

# Victoria Primary Academy

Finedon Road, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 4NT

## Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has continued to experience high levels of change to staffing. This is slowing the impact of leaders' actions to improve teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders' review of curriculum frameworks has not yet refined these sufficiently to support teachers to plan consistently well.
- Pupils are not making consistently good progress across year groups and across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable. Sequences of learning do not consistently build on and deepen pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Teachers are not consistently using information about what pupils know with sufficient precision to swiftly address misconceptions within lessons.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to think harder. The most able pupils, in particular, spend too much time on work they can already do. Therefore, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers are not ensuring that pupils develop consistent confidence and habits to be independent learners.

### The school has the following strengths

- The principal continues to provide strong leadership, based on accurate knowledge of the school and its community.
- Senior and other leaders work together as an effective team with a consistent rigour and shared vision to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The Hatton Academies Trust (the trust) provides effective support for the school, including flexible and responsive staff training.
- Leaders have established a positive learning environment.
- Phonics is taught well.
- The inclusion team members use information carefully to ensure that they provide tailored support for vulnerable pupils. These pupils make progress that is often better than that of others in the school.
- Early years leaders ensure that children settle quickly and waste no time in making a good start to their learning. There is a clear focus on giving children the basic skills they need to be ready for Year 1.
- Parent and carers value the approachable staff. They are rightly confident that their children are safe and happy.

## Full report

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

- Complete the curriculum review to develop a coherent and manageable framework across subjects and year groups.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to be consistently good by teachers:
  - deepening their subject knowledge so that they plan sequences of learning that systematically build up pupils' understanding
  - using assessment more precisely within lessons to adapt teaching to better meet pupils' needs.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by teachers:
  - planning learning that sufficiently challenges pupils and deepens their understanding, especially for most able pupils
  - enabling pupils to build on positive attitudes to learning, to be more independent learners.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal continues to provide strong direction and unwavering determination to provide the best learning and outcomes possible for all pupils in the school. She has sustained and built on the effective actions that were identified at the monitoring visit in 2017. Her actions are based on accurate monitoring and evaluation.
- The trust provides robust challenge but strong partnership, in a shared vision to find the best staff and keep the school moving forward through the frustrations of ongoing staffing change. However, the changes have currently slowed the impact of leaders' push to secure good and better teaching and outcomes across the school.
- Senior leaders provide effective training to all leaders and staff. The trust supports senior leaders well in developing leadership capacity. This has secured an effective team ethos that supports the rigorous culture of continual improvement.
- Leaders monitor the professional development of staff carefully. Information about how well pupils are doing is used to identify where support is needed for staff and pupils. Professional development for staff is tailored to their individual needs, and regular accurate feedback for improvement is built upon and revisited with staff. Leaders know where practice is stronger and use this well to support colleagues. The trust helps leaders provide links and expertise from across the trust and beyond.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. They have targeted the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to ensure that individual needs are met. These pupils are making at least good progress. In some instances, it is rapid.
- Leaders responsible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils. They swiftly put support in place. These pupils also make good progress from their starting points. Leaders are tenacious in seeking additional support from external agencies when required.
- Leaders use the additional funds provided through the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium well to ensure that all pupils take part in a range of sports and make healthy choices. The introduction of a systematic framework for PE last year has raised teachers' confidence and pupils' enjoyment of their lessons. Pupils are enjoying a wider range of external sporting events, including swimming and tri-golf. Pupils also enjoy regular class sessions to keep them active across the school day.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders considered carefully the chosen framework to provide a sound basis for building pupils' knowledge and vocabulary across the school. Science, humanities and the arts are used as a foundation for pupils' learning. Homework links effectively to this. Pupils particularly enjoy practical experiences. Year 4 pupils, for example, certainly will not forget the key processes of digestion, having messily modelled the processes through to excretion of a banana.
- Leaders have in place appropriate and proven frameworks and policies across the core and wider curriculum. However, they are currently reviewing how these can be refined further. This is particularly so that new and less experienced teachers have coherent curriculum guidelines that enable them to impact more quickly on learning progress.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted across the curriculum. Leaders encourage pupils to be mindful and think about their actions as responsible citizens. The cultural diversity of the school community is used well to promote understanding, tolerance and mutual respect. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being librarians and telephone operators for internal calls. They are particularly thoughtful and keen to help pupils who are new to the school, including giving translation support.

