

Potter Street Academy

Carters Mead, Harlow, Essex CM17 9EU

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new aspirational leadership team, alongside the dedicated staff, governors and trustees, is rapidly improving teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour and their achievement in this inclusive, welcoming school.
- Leaders, governors and trustees have an accurate view of the school and know where to focus improvement. Governance is effective. The school is well placed to improve further.
- There has been rapid improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, so that they are now good. Exclusions have declined significantly.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. They want to come to school to learn. Attendance has risen above the national average. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and teachers provide a stimulating, exciting curriculum, but pupils are not always challenged and stretched in subjects other than English and mathematics (foundation subjects).
- Curriculum planning in some foundation subjects does not show a clear progression of skills throughout the school. Assessment in these subjects is not robust enough to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils treat each other and adults with respect. School leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Standards are improving. Over time, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined has continuously increased.
- During this school year, most pupils are making good progress from their various starting points. This is raising attainment in English and mathematics.
- Teaching and learning in the early years are improving quickly. Children are happy and confident. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Staff, governors, parents and pupils are fully supportive of the school
- Teachers plan interesting tasks that motivate pupils well in their work. Occasionally, these activities are not adapted precisely enough, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), so that they make consistently 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 they are consistently good to further raise pupils' outcomes across the school by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to deepen their thinking across all areas of the curriculum
 - adapting learning activities, so that they precisely meet the individual needs of pupils, especially those with SEND, to keep them engaged in their learning, so that they make continuously good progress from their starting points.
- Ensure that the curriculum provides appropriate progression of skills with robust assessment in the foundation subjects to enable pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Formalise and extend assessment of children's learning in the early years so that it is equally effective in all areas of learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes to the senior leadership team. The new headteacher and new deputy headteacher are passionate and ambitious for all pupils to do well in this rapidly improving school.
- Leaders, governors and trustees have developed a friendly school community in which pupils behave and achieve well. Together, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The leadership team has good capacity to develop the school further.
- There have been significant improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, with a sharp decline in exclusions since the previous inspection. This has enabled pupils to be better prepared to learn and, consequently, has supported improvement in the progress that they make. Attendance has also improved.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which are now good in English and mathematics. They have established a learning culture where staff are keen to develop professionally and they are supported to do so. Leaders improve teachers' knowledge and teaching skills through sharing of good practice within the school and high-quality training opportunities from the trust. Teachers want to work in the school and are proud to be part of the team. Everyone works well together.
- Leaders regularly monitor the impact of teaching and learning. Most pupils are making good progress from their September starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. However, occasionally, the learning activities are not adapted precisely enough to meet individual pupils' needs, especially for pupils with SEND. Where this occurs, pupils lose interest and make less progress.
- The stimulating curriculum is a strength of the school. This is demonstrated in the high-quality displays around the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development threads through the curriculum. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of British values, especially those surrounding democracy. The school is fully committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. Regular exciting visits enhance the learning opportunities for all pupils.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. They carry out robust checks on pupils' work and the progress they make. This focus is ensuring that differences between disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing.
- The recently appointed inclusion and special educational needs leader is strengthening the work of the school. New individual pupil plans are being implemented effectively. However, these have not yet had time to influence teaching and learning on a daily basis to ensure that pupils' needs are consistently met. Additional funding is spent effectively.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is spent well to promote sport and PE within the school and through extra-curricular activities. The school also uses the funding to support the sustainability of high-quality teaching and learning in PE.

- The school's caring and inclusive atmosphere fosters good relationships with pupils and their parents. The vast majority of parents are supportive about the school and the work that leaders do to keep their children happy, safe and well cared for. Parents expressed views such as: 'Potter Street Academy is a lovely school. The children are always polite and the staff are very helpful,' and that their children 'are happy, confident and can't wait to go every morning'.

