

Booker Park Community School

Stoke Leys Close, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 9ET

Inspection dates

29–30 November 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although governors are united in their positive ambition for the school, they do not yet hold school leaders fully to account. For example, they have not analysed precisely how well disadvantaged pupils are supported.
- Some middle leaders are effective and lead their areas of responsibility proficiently. However, some subject leaders are not having enough impact on improving pupils' progress.
- The Booker Park curriculum is not yet fully developed. As a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress in a broad enough range of subjects.
- Leaders do not check the accuracy of pupils' performance information or monitor the quality of teaching rigorously enough. Leaders are not fully assured that information gathered is reliable.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Inconsistencies in the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' learning mean that sometimes tasks are not matched to pupils' needs closely enough, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is inconsistent. Most pupils achieve well in reading. However, pupils' progress in other subjects, including writing and mathematics, is more variable.
- The needs of pupils with identified social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties are not understood well enough and this slows their progress, particularly for the most able.
- The proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school is above the national average. Leaders do not analyse the reasons for pupils' persistent absence well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Interesting visits and experiences enrich pupils' learning.
- Pupils make good progress in their communication skills because teachers work effectively with other professionals.
- Rigorous safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Children receive effective support that is skilfully tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Most pupils are kind and considerate towards each other. They show respect for staff and move sensibly around the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders, so that they can contribute fully to improving pupils' learning and progress
 - evaluating the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and improving pupils' progress across the school
 - ensuring that the curriculum is planned effectively to improve the consistency of pupils' progress across a broad range of subjects
 - ensuring that pupils' performance information is accurate and used to inform school improvement planning
 - regularly monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning to improve pupils' progress
 - decreasing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers make effective use of accurate assessment information to plan tasks that are well-matched to pupils' needs and abilities
 - teachers have high expectations, and plan activities that sustain pupils' interest, including the most able pupils, and help them to achieve well, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - teaching assistants are deployed consistently well to support pupils' progress, particularly for pupils with SEMH needs
 - pupils' SEMH needs are well understood.

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

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

Requires improvement

- In recent years, senior leaders' efforts to meet the increasingly complex needs of some pupils with SEMH difficulties have not been sufficiently effective. Furthermore, this has reduced their capacity to ensure consistently good teaching and strong pupil progress across the school. However, senior leaders do have a clear vision for the school and what they want pupils to achieve.
- Senior leaders have accurately identified shortcomings in the provision for pupils with SEMH needs. As a result, leaders have seconded effective leadership support from a local school with expertise in meeting these pupils' very specific needs. This support has only been in place for a few weeks, but early signs of improvement can already be seen.
- Although some disadvantaged pupils do well at the school, this is not consistently the case. Leaders have neither ensured that additional funding is used effectively nor that all of the funding is used to support eligible pupils. Also, leaders and governors do not evaluate the impact of the use of additional funding rigorously enough.
- Middle leadership is variable. Leadership of the provision for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder is effective. Well-trained and knowledgeable leaders provide skilful guidance to teaching and learning support assistants across the school. However, leadership of English and mathematics is not as effective because of inconsistencies in leaders' subject knowledge.
- Leaders have thought carefully about pupils' individual special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and adapted the curriculum accordingly. Pupils who have profound, multiple and complex learning needs follow a highly specialised curriculum, while the remaining pupils follow the Booker Park curriculum. As a result, pupils experience a suitably broad and relevant curriculum. However, the curriculum is not yet fully developed to assure pupils' consistent progression, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Most staff feel well supported by leaders to continuously improve their work. Leaders provide helpful guidance to support teachers to improve their skills. While leaders regularly visit classrooms to check the quality of teaching, this aspect of the school's work is less well developed and is not yet rigorous enough.
- Leaders regularly monitor pupils' progress across the school. This information is helpfully shared with governors. However, leaders' analysis of this information is at an early stage. Leaders have not checked the precision of teachers' assessments well enough to be assured that pupils' progress information is valid. As a result, school improvement planning is not reliably based on accurate information.
- Leaders use the sport premium funding well to improve the quality of physical education teaching and increase pupils' participation in sporting activities. Pupils have enjoyed having a say in the type of physical activities available to them, both indoors and outside.
- The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is one of its strengths. Pupils delight in many sensory activities that help to develop a

sense of awe and wonder. Additionally, pupils enjoy a wealth of trips and visits to enrich their learning and successfully promote their participation in the wider community. For example, some pupils made Christmas decorations and were then invited to visit the local attraction where they were displayed.

