

# Heron Park Primary Academy

Dallington Road, Hampden Park, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 9EE

## Inspection dates

11–12 September 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although the actions of leaders, including governors, are leading to improvement, the quality of teaching, and pupils' attainment, are not yet consistently good.
- The changes leaders are making to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are too recent to have had a consistent effect on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders do not have a consistent and precise understanding of pupils' progress from their starting points. Therefore, they cannot ensure that pupils are challenged. This applies particularly to the most able pupils.
- Leaders' plans are not carefully monitored against targets for improvement. As a result, governors cannot check effectively on progress and are too reliant on the information the leaders provide for them.
- Teachers do not always set high expectations for what pupils are able to achieve. They do not challenge the most able pupils to do their very best.
- Teachers do not regularly set tasks that move pupils' learning on rapidly enough. In some subjects, there is not enough emphasis on the development of skills.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher leads with passion and determination. She is committed to improvement, developing a strong team of teachers, and strengthening leadership.
- Leaders closely monitor and support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to secure good progress and outcomes.
- Leaders are successfully promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is spent well and has a strong impact on pupils' participation in a wide range of sports, including competitions.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. They are courteous and respectful of each other and adults.
- Children in the early years classes make good progress.

## Full report

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good or better, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide tasks with the right level of challenge to enable pupils to build quickly upon their previous learning
  - leaders and teachers have high expectations of what all pupils, and especially the most able, should achieve during lessons and over time
  - assessment is used skilfully to plan pupils' learning, address pupils' misconceptions and strengthen their understanding
  - pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics are secure and build upon their starting points.
- Improve the impact and effectiveness of leadership, at all levels, by making sure that:
  - leaders have a consistent and precise understanding of pupils' progress from their starting points to enable them to provide pupils with more robust challenge, particularly for the most able pupils
  - leaders at all levels effectively monitor and evaluate actions and initiatives introduced to raise standards
  - capacity among senior leaders is developed to share the workload, embed new procedures and bring about consistency
  - the skills of middle leaders continue to improve so that they can work alongside teachers to secure essential improvements in teaching
  - pupils make secure progress through the English and mathematics curriculum from year to year.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- There have been a number of leadership changes since the previous inspection. The new headteacher joined the school at the beginning of this term and has spent only a matter of days in post. She has very quickly established good working relationships with pupils, staff, governors and the trust. She is passionate and dedicated with a resolute belief that every pupil, regardless of their background, can and will achieve. She understands what needs to be done to improve the school.
- Leaders and governors do not have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement have been hindered because of the frequent changes in leadership. This is particularly the case with regard to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Currently, too few pupils attain well at the higher standard. Too few pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- The priorities that leaders have identified for improvement are accurate. However, leaders' improvement plans are not consistently monitored. Leaders and governors are not checking how effectively new initiatives are being implemented in classrooms, or the impact these are having on pupils' outcomes. As a result, pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics are inconsistent across the school because they are not challenged sufficiently. Neither teaching, nor pupils' attainment and progress, are consistently good.
- Pupils' attainment is now tracked with greater accuracy. However, leaders do not routinely check the progress of pupils from their starting points in all year groups. As a result, they do not have a clear enough understanding of the progress that pupils make over time. This restricts the quality, depth and usefulness of leaders' self-evaluation.
- Leaders have introduced a range of actions to improve standards. These include new approaches to the teaching of mathematics, a review of the school's approach to writing, and reading sessions to promote pupils' love of reading. However, leaders are not rigorous enough in checking that these approaches are applied consistently and effectively. As a result, the pace of improvement has not been quick enough in all year groups.
- Some subject leaders are at an early stage of monitoring the effectiveness of their subjects. The leader for English has engaged in a range of helpful professional development activities and, as a result, has made many recent changes that are beginning to improve classroom practice. As yet, this has not had time to make a measurable impact on pupils' attainment.
- Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the impact of the strategies used to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is not sharp enough. Differences are now diminishing in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of other pupils nationally, particularly for less able pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator has a secure understanding of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. She has put in place individual plans for these pupils that are appropriate and matched to their needs. The implementation of these plans and

the impact they are having on pupils' outcomes are closely monitored and evaluated. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make steady progress from their starting points.

