

Alton Park Junior School

Alton Park Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 1DL

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective. Although the school has the required safeguarding documents, leaders do not ensure that the school is a safe environment for pupils. Some pupils are bullied and intimidated by their peers.
- The multi-academy trust (MAT) is not demonstrating the capacity to make the necessary improvements.
- Leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's performance. Governors have not held leaders and staff to account closely enough to support the improvement of the school.
- Improvement plans are not sharp enough to drive improvements in pupils' progress.
- A significant number of parents and carers and staff who responded to Ofsted's online surveys do not have confidence in the school's leadership.
- Too much teaching is ineffective. Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to consider pupils' needs or abilities.
- The curriculum does not adequately meet the learning needs of the pupils in the school.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are too low for all groups of pupils. Pupils are not making sufficient progress from their different starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough, and their attainment shows little sign of improving. Leaders do not have a clear enough understanding about the effectiveness of pupil premium funding in the school.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support pupils' progress.
- Parents and pupils are not clear about how homework supports learning.
- Leaders have not done enough to challenge poor behaviour in lessons and around the school. This has a negative effect on pupils' learning and on their welfare.
- Attendance is low and is not improving quickly enough. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. Punctuality is poor.
- The number of pupils excluded from school is high. This has a negative impact on their education.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive good support, especially pastoral support.
- Staff provide effective pastoral support for pupils.

Full report

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency, assure pupils' safety and welfare, by ensuring that leaders:
 - support all staff to manage pupils' behaviour consistently well in lessons, around the school and on the playground, especially at breaktimes and lunchtimes
 - take prompt action to eradicate incidents of bullying.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - supporting and challenging those with leadership responsibilities to evaluate more accurately how well their improvement planning is raising pupils' achievement
 - building the capacity of the governing body so that it has the skills, experience and expertise required to steer and support school improvement
 - doing more with pupil premium funding so that disadvantaged pupils achieve well
 - reaffirming the school's approach to homework so that staff, parents and pupils understand how it contributes to pupils' learning.
- Increase pupils' attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average, by taking firm action to reduce:
 - the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school
 - the number of times pupils are excluded from attending school because of poor behaviour
 - instances of pupils arriving late to school.
- Improve the quality of teaching in all classes and accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that they reach at least the standards expected for their age, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - using teachers' assessments of what pupils already know to pitch learning at the right level for pupils to make the progress of which they are capable
 - making better use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.

It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers without the agreement of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

External reviews of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have not ensured that the school provides an acceptable standard of education over time. The school's evaluation of its own performance suggests it is better than it is. This over-generous evaluation means that improvement actions have lacked a sense of urgency or focus.
- Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching is strong enough to help pupils make sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics to achieve at least in line with national averages. Pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 are not sufficiently prepared for their secondary education.
- Senior leaders have not taken robust action to ensure that all staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Consequently, some pupils are prevented from taking full advantage of the learning opportunities on offer in lessons.
- Over half of parents and a significant proportion of staff who responded to Ofsted's online surveys expressed concern about aspects of the school's leadership. Only a third of parents would recommend the school to another parent. Almost half of the staff who took part in Ofsted's online survey do not feel supported by senior leaders in managing pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders and trustees are not managing the pupil premium funding well enough to prevent the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils. They have not linked spending precisely to the school's priorities. For example, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is low, exclusions are high, yet funds have not been used directly to tackle these issues.
- Senior leaders have recognised that what they have done in the past has not worked well enough to improve pupils' outcomes. They have reorganised leadership responsibilities recently. There are early signs that this is beginning to make a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The majority of middle leaders are enthusiastic, but are new to their roles. They have clear ideas about what they want to achieve and have made a start on introducing new ways of working. However, these strategies are very new. As a result, it is too early to say how effective they are in making a positive difference to pupils' learning.
- Leaders have new arrangements to check on pupils' standards. Assessments of what pupils know and can do are now more accurate. This has highlighted that pupils have wide gaps in their knowledge and skills. Leaders are aware that curriculum gaps from previous years need to be addressed before moving on to the learning for the current year.
- Systems to support pupils with SEND are effective. Leaders link closely with other support agencies to ensure pupils get specialist help where it is required.
- Teachers new to teaching say they feel supported. They receive extra training to develop their teaching skills.
- The school's curriculum is being revised by leaders, in the hope that it can become more effective in helping to raise standards and ensure that pupils make stronger progress. Nevertheless, there are some strengths in what is currently offered to pupils,

