

Passmores Academy

Tracyes Road, Harlow, Essex CM18 6JH

Inspection dates

9–10 May 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 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal's inspirational leadership has created a culture of high expectations and ambition. All members of the school community are encouraged to pursue excellence.
- Governors are professional and knowledgeable. Their clear understanding of the school's priorities enables them to oversee effectively the continued raising of standards.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They focus on the right priorities for development and rigorously monitor their improvement plans.
- The rich and imaginative curriculum puts pupils' needs and aspirations first. These needs are enhanced by the extensive extra-curricular programme.
- Teaching is consistently good. Leaders' actions and comprehensive staff training programme ensure that it continues to improve.
- Leaders prioritise staff well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school and their morale is high.
- Parents and carers speak very highly of the school and most would recommend it to other parents.
- Careers information and guidance are of a high quality. Pupils are well supported in making appropriate choices at key stage 4 and post-16.
- The outstanding provision for pupils' personal development and welfare ensures that no child is left behind. Relationships based on mutual trust flourish between pupils and staff.
- Pupils in the school's specialist resource base receive exemplary care.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive highly effective care and support.
- Pupils are tolerant and respectful of others, and behave well. Their attendance is above average, and they arrive punctually to lessons.
- Pupils make good progress over time because they work hard and are well taught.
- Leaders use additional funding well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make increasingly strong progress.
- Despite major difficulties in teacher recruitment, leaders have secured high-quality teaching in most areas of the school. Leaders acknowledge that some teaching in science and mathematics needs to improve further.
- Leaders recognise that they need to secure further improvements in pupils' reading skills.
- Some of the most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should because the work teachers set is not challenging enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning so that outcomes, particularly in mathematics and science, continue to improve for all pupils.
- Ensure that teachers plan lessons that stretch and challenge the most able pupils, so that they consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- Consolidate plans to develop pupils' literacy skills so that pupils become more confident and fluent readers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal relentlessly pursues the goal of making Passmores the 'best that it can be' and making the school 'a servant to its community'. He ensures that staff focus on raising aspirations within an environment that nurtures and supports pupils' needs exceedingly well.
- His ambition is embraced by staff and parents. All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey for this inspection agree that they are proud to be a member of staff and enjoy working at the school. One middle leader said, 'I feel I make a difference every day.' High levels of parental confidence are typified by the comment from one parent who said, 'Passmores is providing an invaluable service to the most vulnerable children in this town.'
- Leaders have an accurate and well-informed view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use this information to establish future plans for improvement and regularly check to see what difference their actions are making.
- The innovative training that leaders provide for teachers is a strength. It addresses systematically the areas of teaching and learning that need further improvement, and it is tailored to meet individual teachers' needs. A current priority, for example, is to enable teachers to improve pupils' memory and retention skills.
- The large team of middle leaders collaborates enthusiastically and effectively to improve outcomes for pupils. They rigorously monitor the quality of teaching in their subject areas. They value the support they receive from senior leaders.
- Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. Pupils benefit from flexible support, underpinned by care and dignity, and their needs and wishes are given the highest priority. Across the school, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are confident, assured learners.
- The specialist resource base is led well, and its work is held in high regard by parents and by the local authority. Pupils' emotional needs are met well and their communication skills have improved considerably as a result of this provision.
- Newly qualified and trainee teachers describe a 'family feel' to the school. They are well supported by school leaders who help them develop their teaching skills through regular mentoring and support.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Intervention programmes are carefully targeted to meet pupils' individual needs, and leaders review pupils' progress regularly to determine the impact of their actions. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points in English and increasingly in mathematics.
- Leaders use Year 7 catch-up funding well to support pupils who arrive in Year 7 with weak literacy and numeracy skills. These pupils are given additional teaching throughout, and sometimes beyond, Year 7. Most of these pupils make at least as much progress as their peers, particularly in English.
- The curriculum is planned specifically for the diverse needs of pupils in the school with

a strong focus on their development as responsible and caring citizens. At key stage 3, the 'Real Project' effectively develops their skills in working with others. All pupils follow at least one EBacc option subject at key stage 4, and finish Year 11 with qualifications appropriate to the next stage of their education or training.