- Support from the Aurora Academy Trust has increased leaders' and teachers' focus on outcomes and is having a positive impact. The trust has provided focused professional development for staff and support to raise standards, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and rich curriculum that takes advantage of the geographical setting of the school. The breadth of curriculum experiences provided, including a range of visits, contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to develop staff expertise and confidence, and to widen the range of sports activities. External sports coaches provide pupils with high-quality PE lessons and extra-curricular opportunities. The use of coaches to raise the profile of competitive sport has resulted in increased participation and success in inter-school competitions. One parent said that her son's sporting achievements 'astound' her.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors, with support from the trust, have dealt effectively with turbulence in the leadership of the school.
- Since the previous inspection, governance has not been fully effective in evaluating the impact of the strategies used to raise pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. As a result, governors' challenge to school leaders has not been sharp enough to ensure that these pupils achieve as well as they could.
- Although governors ask challenging questions, leaders do not always respond comprehensively to the issues raised. Governors are sometimes over-reliant on the information the school leaders present them with. This limits the ability of governors to hold school leaders to account fully, particularly in relation to pupils' achievement.
- Governors are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding. Some members of the governing body have specialist training in this area as a feature of their work outside school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and this helps to keep pupils safe. All parents who responded to Parent View said that they feel that their children are safe at school. Pupils have been taught about bullying and know that they should tell an adult if it happens to them or to someone else. Pupils say that bullying does not happen very often and that staff usually sort things out quickly when it does.
- The deputy headteacher, who is also the designated leader for safeguarding, has made the welfare of pupils a top priority. She has a detailed understanding of pupils'

vulnerabilities and, along with the student support officer, goes the extra mile to ensure that these pupils and their families receive the support they require. Work with external agencies is strong. This includes the care for those pupils who have child-protection or child-in-need plans.

- The systems for checking absence are rigorously and conscientiously applied to keep pupils safe.
- The headteacher has ensured that all staff have received the required level of training. Staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. They talk knowledgeably about what they need to do should they have any concerns. Governors have not previously ensured that there are robust systems for effectively recording the safeguarding training undertaken by teachers.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- There has been a lack of consistency in the quality of teaching, which has led to varied rates of progress across classes and subjects. While many teachers have high expectations of what pupils will learn, this is not the same in all classes.
- Some teachers plan activities that lack challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. This is because assessment has not been accurate or used sufficiently well to plan learning that is well matched to pupils' ages and abilities.
- Pupils are not moved on quickly enough when they have mastered basic skills, as teachers do not routinely set demanding tasks that deepen pupils' learning. This is especially so for the most able. As a result, too few pupils are challenged to enable them to reach the expected or higher standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The development of teaching methods to boost standards in mathematics is a high priority across the school. However, basic skills are not taught consistently well. Sometimes, pupils do not learn mathematical skills well enough, and tasks are not always challenging enough. As a consequence, many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The majority of pupils say that they enjoy reading. They read fluently and at a level appropriate to their age and stage of development. However, in some cases, the books that pupils are given to read are too easy and do not provide sufficient challenge. In other cases, although pupils are able to read the words on the page fluently, their understanding is more limited. For some pupils, their lack of ability to 'sound out' words limits their skill at reading unfamiliar words. Some staff do not have sufficiently strong knowledge of phonics to enable them to teach the subject effectively or to help pupils to apply their knowledge when reading and spelling.
- Efforts to raise standards in writing have started to have an impact, but more work is needed, especially to embed the use of known spelling strategies in all opportunities to write. Teachers are developing more tangible links with pupils' reading. For example, pupils include features used by published authors to improve their own writing.
- In some classes, teachers are skilful in challenging pupils' thinking. For example, in one class, pupils responded to prompts using appropriate mathematical language and reasoning. However, this level of challenge is not consistent across the school, and in

other classes, opportunities to challenge and deepen pupils' understanding are missed.

- Many adults, including support staff, extend and develop pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. In Nursery, adults are effective in giving children choices and encouraging them to persevere with tasks.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's welcoming and caring ethos is central to its work in raising standards for pupils. From the moment pupils enter the school each day, they are treated with respect and a genuine sense of care by the adults in school. A parent wrote, 'Teachers helped and allowed [my daughter] to flourish and build up her confidence.'
- Pupils' welfare is a school priority. Leaders work successfully with other agencies, including the local authority and social care, to identify any pupils or families that may be at risk. Staff know the pupils well, and pupils benefit from good pastoral care.
- Pupils demonstrate empathy and compassion. They support each other well and accept and celebrate each other's differences.
- The school site is very well kept and maintained. Pupils respect the learning environment, which is clean, bright and inviting.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is orderly. Pupils are polite to each other, staff and visitors.
- At playtimes, pupils play well together. Adults support pupils to develop social skills when playing games. Sports coaches run games for pupils to participate in.
- With support from the trust, leaders have developed their approach to behaviour management. The school's behaviour records show that incidents of poor behaviour have decreased. Leaders follow up incidents with pupils and parents, and support is put in place if necessary. Staff encourage pupils to think about the reasons for their actions, and what they would do differently in the future.
- Pupils said that behaviour in lessons is good and that there are few interruptions to their learning. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, and work cooperatively in lessons. They sustain concentration when working independently and help one another with their work.
- Although behaviour is good overall, a small number of pupils do not take sufficient care with the presentation and organisation of their written work in all subjects. Similarly, very occasionally, some pupils drift off task, notably where the work is insufficiently challenging or when they have not understood the task.
- Pupils receive rewards for good or improved attendance and this has a high profile in