Governance of the school

- The trust and local governing board have clearly defined areas of responsibility and have high aspirations for the school. They offer effective support and challenge to school leaders to secure school improvement.
- Trustees and governors have a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve further. Their work has been enhanced by evaluative reports from an external school improvement partner. Together with senior leaders, they ensure that the school's action plans address any areas for development swiftly.
- Trustees and governors have a clear strategic view. Through regular visits, representatives from both boards check and ask pertinent questions to hold senior and subject leaders to account, regarding the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes. Evidence of this can be seen in the minutes of meetings. They have supported leaders to tackle any underachievement in teaching effectively.
- Trustees and governors ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium funding and the PE and sport grant, are spent effectively to improve the progress pupils make.
- Trustees and governors carry out their legal duties well. They understand their responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding of pupils within the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Trustees, governors, and leaders ensure that high-quality procedures are in place to keep all pupils, including the most vulnerable, safe. Records are of a high standard. Any issues are recorded, routinely monitored and reviewed. Staff are well trained and are quick to report any concerns they have about pupils in the school. Leaders ensure that these concerns are acted upon swiftly and appropriate referrals are made to the relevant agencies.
- The school's single central record of employment checks meets legal requirements. All adults have undergone the required checks to determine their suitability to work with pupils.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum, including assemblies, supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe at school, at home and in the community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' secure subject knowledge, effective questioning, and increasingly high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are leading to swift improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. These are now mainly good across the school. Inspection evidence, including the school's assessment records and work in pupils' books, confirms this. Most current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching ensures that pupils are becoming resilient learners and participate in lessons well. They form good relationships with adults and their peers.
- Well-trained and effectively deployed additional adults respond well to pupils' needs. They provide good support for pupils who are not achieving as well as they should. These adults build up pupils' self-esteem and encourage them to work things out for themselves.
- In the early years and key stage 1, the quality of teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to routinely practise their sounds. Pupils then apply their phonological knowledge to read and spell unfamiliar words.
- The teaching of reading across the school is good. Pupils told inspectors they enjoy reading. After Year 2 pupils had read an extract from 'Fantastic Mr Fox' and Year 6 pupils had read an adaptation of 'Charlotte's Web', both year groups were able to use high-order inference and deduction skills for their age to show their understanding of the relevant texts.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills within English tasks and across the curriculum. The school has a high focus on neat presentation and handwriting. Year 4 pupils were able to improve their skills in writing biographies by comparing two leaders from different cultures who lived at the same time in the past.
- Teachers explain mathematical concepts clearly and accurately. Adults and pupils use the correct mathematical vocabulary. A focus on arithmetic and reasoning skills is supporting pupils' deepening understanding of mathematical concepts. Year 6 pupils explained competently how 10 rolls of a dice would affect the median, mean, mode and range compared to 20 rolls.
- Teachers usually plan well for the different needs and abilities of pupils in their class, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who are in the early stages of learning English. They provide tasks that interest pupils. Occasionally, where learning activities are not adapted precisely enough to meet their needs, pupils become disengaged and make less progress than they should. This is especially the case for pupils with SEND.
- Stimulating activities support good learning and capture pupils' keen interest across the curriculum. However, the written work in science and other foundation subjects is not of the same high quality as seen in English and mathematics. It shows that pupils have too few opportunities to deepen their thinking skills and apply them in attempting more challenging work.
- Essential ideas are revisited over time in some subjects. Year 6 pupils, for example, were able to discuss the importance of a balanced diet and the impact of different food

types on the human body, while in Year 1 pupils were learning basic knowledge and facts about vegetables and dairy products. However, in most foundation subjects this example of progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding is lacking.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and the vast majority take pride in their neatly presented work. They show respect to one another and adults.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with SEND are well cared for and given every opportunity to participate in lessons with their friends. Staff meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils who require additional support sensitively.
- The school provides a safe environment for pupils. They know who to speak to if they have any concerns and that adults will listen to them. Adults deal with any incidents swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through their awareness of personal and internet safety. Pupils who spoke to inspectors showed a good understanding of bullying.
- Pupils attending the breakfast club enjoy eating breakfast together and partaking in a variety of activities. This gives them a good start to the day.
- The school has a strong transition programme in place. This ensures an effective start to learning in September and alleviates concerns about starting a new school or class during the summer break. In July, most Year 6 pupils spend two weeks at the trust's secondary school, which enables all pupils in each year group within school to work with their next teacher. During this time, the early years teacher focuses on the school's new arrivals and completes visits to homes and pre-school settings.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is now good.
- Leaders have ensured a strong cultural change and built up relationships with parents and pupils. They have strengthened the behaviour policy and procedures, ensuring that staff follow these consistently. Consequently, behaviour has improved significantly. Fixed-period exclusions have declined from 176 days in 2016/17 to only five days this school year. This improvement in pupils' behaviour has supported their good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils behave well around school and in lessons. They listen to adults carefully, concentrate well and work hard. This results in a calm, purposeful learning environment. Pupils are polite and proud of their school. They are pleased to talk about their learning.
- Evidence in school logs show that there are few behavioural and racist incidents. In identified cases, staff have taken effective action and recorded information appropriately. Adults support pupils who require additional assistance with behaviour

choices well.