particularly in providing opportunities for them to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills.

- Pupils enjoy music. They sing enthusiastically and with gusto. The teaching of science, such as about food chains and lifecycles, is enhanced by the wide range of animals and birds kept in the school grounds. Pupils enjoy forest activities.
- A pastoral care team, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), learning mentors, counsellors and the family support worker, ensures that pupils who need social and emotional help get the support they need to access learning. Parents speak highly of this aspect of the school's work.
- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding effectively. A sports coach provides specialist teaching, and the funding has provided greater opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of sports.

Governance of the school

- The multi-academy trust (MAT) board of trustees and local governing body have provided governance since the school converted to an academy in April 2016. Trustees disbanded the school's previous governing body in September 2018 because it was not effective in holding the school to account for its performance.
- The MAT trustees are committed to the school. They are supportive of the headteacher, but are not demonstrating the capacity to make the rapid improvements required.
- Trustees have not monitored the school's use of the pupil premium effectively. The funding has not been targeted specifically to improve outcomes for this significant group.
- Trustees have effectively managed the primary PE and sport funding and the finances to support pupils with special educational needs.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Although the school has safeguarding documents, such as policies and procedures, arrangements for ensuring pupils' physical safety are not secure. Leaders have been too slow to take action to reduce the risk of harm to pupils.
- Staff say they do not feel supported by leaders in dealing with pupils' challenging behaviour. Too many parents have lost confidence in staff to deal with incidents of bullying and the behaviour of some pupils.
- The school's single central record meets requirements.
- Staff safeguarding training is up to date. Staff are clear about systems to report their concerns. Those responsible for child protection work are tenacious in working with support agencies to ensure pupils get the help they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Overall, teaching is weak. As a result, pupils are not making the progress they should and could make.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Pupils' work is often unfinished and is not presented neatly. Errors and misconceptions persist because teachers do not consistently highlight them and do not insist that they are corrected.
- Teachers do not plan lessons that are set at the right level of difficulty to help pupils make sufficient progress. Tasks are often too hard. Pupils are confused about what they have to do and frequently give up. For the most able pupils, activities are often too easy. Consequently, pupils are not challenged sufficiently well to do the best they can.
- Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is not effective. Teaching assistants often use their time to maintain pupils' attention. They are not used well enough to provide the support to help pupils to engage in their learning.
- Work in pupils' books confirms the poor quality of teaching overall across the school. Where teachers have higher expectations, teaching is effective and pupils make better progress. When teachers use clear explanations, pupils understand what they are learning and make clear gains.
- Leaders have introduced a new way of setting homework which provides opportunities for families to work together. Recently, pupils have engaged with a project based on British values, reflecting on the rule of law and on democracy. Displays show how pupils are deepening their understanding of British values and that they had found out much about how Britain is governed.
- Handwriting has been a recent focus for the school. Pupils' books demonstrate that this initiative is paying dividends and their handwriting is beginning to show signs of improvement.
- Leaders have introduced higher quality texts to provide pupils with better examples that they can use in their own writing. In mathematics, there is a greater emphasis on problem-solving skills. Pupils' books show that, very recently, they are being asked to think more carefully. As this work is new, it is too soon to gauge how successfully it is raising pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- A significant number of pupils told inspectors they are worried by the bullying that occurs, particularly at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Some have confidence in staff to deal with their concerns, but too many do not.
- School council representatives have begun work with their classes to improve aspects of school life. For example, pupils have identified that fights and arguments are predominantly started in football games. They are working on ways to make the

playground a safer place. 'Worry' boxes have been introduced to encourage pupils to share their concerns.

- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of keeping safe online. They know to use different passwords, not to give out personal information, not to play games online with strangers, and to stick to age limits on computer games.
- The school explores different ways to support pupils' social and emotional needs. Pupils say that they are encouraged to come to school and engage in learning when they are allowed to spend time with Jasper, the school dog.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs offer pupils the chance to eat a healthy breakfast, socialise and be cared for before and after school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Behaviour has not been managed effectively over time. Too many teachers have low expectations of how pupils should behave in lessons and around the school. Older pupils often demonstrate a lack of respect for the feelings and safety of others.
- The school's own records, confirmed by inspectors' observations, show high levels of disruptive behaviour in lessons, unsafe behaviour indoors and rough play outside on the playground, especially in football games. Too many pupils expressed concerns about instances of bullying and also unruly behaviour interrupting their learning in lessons.
- A high proportion of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey and who spoke to inspectors do not agree that the school deals effectively with bullying. A fifth of the staff who took part in Ofsted's staff survey agree with parents.
- Pupils' attendance in the last two years has been below average and remains low. There is little sign of improvement.
- The proportion of pupils excluded for short periods of time is above the national average.
- A significant number of pupils arrive late to school each day.
- Pupils have not developed positive attitudes to learning. Some pupils quickly lose interest, and this leads to disruptive behaviour that interrupts their own learning and that of others.
- Where teachers have higher expectations, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. However, this is not widespread.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their education. Published assessment information shows that, for the past two years, pupils' standards have been low in each of reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently below the national average.

- Teachers' assessments of pupils' current books show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain too low. Too few are working at the standards expected for their age. Pupils' workbooks show that the majority of pupils are not making strong enough progress.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Very few are working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. This is caused by gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills from previously weak teaching. The work set by teachers is often pitched too low for their ability.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The additional funding is not making a positive difference to low attendance or achievement.
- Some younger pupils who find reading difficult are currently being provided with support to improve their phonic skills. It is too early to see the impact of this.
- Pupils with SEND make some progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, from their individual starting points. This is because of the help and extra guidance they receive in lessons.
- Leaders make use of learning places away from school, for pupils who have very specific learning needs. Staff check on a daily basis that pupils are attending the alternative provision and check on their progress each week.

School details

Unique reference number	142685
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10057795

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	490
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Carol Carlsson-Browne
Headteacher	Samantha Norfolk
Telephone number	01255 424335
Website	www.altonparkjunior.org.uk
Email address	admin@altonpark.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Alton Park Junior School converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2016.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It consists of 17 classes. There are four classes in each of Years 3, 5 and 6 and five classes in Year 4.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The headteacher took up her substantive post in September 2017.
- The school is a member of the Premier Learning Trust. The multi-academy trust's board of trustees is responsible for holding the school's leadership team to account.

- The school makes use of 'Grow Intensive' alternative provision.
- A breakfast and after-school club, managed by trustees, operates on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders and heads of year.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors talked to pupils about their work and looked at their books to see how they are learning. Two pupils read to the lead inspector and talked about how well they are learning to read.
- Inspectors observed and talked to pupils at breaktime and lunchtime, in school and outside on the playground.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, the SENCo and with trustees, including the chair of trustees and chief executive officer of the trust. They spoke to middle leaders, new teachers, the pastoral care team, the sports coach and to those with responsibility for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised. This included the school's website, policies, pupils' assessment information, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and the plans for school improvement work. Inspectors looked at the school's records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 57 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, and 37 written responses to the staff survey. Senior leaders and inspectors sampled 130 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors considered the school's own parent survey results. They spoke to parents at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school. Inspectors held discussions with six parents and took account of two letters received from parents.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Mitcheson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Sutton	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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