- Pupils successfully develop an understanding of British values, such as showing respect for each other's opinions. Parents and carers appreciate the values the school promotes. A parent summed up the views of many, describing the school as, 'a warm, loving and accepting environment'.

Governance of the school

- Governors share senior leaders' clear ambition for the school and are rightly proud of the school's strong sense of community. Governors successfully promote the school's values of 'inspire, enable, achieve'.
- The quality of governance varies in its effectiveness. Helpfully, minutes of meetings show examples of governors challenging leaders and seeking further clarification before making decisions. However, governors have not done enough to hold senior leaders to account about the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, the effectiveness of teaching, or pupils' progress.
- Governors are taking a strategic approach to balancing their skills and expertise. They have identified where their work could be strengthened and are actively recruiting new governors with specific competencies. There is a high level of commitment to successfully improving their skills.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the required recruitment checks are carried out for all staff and record these accurately. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding regularly checks that these records are fully compliant.
- Staff fully understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They receive helpful training and regular safeguarding updates. As a result, staff are vigilant and report any concerns appropriately.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They know not to talk to strangers, and those who use the internet have a basic understanding of e-safety.
- Staff work closely with parents and other agencies. Timely referrals for outside help are appropriately made when needed.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey reported that their children are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is not consistently good across the school.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' prior learning is not dependably accurate. Sometimes

teachers ensure that work meets pupils' needs precisely, and this helps pupils to make good progress. However, sometimes teachers do not plan activities that are at the right level for pupils' individual needs.

- Generally, teachers have good knowledge of children's special educational needs. For example, effective strategies to support pupils with autism spectrum disorder are used adeptly across the school. As a result, pupils with autism spectrum disorder can focus on learning because their additional needs, linked to their autism, are well met. However, teachers' understanding of pupils' SEMH needs is not as strong.
- Teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, is inconsistent. Teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are also variable. Sometimes pupils are expected to repeat and over-rehearse skills they have already acquired, and at other times they are introduced to new concepts too quickly, particularly in mathematics. Consequently, pupils' progress is inconsistent.
- Teachers do not understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils well enough, particularly pupils who also have SEMH needs. Consequently, these pupils do not reliably receive suitably effective support.
- At times additional adult support is not supporting pupils' learning well enough. Sometimes pupils' support is not tailored carefully enough to meet their specific needs. However, at other times adults provide skilful finely tuned support because they have a thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to read across the school. Pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories, both at home and at school. Many of the most able pupils successfully use phonic knowledge to read simple texts.
- Teachers often use a range of communication and questioning skills effectively in lessons. As a result, pupils are encouraged to communicate their thinking and successfully deepen their understanding of concepts and skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not reliably demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. Some pupils with SEMH needs routinely find it difficult to settle to their work and stay in the classroom, because their needs are not understood well enough.
- Pupils talk positively about the school. They say that adults care about them and help them to feel safe. The vast majority of parents agree that pupils are safe at the school.
- Pupils' achievements are warmly celebrated in weekly assemblies. Parents are invited to share in their children's success. As a result, pupils develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and what to do if it happens to them. Pupils are confident that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is variable. Many pupils, with support, learn to regulate their behaviour successfully. However, this is not reliably the case for pupils with specific SEMH needs, because sometimes the support they receive is not matched well enough to their needs.
- The number of times that physical intervention has been used to manage the behaviour of pupils with SEMH needs has increased in recent months. However, physical intervention is used safely by well-trained staff. Leaders carefully analyse incident logs and are using this information to reduce the use of physical intervention.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. However, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school is above the national average. Leaders' analysis of the reasons for pupils' persistent absence has not yet been rigorous enough to rapidly improve the attendance of these pupils.
- Most pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day. Routines and expectations are clearly established and consistently applied. Pupils move sensibly around the school between activities. On the whole, playtimes are happy and sociable occasions.
- The majority of pupils concentrate well in lessons and show real interest in what they are learning. Pupils usually listen carefully to each other and show respect for the friendly and supportive staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Attainment is typically below that seen nationally. Pupils have a wide range of SEND and associated learning difficulties. In addition, many are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Classes are organised appropriately, according to pupils' age groups and their developmental and learning needs.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics, including for the most able, is variable across the school. Inconsistencies in teachers' assessment means that sometimes pupils' starting points are not identified accurately. Pupils' workbooks include examples of some pupils making slow progress because they spend too much time repeating work unnecessarily.
- Generally, pupils make good progress in reading. However, the quality of pupils' writing is more variable. For example, sometimes writing tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' needs. This means that occasionally pupils struggle to get started with their writing, which slows their progress.
- Approximately one quarter of the school's pupils are disadvantaged. Although their progress is variable, many disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers. However, some disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who also have SEMH needs, do not make sufficient progress from their starting points because their needs are not so well understood.
- Pupils make good progress in their communication skills. Teachers work effectively with other professionals, such as speech and language therapists, to successfully meet