- The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A rich array of extra-curricular activities takes place before and after school, and during lunch and breaktimes. Participation levels are high in sport, music and drama clubs. The extensive programme of trips helps to enhance pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Pupils benefit from strong teaching across a wide range of subjects because leaders are uncompromising in their commitment to achieving excellence. Leaders have faced a significant challenge in teacher recruitment, particularly in mathematics and science. As a result, pupils have not made enough progress in these subjects. However, recent appointments and well-targeted training have led to an improvement in the consistency of teaching in these subjects.

Governance

- Trustees and governors ensure that they are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They are highly knowledgeable and offer a wealth of experience and expertise, for example in finance and safeguarding.
- Trustees and governors ensure that additional government funding is spent effectively.
- Governors are supportive of leaders. They are effective in carrying out their duties and meet all their statutory responsibilities.
- Trustees plan strategically for the school's future, and ensure that it remains financially viable. Their clear vision for continued improvement embraces all schools in the trust, and is focused on improving pupils' life chances.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding has a very high profile, and pupils' welfare and safety are paramount. Staff, pupils and parents agree overwhelmingly that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school that allows pupils to feel safe.
- All safeguarding arrangements are robust and rigorous. Staff are appropriately trained; they register concerns well and these are handled appropriately and promptly. Case files are detailed and record information accurately. Staff work effectively with external agencies, and governors are kept up to date about safeguarding matters.
- Staff make good use of lessons, tutor times and assemblies to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media.
- Governors monitor the school's safeguarding processes to ensure that these are robust. They make sure that all the required checks are carried out to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Across most subjects and in all year groups, effective teaching supports pupils' good progress. Teachers assess accurately how well pupils are achieving and plan stimulating activities to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers underpin their efforts by creating positive working relationships with pupils and by building a shared learning culture. Pupils and teachers collaborate to understand how best to develop pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Pupils are typically attentive and enthusiastic about their learning, and are confident in asking and answering questions. They respond well to teachers' verbal and written feedback, which is provided in line with the school policy.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils which are reflected in the high standard of the presentation of work in pupils' books. They provide pupils with a wide range of resources to support their learning in class, and trust them to choose the resources that help them learn most efficiently.
- The school has agreed its own framework for effective teaching and learning: the 'Passmores Experience'. Most teachers use this well to create a calm and orderly learning environment. These teachers also use their strong subject knowledge to question and check pupils' understanding. In English, and increasingly in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, teachers plan focused learning activities. These are pitched appropriately to challenge all pupils, irrespective of their starting points.
- Teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and plan appropriate activities to support their learning. Additional adults provide effective support for the pupils that they work with. This contributes to these pupils generally making good progress from their different starting points.
- Staffing and recruitment difficulties mean that some teachers teach subjects other than their specialism. These teachers do not always have the depth of knowledge or skills needed to help pupils make consistently good progress. This has particularly been the case in mathematics and science. Leaders have worked hard to remedy this situation and have ensured that the school will be fully staffed from September.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations for the most able pupils. The work they set does not always stretch these pupils, and they fail to make sufficient progress. Leaders have plans in place to resolve this issue but it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their actions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff know pupils exceedingly well and an overwhelming majority of parents indicated on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, that their children are safe, happy and well cared for. Pupils and staff frequently refer to the school in terms of a family. 'At Passmores, they care about each individual pupil' was typical of the many comments parents made to acknowledge the inclusive nature of the school.
- Pupils do not tolerate bullying. On the few occasions it does take place, pupils are confident that staff will help them, and resolve the matter quickly and effectively.
- The school has a significant number of vulnerable pupils. Staff work closely with other agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the help that they need. They chase up referrals relentlessly, particularly if they feel that they are not being processed quickly enough. Staff have also implemented comprehensive support systems to ensure that children who are looked after are safe and supported well.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive clear guidance to support their options at the end of key stage 3. Pupils value the high-quality careers education that enables them to make well-informed decisions about post-16 education and training.
- Many pupils across all year groups willingly take on leadership roles, such as those of digital leader, pastoral leader or as members of the student council. The 'Student Pedagogy Team' works alongside teachers to improve pupils' learning. Pupils are confident to give their opinions and listen respectfully to the ideas of others.
- Staff regularly outline the school's values which are set out clearly in the 'Passmores Passport'. This document rewards pupils for their active participation in school life and is enthusiastically completed by pupils.
- Leaders carry out appropriate checks on the welfare of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision. This includes daily checks on pupils' attendance and regular monitoring of the progress that they are making.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders are clear that the management of pupils' behaviour starts with positive relationships, and they model this routinely in their interaction with pupils. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils are polite and courteous, and socialise sensibly at lunchtime and breaktime.
- Pupils feel confident to be different. Pupils gave examples to inspectors of how they or their friends had been supported with their own differences, and explained that discrimination or derogatory language is not tolerated. Pupils are certain that having a different background or outlook on life is respected in this school. As one pupil said, 'Passmores is definitely for everyone and anyone.'
- Staff skilfully manage the complex needs of pupils in the special resource base with the result that pupils' behaviour there is exemplary.
- Leaders monitor the attendance of groups of pupils so that none is disadvantaged by