### **Governance of the school**

- The trust's board of directors continue to be responsible for school governance. The directors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that statutory roles of governance are fulfilled effectively.
- They have a strong confidence in the school's leadership, based on their probing questioning and stringent systems of monitoring and evaluation. They maintain a strategic emphasis on providing systems and 'back office' support that enables school leaders to focus on teaching and learning.
- There is an effective partnership between the acting CEO, the principal and other leaders. There is clear trust and openness that is unwavering in focusing on continuing to improve teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Directors of the trust share the frustration of school leaders about the impact of ongoing staff changes. They are realistic about the likely continued challenges of recruitment and retention. They are proactive in participation in teacher training, exploring recruitment strategies and continuing to develop staff training and incentives to optimise staffing in all of their schools.
- The board of directors is ensuring that the expertise across the primary and secondary schools within the trust is being used with increasing effectiveness across settings.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are rigorous systems and procedures in place, which are understood by all staff. Leaders keep thorough records to ensure effective and timely work with external agencies. Staff receive relevant training and updates, including on radicalisation and extremism.
- The trust is diligent in ensuring that the school fulfils its safeguarding duties. It makes sure that necessary checks are completed before adults begin to work or volunteer at the school and responds quickly to school leaders when additional support is required.
- The culture of safeguarding in the school is evident. Pupils spoken to by inspectors said that they feel safe. Teaching children about how to keep themselves safe is given a high priority by leaders. Pupils were particularly knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe online.
- Case studies and records show that vulnerable children and their families are carefully and effectively supported. There have continued to be fixed-term exclusions in this academic year. These are carefully considered, proportionately and stringently logged. Leaders work tenaciously to secure support from external agencies to meet the complex needs of pupils. Leaders are quick to investigate and follow up any concerns.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistently good. Leaders have appropriate systems in place to implement effective policies and approaches to improve teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. However, continued changes to teaching staff and, particularly, unanticipated instability in key stage 1 this year mean that the level of consistency and impact on pupils' learning are not yet where leaders want them to be.
- The trust and school leaders work effectively with a teaching school alliance to optimise recruitment of high-calibre trainees and newly qualified teachers. The school currently has five newly qualified teachers. They are progressing well for this stage of their career. They have been carefully paired with experienced colleagues to scaffold planning and teaching. However, having one third of the teaching team at this stage of their career coupled with other recent joiners means that over half the teaching team need additional support.
- Leaders have robust assessment systems in place to inform planning and interventions. The trust is effective in supporting leaders to moderate these internally and externally. However, not all teachers across the school have the depth of subject knowledge to use this information to precisely adapt their planning to meet the needs of different pupils, especially most-able pupils.
- Teachers are not consistently skilled in breaking down learning to plan well-sequenced learning to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to be successful in lessons and independently tackle more complex tasks. Not all teachers are equally skilled at checking pupils' understanding and adapting tasks to swiftly address misconceptions within lessons.
- The teaching of phonics and reading is securing pupils' ability to read accurately. It has improved over time to become a strength, as leaders are determined that all pupils become readers. Strategies are in place to encourage pupils to read widely. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy using the school library. The school's chosen approach to teaching reading is ensuring that pupils are more systematically taught the skills they need to improve their understanding and tackle a range of comprehension questions. However, the school's overall curriculum frameworks are not yet consistently embedding pupils' knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and concepts to access more challenging texts.
- Leaders have introduced effective activities and approaches to improve the fluency and accuracy of pupils' knowledge of number bonds and times tables. Teachers are building on this well to consistently develop pupils' calculation skills in mathematics. All teachers are planning for opportunities to use and apply pupils' improved calculation skills. However, they are not equally skilled at showing pupils how to confidently tackle these tasks.
- In English, teachers are systematically developing pupils' knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers plan effectively for age-appropriate learning in these aspects. Teachers' expectations of accurate application of these skills are not consistent across the wider curriculum.
- Across the curriculum, teachers follow the school's curriculum framework to ensure that pupils learn concepts and skills across a range of subjects, appropriate to their

age. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils have to think hard enough. They do not routinely move pupils swiftly on to more challenging learning, so that they are deepening their understanding and spending sufficient time on learning to confidently tackle more complex problems.

- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and establish clear routines, and pupils are keen to learn. Teachers consistently maintain a calm and focused climate for learning.
- Teachers are conscientious and work hard to respond to and implement school policies and approaches.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The strong ethos of respect and care is underpinned by clear 'Victoria values', which are consistently referred to by staff and pupils across the school.
- Pupils work well together, listening respectfully to teachers and each other. This behaviour only wavers where teachers' expectations are less clear. Peer discussion and sharing of ideas are consistent features in line with school policy. Where teachers have clear expectations, pupils respond well and take pride in their work.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, teachers are not yet consistently ensuring that pupils have the skills to be as independent and successful as they need to be in improving their work.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and feel very safe in school. They know whom to speak to in school if they have any worries. They understand the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Pupils said that bullying is rare. They are clear on what to do if it does occur. Scrutiny of logged incidents and actions taken supports this view.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke to inspectors and responded to Parent View were very positive about the support their children receive. They are rightly confident that their children are happy and safe.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show courtesy and consideration towards each other and adults, including visitors in the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils behave well in class and around the school, and interruptions to learning are rare. Pupils enjoy receiving rewards, such as 'victastic' points. They are particularly proud when they receive congratulations certificates in assembly.
- Pupils take responsibility for their actions and choices, due to a strong ethos of respect and citizenship. They were keen to tell me about how they 'show their values through their actions'. They were also very clear about the colour-coded behaviour plan. They said that they like that they know where they stand and that adults use sanctions fairly.

- The school has sustained attendance that is at least in line with national averages over time. This is because the school is never complacent and continually keeps the importance of good attendance in the minds of parents and pupils through rewards and newsletters. The inclusion team makes sure that any risk of low attendance is quickly spotted and tailored support for improvement put in place.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in the progress made by different groups of pupils and in different subject areas over time.
- Across the school, but particularly at the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment remains persistently below national averages. In 2018, from very low attainment of reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 and 2017, the difference to national attainment reduced by over 20%. However, over half of the cohort still had not secured skills to equip them to confidently take on the demands of the secondary curriculum.
- Current school information and inspection evidence is consistent with the accurate analysis of leaders. There is improving progress in key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics for many pupils. However, this is not yet sufficiently rapid to secure consistently good progress, especially for most-able pupils.
- At key stage 1, from 2016 to 2018, pupils consistently built well on their outcomes at the end of Reception and their subsequent Year 1 phonics scores. Relative to their starting points, more pupils achieved the standards expected than others did nationally. However, current school information and inspection evidence show that unanticipated teacher changes and difficulties this year have slowed progress for current pupils.
- Attainment in the Year 1 national phonics tests rose year-on-year from 2016 to 2018, reducing the difference from national averages and ensuring that pupils make better progress from their starting points than national averages. Evidence during the inspection confirms that systematic and effective teaching of phonics is maintaining this momentum for current pupils.
- Teachers are planning for a range of curriculum experiences and learning that is broadly age-appropriate due to comprehensive curriculum frameworks. Teachers' expectations in wider-curriculum tasks are not as consistent as in English and mathematics. Variability in teachers' subject knowledge also means that pupils do not consistently deepen their understanding to achieve higher standards.
- Leaders are ensuring that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is used well. They use assessment information intelligently to tailor specific interventions to support pastoral and academic needs. Pupils in both of these groups are making improved progress. For disadvantaged pupils, progress is often better than for others in the school.