- Playtime systems are orderly and calm. Pupils play well together, making effective use of the outside equipment. Staff are well deployed to provide a good level of supervision at breaktimes.
- The school's attendance has risen to above the national figure. Very few pupils are persistent non-attenders.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' standards are improving across the school. At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who reach the expected standards combined in reading, writing and mathematics has risen continuously for the past three years ever closer to the national average.
- Over time, the Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standards has been broadly in line with the national averages. The school's assessment system, work in pupils' books and the recent external moderation by the local authority indicate that initial results of pupils' attainment in 2019 are similar at the expected standard but with more pupils attaining greater depth. This is a notable improvement on attainment in previous years.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check varies over time depending on each cohort. It was below the national figure in 2018; however, initial outcomes confirm improvement this year as a result of strong teaching of phonics.
- The progress pupils make from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 has remained similar over time in reading but declined in writing and mathematics. This is due to a legacy of weak teaching. The school's records for English and mathematics, and pupils' work in books and on displays, indicate that effective teaching has ensured that current pupils are making good progress from their September starting points across the school, especially in Year 6.
- School leaders have taken rapid action to ensure that targeted teacher and additional adults' support is improving the progress that disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language make. Leaders ensure that those pupils who have specific barriers to learning are cared for well so that they are ready to learn.
- Some pupils with SEND do not make strong progress from their various starting points because learning is not consistently adapted well enough to meet their needs.
- In the past, the most able pupils have not always been sufficiently challenged. However, this is no longer the case in English and mathematics where they are doing well. Even so, enough challenge and stretch for the most able pupils are not replicated consistently in some foundation subjects.
- Current Year 6 pupils are confident learners who can explain their learning competently. They are being prepared well for secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- There have been substantial improvements in the early years since the previous inspection. New leadership arrangements, involving a leader who works across two trust schools, are working well. Leaders and staff have an accurate view of teaching and learning, which are now good. They can explain the impact of their work this year and can demonstrate their plans for the coming year.
- Many children enter the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are below those that are typical for their age. Every child's needs are carefully considered, so that they make good progress throughout the year. This is closing any gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others. Children who speak English as an additional language settle into school quickly and also make good progress from their various starting points.
- Initial standard assessments indicate a rise in the proportion of children attaining a good level of development this year due to strong teaching. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Leaders have worked extensively with staff to train them and provide support. As a result, the expertise of adults in the early years is growing. Adults challenge themselves and show a highly reflective attitude. They have a good understanding of what constitutes good and effective teaching and learning for children in the early years.
- Adults know the children well and have established clear routines with high expectations. Children settle into their activities and show sustained concentration. They share and play well together, while respecting the needs of others. Children's behaviour is good. There are strong, caring relationships between the adults and the children.
- Phonics is taught well. Children use their understanding of phonics to read and spell unfamiliar words. Children enjoy reading and looking at books.
- The learning environment, both inside and out has improved since the previous inspection. A number of appealing learning activities are on offer, which children embrace with enthusiasm, such as growing plants and measuring growth.
- Currently, the theme of minibeasts threads effectively through the children's learning. The children enthusiastically discussed and wrote about the butterfly that had hatched from its chrysalis that very morning. For some children, this involved writing one sentence, while others chose to write a booklet about a variety of minibeasts. Other children showed high-quality creative skills, making caterpillars and butterflies from playdough. They paid attention to detail from their previous learning, adding small sticks as 'hairs' to protect the caterpillar from being eaten.
- Outside learning builds on children's previous learning. For example, children carefully used colourful pincers to pick a lily pad out of the water tray. They then used small plastic frogs to calculate an addition sum on the lily pad. Children develop their accuracy in measurement through effective questioning from adults, when measuring buildings in the outdoor area using retractable tape measures 'just like builders'.
- Children show appropriate physical development skills when throwing and catching a ball. Adults support development by encouraging the children to take a step backwards to widen the gap between them when they are successful. When children made an

obstacle course out of crates, hoops and cones, they were delighted when they threw a hoop over a cone.

- There has been a deliberate effort to engage parents more effectively in their children's learning. Termly workshops have included a focus on the development of early phonics and mathematics.
- Leaders have clear assessments of children's starting points and check progress across the year. This supports children's learning and ensures that they get off to a good start in their school life. However, leaders know they have not yet completed all they want to accomplish. Assessment is not yet fully formalised in all areas of learning.
- Leaders and staff in early years provide children with a safe, secure environment in which to learn and play. Safeguarding is effective and welfare requirements are well met.

School details

Unique reference number	139802
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10088678

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	249
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Chris Kirk
Headteacher	Emma Bloomfield
Telephone number	01279 866 504
Website	www.potterstreetacademy.com
Email address	office@potterstreetacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	20–21 April 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Passmores Co-operative Learning Community Trust. This comprises of Passmores Academy and three primary schools.
- The school receives support and challenge from the trust's chief executive officer and its local governing body. Responsibility for the school's performance lies with the board of trustees.
- There have been a number of new appointments to the leadership team since the previous inspection.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all of the classes. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the inclusion/special educational needs leader.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and senior and middle leaders. A joint meeting with governors and representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer, was also held.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including: the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; information on pupils' attainment and progress; records of behaviour and safety; minutes of governing body meetings; and safeguarding documents.
- A discussion was held with a group of pupils, and informal conversations with pupils took place during lessons and at breaktimes. The inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised work in pupils' books.
- The inspectors considered 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 16 free-text comments. Views of parents were informally sought at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspectors also took account of 39 staff responses to their online survey.

Inspection team

Julie Harrison, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Sumner	Ofsted Inspector
David Turner	Ofsted Inspector

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