge well enough when writing at length. At times, pupils lack confidence and fluency in calculation skills when solving mathematical problems.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a higher proportion of pupils achieve the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 by making sure that:
 - recent improvements in teaching and learning are sustained
 - teachers give greater attention to pupils' calculation skills so that they more confidently apply their skills when solving problems
 - teachers give increased focus to pupils' sentence construction and grammar so that they more ably and confidently apply their skills when writing at length.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is well supported by an effective leadership team. They share high ambitions and a commitment to ensuring that all pupils do as well as they can. Senior leaders work closely with governors to identify strengths and what needs to improve. They have established consistently high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour, which underpin all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders have established a friendly, welcoming and purposeful atmosphere. There is a positive ethos and a strong team of staff whose members feel valued. One commented: 'Workload is always taken into account when changes are under way. I have always felt able to seek advice and let a member of the senior leadership team know when I have felt under pressure. They always do what they can to help.'
- Leadership is shared widely, and the different skills of individual staff are used effectively to secure improvements. Subject leaders are very effective in supporting colleagues. They make a strong contribution to sustaining the good quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have set up effective systems to check on pupils' progress. Meticulous records are kept and analysed carefully. This provides a clear picture of how well different groups of pupils are learning, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Their robust monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching enable leaders to identify strengths and to provide well-targeted professional training. Leaders have successfully created an 'open' learning culture where staff are willing to share ideas and challenge themselves and their colleagues.
- Leaders take a robust approach to performance management. Teachers' individual targets are clearly linked to pupils' progress and attainment. Support is given when necessary and this makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have planned an imaginative curriculum that engages pupils and provides them with many memorable experiences. Pupils' blogs linked to the school's website include references to a wide range of helpful activities, including, for example, making animated stop/start films, a trip to the local Museum of Greek Archaeology, and a visit by a theatre company.
- A strong programme of personal, social and health education, along with the study of literature, art and music, contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are respectful of one another and have a good understanding of diverse cultures and faiths.
- Opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding and appreciation of British values are woven into the curriculum well and supported effectively by the school's own values. For example, pupils acquire insights into the democratic process through elections for the school council and by visiting the Houses of Parliament. One parent wrote, 'My children have a good understanding of citizenship and how British values underpin society.'

- Leaders make good use of the additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils. They have successfully tackled recent weaknesses in the achievement of this group of pupils, identifying what worked best and modifying support accordingly. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress.
- The funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used very effectively to ensure that the diverse needs of this group of pupils are met well.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is spent effectively. Pupils benefit from an extended range of activities, including, for example, Bollywood dancing, tag rugby and multisport. Participation in physical activities has increased significantly. Recently, the school achieved an award for its commitment to the development of competition within the school and the local community.
- The local authority provides effective support and guidance. Productive links with the federated primary school enable the helpful sharing of ideas, joint training, and checks on the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a good range of expertise and experience. They are clear about their role in providing guidance and support and, at the same time, holding leaders to account. They are well aware of performance information. When issues occur, such as the recent dip in standards at key stage 2, governors check that senior leaders are addressing the issues effectively and driving improvements.
- Governors seek assurance that additional money, such as the pupil premium and funding for sports, is used effectively. They keep a sharp eye on all aspects of safeguarding to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
- Regular skills audits and annual reviews enable governors to evaluate their impact. They use the findings of such activities to devise relevant action plans that are monitored regularly through the year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The culture around keeping pupils safe is strong throughout the school. Leaders and all staff have benefited from a range of safeguarding training, including how to keep pupils safe from radicalisation and exploitation.
- Staff recruitment checks are recorded efficiently and help to ensure that all who work at the school, or visit regularly, are suitable to work with children.
- Staff teach pupils effectively about how to keep safe when using the internet and how to ensure their personal safety. Pupils in Year 6 were keen to point out how adults watch out for them as they move frequently across the road between the main building and their classrooms.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching is underpinned by warm relationships and a strong sense of purpose during lessons. Pupils' learning is supported well through teachers' skilful questioning. Pupils rise to frequent challenges to express their views and think deeply when responding to questions.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to explain things clearly. They quickly spot pupils' misconceptions as they emerge and use alternative ways to clarify ideas. Teachers know their pupils well and adopt appropriate strategies to support those who lack confidence and to challenge the most able.
- Pupils benefit from ongoing helpful feedback during lessons. Teachers ensure that appropriate resources are readily accessible when necessary and this enables pupils to develop good levels of independence when appropriate. Teaching assistants provide effective support within lessons and when taking small groups. Again, they promote pupils' success well.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' positive and effective behaviour management. The pace of lessons and the engaging activities mean that pupils typically sustain their attention and try hard. They take pride in their achievements, as evident in their good-quality work in different subjects. Pupils' books include writing, diagrams, pictures and labels that pupils have clearly taken care to present as neatly and attractively as they can.
- Lessons are generally well planned. Key literacy and numeracy skills are taught systematically and effectively. However, teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to apply their punctuation and grammar skills reliably when writing at length. At times, pupils' calculation skills are not developed well enough to tackle the mathematical problems that teachers set.
- Staff have particular expertise in teaching phonics, and this helps pupils to make a good start in reading. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills for younger pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff and pupils work well together to sustain a harmonious atmosphere where all feel valued and respected. Pupils appreciate the efforts of their teachers to make school a happy, secure and interesting place. One remarked, 'We don't know people when we come but the school brings us together.'
- Pupils are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities. Those who are elected as young leaders display growing levels of maturity. They proudly serve as councillors and house captains.
- The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about effective life skills and gain the knowledge to live a healthy life. As a result, pupils have a good