### Early years provision

### Good

- Children in the early years enter with skills and abilities well below what is typical for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development is improving year-on-year and reducing the difference with the

national average. This represents at least good progress from the children's starting points and ensures that the majority of children are well prepared when they enter Year 1.

- The early years leader sets high expectations across the whole teaching team. She models highly effective teaching. She is well supported by senior leaders and the trust. Through effective training, leaders are ensuring that staff who have joined the setting since September have a clear and consistent understanding of priorities for children's progress. A particular strength is the consistent drive for strong language, reading, writing and number skills. Leaders have identified this as an ongoing key priority for children due to their skills being particularly low when they start school.
- Teachers use careful, ongoing assessment to plan targeted and structured opportunities to develop skills, particularly in phonics, pre-writing skills and number. Observations and assessments are used well to inform adults' questioning and opportunities to involve children in thinking through problems, although the challenge is not as consistent for the most able children.
- Teachers undertook sharply focused baselines at the start of the school year to assess children's skills and knowledge on entry and then put appropriate support immediately into place for disadvantaged children and those with SEND where required. This is securing rapid progress for these children.
- Children settle quickly into the welcoming environment because the adults working in the early years provide a variety of interesting, stimulating and well-organised activities. This means that children work purposefully and maintain concentration on tasks, with or without adult support. For example, children enjoyed telling inspectors about the models they were making with cogs and carefully counted that they had 20 pieces and needed four more for their design. Adults have been particularly effective in establishing routines and independence.
- Leaders have invested in the development of a stimulating outdoor space and resources to promote effective experiences and learning. Pupils were relishing the opportunity to practise their letter formation in the sand and enjoy a range of active tasks. The early years leader is planning closely with other staff to make sure that all teaching groups have consistent access to this space and other child-initiated opportunities.
- Adults encourage safe play and use of resources. Children are kept safe at all times and are well looked after by caring staff. This ethos ensures that children play happily and fairly together.
- Parents are rightly positive about the good start their children make in the Reception class. Parents value involvement in their children's learning through home visits and day-to-day availability of staff. They are confident that their children are safe and well cared for in this environment.



## School details

Unique reference number	140193
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10087381

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	William Thallon
Principal	Hayley Scargill
Telephone number	01933 223323
Website	<a href="http://www.victoria-pri.northants.sch.uk/">www.victoria-pri.northants.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@victoriaprimaracademy.org.uk">head@victoriaprimaracademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–15 December 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is an academy, sponsored by The Hatton Academies Trust. Victoria Primary Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Six teachers have joined the school since September 2018; three of these joined mid-year. There are currently five newly qualified teachers. The school is in the process of recruiting two more teachers for September 2019.
- A third of pupils are White British, with the remainder coming from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Just over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below average. However, the school is in the highest 40% nationally for deprivation.
- The school has a higher rate of pupil mobility than is typical nationally, including a number of pupils who are new to the country.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across all year groups and phases and visited most classes more than once – 40 visits in total. A large proportion of observations were carried out jointly with the principal and other senior leaders. Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 5 and 6. The inspectors talked with pupils about their school and looked at pupils’ books while visiting lessons. The team scrutinised a large sample of pupils’ work jointly with the principal and other leaders to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and other leaders, including leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND, inclusion, English, mathematics, the early years and age phases. A meeting was held with representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair and the acting CEO.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day and considered the 40 responses to Ofsted’s online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text service for parents.
- Inspectors considered responses from 26 staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire. However, inspectors considered the 100 responses to a recent internal pupil questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed pupils across the school day, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation, the school improvement plans, academy sponsor reviews, the school’s most recent information on pupils’ achievement, information related to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and the information published on the school’s website.

## Inspection team

Mandy Wilding, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca King	Ofsted Inspector

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