the school. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils who are persistently absent receive close monitoring. The leadership team has worked hard with this group of pupils and their parents and has had some individual success. Persistent absence is now broadly in line with the national average.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- In 2017, too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, underachieved in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In 2018, pupils' achievement improved at the end of key stage 2. However, currently, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons across all year groups to make consistently good progress. Consequently, too few pupils are working at the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- In key stage 1 in 2017, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was lower than that found in other schools nationally. In 2018, although attainment at age-related expectations has improved, it is still too low. Attainment at a greater depth of understanding at the end of key stage 1 has dipped from 2017.
- Pupils' outcomes in grammar, punctuation and spelling at the end of key stage 2 are lower than those found in other schools nationally. Leaders have introduced a new spelling scheme, but pupils' newly acquired skills are not consistently applied when they write across the curriculum. This slows pupils' overall progress in writing.
- Although the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check has steadily risen since 2015, it remains below the national average. This proportion has shown some increase by the end of Year 2 over the same period, but remains below the national average.

### Early years provision

### Good

- The Nursery class joined the school's early years provision in 2015. Since then, leaders have been working to join the Nursery and Reception classes together to form a 'foundation village' to ensure that children work appropriately according to their various abilities. This is developing, although there are some key areas, particularly in speech and language teaching, where the approach is not yet consistent across the provision.
- Good development outcomes at the end of Reception Year steadily rose from 2015 to 2017, starting from below the national average to being in line with it. Outcomes dipped slightly in 2018. Over the same period, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have risen rapidly, but remain below the national average.
- Leaders, supported by the trust, have identified that girls in the early years provision outperform boys in almost every cohort. To raise standards for boys, activities are thoughtfully planned for the outside area to encourage learning through play. An example of this was the phonics lesson that involved squirting water and using fly swatters.
- Progress from children's starting points is evident in all their learning journeys,

regardless of ability. However, this is not always accurately reflected in assessment outcomes across the year, as some end-of-year assessments for the most able children show little, if any, improvement from their starting points.

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is wide and appropriate. Children's learning journeys show that they write well, particularly the most able, who write stories of length.
- Children are safe because routines are effective in keeping the early years area secure. Staff provide a friendly welcome on arrival. The beginning of the day is calm and purposeful. There are strong and caring relationships between children and staff.
- Children work and play cooperatively. They respect the environment and care for things around them. Staff know the children well. Leaders work well with external agencies to support children who have SEN and/or disabilities.



## School details

Unique reference number	138390
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10053297

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Karen Rolfe
Headteacher	Helen Emmett
Telephone number	01323 502525
Website	<a href="http://www.heronparkprimaryacademy.org">www.heronparkprimaryacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:hemmett@auroraacademies.org">hemmett@auroraacademies.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 May 2016

## Information about this school

- Heron Park Primary Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has Nursery provision for two-year-olds. It is part of the Aurora Academy Trust.
- The Aurora Academy Trust board has responsibility for matters relating to the school. However, there is a local advisory board comprising parents, staff and local community members.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from pupil premium funding is well above average. Typically, the number of these pupils in each year group is high, often about half of the cohort.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- There have been a number of significant leadership changes since the previous inspection. The school's previous headteacher resigned his post in December 2017 and

the deputy took over as acting headteacher in January 2018, supported by an executive headteacher from the trust. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2018.

- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 15 lessons, looked extensively at work in pupils' books and talked with a wide range of pupils about their learning.
- They involved the headteacher in a number of these visits and held ongoing discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and representatives of the trust throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors also met with other leaders, teachers, staff, and members of the governing body.
- They spoke informally with parents and took account of 10 responses to Parent View available at the time of the inspection. Inspectors also analysed 21 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a range of the school's documentation, for example, documents relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching and the school's information about how well current pupils are doing.

## Inspection team

Marcia Goodwin, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Corbett	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Scutter	Ofsted Inspector

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