pupils' needs.

- Most pupils are well-prepared for their move to secondary school, particularly in their personal development and communication skills. Skilful adult support ensures that older pupils are typically confident and self-assured.
- Children make good progress in the early years. Accurate assessment of children's learning is used effectively to plan children's next steps. Valuable involvement with other professionals, such as occupational therapists, ensures that children, including disadvantaged children, make good progress in all aspects of their development.

Early years provision

Good

- Good leadership in the early years ensures that children get a positive start to their education. Leaders have a clear vision for the successful development of the early years department. They are ambitious that all children achieve well and are happy. Parents value the support their children receive. Several parents described their children as 'thriving' at school.
- Children achieve well. Adults know children well and successfully plan activities that are precisely matched to their individual needs and interests. For example, adults skilfully support children to explore sensory cause-and-effect toys. Adults use vocabulary carefully to name the specific actions of the toys. As a result, children are highly motivated to concentrate and were able, independently, to make the toys move in a variety of ways.
- Adults adeptly use a wide variety of communication strategies to engage children in their learning. Adults' proficient use of language and signing helps children to develop their communication skills quickly and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
- Children are safe in the early years. Well-trained staff work effectively with other professionals to meet children's pastoral and medical needs.
- Children enjoy the wide variety of stimulating experiences that adults provide, both indoors and outside. Interesting visits and trips within the local community help to enrich children's learning. For example, children go on weekly local walks which successfully support their personal development and social skills.
- Relationships between children and adults are consistently warm and positive. Children are encouraged to be kind and considerate to each other. Children's many achievements are praised. Consequently, children behave well and feel good about themselves.

School details

Unique reference number	110588
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10082125

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	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Coneron
Principal	Christine Stephenson
Telephone number	01296 427 221
Website	www.thevalefederation.com
Email address	cstephenson@thevalefederation.com
Date of previous inspection	November 2014

Information about this school

- Booker Park School is a special school which caters for primary-age pupils with a broad range of SEND. The school is part of the Vale Federation, together with the secondary provision at Stocklake Park.
- Both the principal and the head of school were appointed in September 2014. The principal has overall responsibility for both schools in the federation.
- Booker Park provides for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils have specific SEMH needs. Nearly half of the pupils attending the school have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Approximately a quarter of pupils are disadvantaged.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. All observations were carried out with the head of school or a senior leader. A sample of pupils' workbooks was also examined.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, the designated safeguarding lead, the early years leader and a group of support staff.
- The lead inspector met with some governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about their work and to gather their views. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 31 additional free-text responses. An inspector spoke to a few parents on the telephone and other parents informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of 87 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of the school's documentation, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; minutes of the governing body; the school's action plans; and peer-review visit reports.
- Safeguarding procedures were reviewed.

Inspection team

Claire Prince, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Liz Bowes

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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