understanding of things such as healthy diet, and that inappropriate relationships could be to the detriment of their mental and physical well-being.

- Parents, staff and pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare, a view confirmed by school records. Pupils were keen to point out how the school keeps them safe. 'We can always talk to an adult if we are worried,' remarked one pupil, with the agreement of his classmates. Pupils are aware of the potential hazards when using the internet, including cyber bullying.
- School leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate support. There are good arrangements in place for reporting any concerns regarding pupils' welfare. Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school's support. Reflecting their collective views, one parent wrote: 'I have been very satisfied with the leadership, teaching, care of children and the school's ability to deal with any concerns or issues. The staff are caring, committed and enthusiastic.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school environment is welcoming, orderly and calm. Pupils treat each other, adults and school property with respect. They are keen to learn, not afraid to take risks and support one another in a learning environment that is safe and motivating.
- Pupils collaborate with one another very well in pairs and small groups. They respond well to the school's behaviour expectations and lessons run smoothly.
- Pupils spoke positively about the 'traffic light system', which helps them to behave. They described behaviour as mostly good, adding, 'Only a couple misbehave, and it can be distracting.' Pupils' conduct and self-discipline around the school and in lessons reflect this view.
- Leaders monitor attendance closely and work effectively with families to reduce absence. Attendance is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In recent years, the outcomes in key stage 1 have been consistently above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Typically, pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has risen and is close to that of other pupils. In 2017, this group of pupils outperformed other pupils nationally in reading, writing and science.
- Pupils quickly develop very secure phonics skills, with almost all reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This provides a strong basis for their reading and writing.
- Outcomes in key stage 2 dipped over the last two years. Leaders acknowledge that this was mainly because of a legacy of some weak teaching in Years 3 and 4. The quality of teaching in key stage 2 is now consistently good, and this has led to better progress and rising standards.
- In the last two years, at end of key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils did not make good progress and attained much less well than other pupils. However, current

disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress. Well-targeted support and pupils' increased motivation and self-belief are making a positive difference to their achievement. As a result, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others is now diminishing.