low attendance. Overall attendance remains above average.

- The school prioritises high standards of behaviour and leaders are uncompromising in upholding them. This has led to an above-average number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders have initiated appropriate plans to reduce this figure by establishing an internal isolation unit.
- A few pupils present extremely challenging behaviour. The school has an inclusive philosophy, and staff have worked tirelessly with many external agencies to overcome these challenges. Leaders acknowledge, however, that the school's resources are limited, and they are actively seeking alternative provision to meet these pupils' needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- On entry to the school, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly below the national average figures.
- In 2017, Year 11 pupils' overall progress fell below the national average. Leaders quickly identified the cause of the decline, and intervened decisively to address it.
- Teachers now target additional support in English and mathematics for some pupils in Year 11. The latest assessment information indicates that these pupils have made good or better progress since last September.
- Inspectors sampled the work in pupils' books and examined the school's own recent assessment information. This scrutiny demonstrates that pupils are making good progress across a wide range of subjects and in all year groups.
- Results from previous years show that pupils achieve well in English. Outcomes have been weaker in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages but are now improving rapidly as a result of the actions leaders have taken.
- At key stages 3 and 4, differences between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and those of their peers are diminishing. In English, these pupils already make progress which is at least in line with other pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive effective support to meet their targets. A small group of these pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend college and undertake work experience as part of their education. Leaders monitor their attendance and progress carefully. From their starting points, they make progress which is broadly in line with that of other pupils.
- Pupils in the specialist resource base are making strong progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The school prepares pupils well for when they leave school. Last year, nearly every pupil secured a place in further education, training or employment.
- The small number of pupils that access alternative provision make effective progress.
- Pupils' reading skills are typically low when they join the school in Year 7. Leaders plan additional support to ensure that pupils improve these skills rapidly, but recognise that there is still work to be done in this area.
- Some most-able pupils have not achieved as well as others. Leaders have sought to

address this by providing them with a greater degree of challenge. There is evidence that these plans are improving pupils' rates of progress in some subjects, but leaders recognise this as an ongoing priority.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 137445 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 10043328 |

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

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,077 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Paul Beashel |
| Principal | Vic Goddard |
| Telephone number | 01279 770800 |
| Website | www.passmoresacademy.com |
| Email address | v.goddard@passmoresacademy.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 17–18 October 2013 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Passmores Cooperative Learning Community Trust.
- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the proportion who have an education, health and care plan are both significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The school manages a special resource base for pupils who have autism.
- The school uses Aspire Academy, Harlow College and Pets Corner as alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 52 lessons across a wide range of subjects and in all key stages. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed tutor time and looked at pupils' work in lessons across all year groups.
- The lead inspector met with the principal, subject leaders, members of the local governing body, trustees, and two local authority advisers.
- Inspectors held meetings with the school's leaders who have responsibility for safeguarding, teaching, behaviour, attendance, and additional funding. An inspector visited two alternative providers and held a telephone conversation with another.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They listened to pupils reading and spoke formally with pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4. Over the two days, inspectors spoke informally with pupils about their learning and their safety.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, minutes of meetings of the local governing body, information about the attainment and progress of all pupils, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and information on the school's website. They also checked the school's single central register.
- Inspectors evaluated 165 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 109 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Peter Whear, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sue Smith | Ofsted Inspector |
| James Dyke | Ofsted Inspector |
| Katrina Lambert | Ofsted Inspector |
| Nicola Hood | Ofsted Inspector |

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018