- The school's comprehensive assessment information shows that pupils are building on well from their starting points. Many pupils in Year 6 have already reached the standards expected by the end of the key stage in English, mathematics and science.
- Across key stage 2, pupils are becoming adept at analysing texts and identifying how authors use devices such as metaphors and rhetorical questions to engage the reader. Pupils increasingly use sophisticated vocabulary. For example, a pupil in Year 4 wrote: 'Wherever it strikes, you can feel the storm's rage, authoritative, aggressive and shadowy.'
- Older pupils made insightful comments, for example about their reading preferences and the advantages and disadvantages of reading or watching a film of the same story. These pupils also draw well on their reading skills in their good-quality writing.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in mathematics was above the national average. The most able continue to achieve well and an increasing proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth in mathematics. They explain their reasoning and mental strategies well.
- Although pupils are generally well versed in writing and solving mathematical problems, they sometimes get stuck when working independently or taking a test. For example, when subtracting larger numbers, pupils are confident about how to set out the calculation and know what to do. However, they sometimes lack confidence when calculating simpler problems, such as '16 subtract 9'. Similarly, pupils do not consistently apply their knowledge of punctuation and sentence structure successfully when writing at length.
- The school's assessment records show that pupils are making good progress in science. This was also evident in pupils' well-presented work. The range of art displayed around the school is of good quality, and accurately reflects the school's assessment information. Pupils enjoy music and achieve well in this subject. They have a good grasp of rhythm, as seen in their performance of complex repeated rhythms during a Year 6 lesson. The school orchestra, which regularly performs in public, enables pupils to develop musical skills well above those expected for their age.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress due to highly effective support. Pupils with physical disabilities benefit from sensitive assistance which helps them make good progress alongside their classmates.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enjoy school. They quickly settle into the early years due to the warm relationships adults establish with them. Children make good progress across all areas of learning. By the end of Reception, the proportion who attain the expected good level of development is similar to the national average. Children's enthusiasm for learning, underpinned by their self-confidence and secure basic skills, means they are

well prepared for Year 1.

- Leadership is effective. Staff are totally committed to the children in their care. The leader, alongside colleagues, carefully checks the impact of learning activities on children's progress. High-quality records of children's progress are used to celebrate children's achievements. Leaders also use these records to identify and address any weaknesses in both the provision and in children's learning.
- Teaching staff have a good understanding of how young children learn. They observe each child's development, assess their progress and plan for their next learning steps. They make learning fun and, as a result, inspire and challenge the children.
- A strong focus on children's personal, social and emotional development creates a purposeful atmosphere in which children feel confident to try things out for themselves. They are inquisitive and keen to learn.
- Adults take every opportunity to demonstrate communication skills, and children quickly pick these up, learning to listen to one another and express themselves clearly.
- Children make a good start in phonics and soon begin to use their knowledge of letters and sounds when attempting to read and write. By the end of Reception, they read simple texts with understanding and use their phonics knowledge to good effect in their own writing. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed applying their skills when writing spells in the 'witches' workshop'.
- Through counting and ordering objects, children gain an understanding of number and make a good start in learning to add and subtract. Well-chosen materials and resources for children to observe and describe help them to develop their understanding of shape, space and measure.
- Staff know the children well and ensure that the welfare requirements of the early years are met. Parents value the attention to children's care and welfare. As one parent commented, 'I wouldn't send him anywhere else.'
- Leaders make effective use of the extra funding for disadvantaged children and children who have SEN and/or disabilities. Funding is used appropriately to provide support for individual children to ensure that any barriers to learning are addressed. Individual plans for children are effective in helping them to make good progress.
- Leaders' development plans are rightly focused on improving the outdoor learning environment to provide a wider range of resources for supporting children's learning and physical development.

School details

Unique reference number	109790
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10040722

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Wall
Headteacher	Nicola Browne
Telephone number	01189 375 515
Website	www.parklaneblogs.net
Email address	admin@parklane.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2013

Information about this school

- Park Lane is larger than the average-sized primary school with two classes per year group from Reception to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with other pupils coming from a range of ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than in other schools nationally.
- The infant and junior departments are on separate sites, a short distance apart.
- Park Lane federated with another large local primary school in September 2012 and the headteacher has responsibility for both schools.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed activities in all year groups. Observations were undertaken with the headteacher and heads of the infant and junior schools.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and had a discussion with the local authority school standards officer.
- Meetings were held with pupils to discuss their views on their learning and well-being. Inspectors also talked with parents to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors met pupils from Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 to discuss their reading. They talked to pupils during breaktimes and lessons, and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including: assessment information; school improvement plans; leaders' evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment; the governing body's minutes; and curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of work in pupils' books to review their progress in different subjects.
- Inspectors took account of the 66 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, inspectors evaluated the 29 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Shaughnessy	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	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.

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