

Inspection of a good school: Victoria Park Infant School

Henshaw Street, Stretford, Manchester M32 8BU

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2021

Outcome

Victoria Park Infant School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They behave well and enjoy their learning. Pupils develop strong relationships with adults who support them well. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils learn about what being a good friend means. Staff act quickly to protect pupils from bullying.

Parents and carers said that Victoria Park is a caring school 'nestled in the heart of the community'. They are very positive about the school and hold the staff in high regard. They appreciate the way that staff always have time for them and their children.

Before the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, pupils had access to a wide range of trips and clubs, like street dance and visits to stately homes, to broaden their experiences. Despite the pandemic, leaders and staff have continued to provide such activities and events. For example, events like 'carols in the cold' helped to maintain the school's Christmas celebrations and brought the community together.

Most pupils live up to the high expectations that staff have of them. Even so, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should, especially in reading. This is because leaders have not thought carefully enough about the early reading curriculum.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have made sure that pupils experience a broad and ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, curriculum plans clearly outline the knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn and the order in which it should be taught. The curriculum is planned so that pupils can make purposeful links in their learning. This is especially the case in mathematics and science. In these subjects, pupils' knowledge deepens over time, and pupils achieve well. Furthermore, in most subjects, leaders make sure that pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Staff ensure that these pupils participate in all aspects of school life.

Leaders have successfully promoted a love of reading. Pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories read by their teachers. Phonics is taught every day, which helps some pupils to develop their reading skills. However, there is an inconsistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. Not all staff have accessed up-to-date training in the teaching of phonics. Consequently, they lack confidence and competence in supporting and developing younger pupils' reading skills. In addition, books that pupils read are not well matched to the sounds that they know, and the support given to some weaker readers is also not effective and targeted to meet their needs. As a result, some pupils, especially those with SEND, do not achieve well in reading.

Pupils, including children in the early years, behave well in class and around the school. Consequently, there is little disruption to pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy playtimes. They speak with enthusiasm about the games that they play with their friends, and the play equipment that is available for them to use.

Leaders provide opportunities to develop pupils' character and resilience. Pupils enjoy having responsibilities within the school, such as being mentors to younger children when they start in the early years. Pupils are keen to help others in their community. For example, they enjoy visits to a local care home so that they can sing to the residents. Staff also provide extra sessions to support pupils with their mental well-being.

Governors work closely with leaders, and have supported them well throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They fulfil their statutory duties diligently. Nevertheless, governors have not maintained oversight of leaders' actions to improve the curriculum. Consequently, the level of challenge that they offer to leaders is not as rigorous as it could be. Staff appreciate the consideration that governors and leaders have given to their workload and well-being, particularly in recent times. Staff are proud to work at the school and morale is high.

In discussion with the headteacher and governors, we agreed that the teaching of reading may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders have developed processes and strong systems that support pupils' safety well. Staff receive up-to-date training and understand their responsibilities. They know the signs of abuse and neglect, and use the school's systems effectively to protect pupils. Leaders follow up concerns quickly and work well with other agencies to make sure that children and families get the support that they need.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when they are online. They are confident about raising concerns with staff when they are worried about something.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approach to the teaching of early reading differs across classes and year groups. Not all adults who teach phonics have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach phonics well. Pupils also read books that are not matched to their phonics knowledge. This results in some pupils, especially those who need additional help to catch up, not making the progress that they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff who teach phonics are well trained and understand the phonics programme. They should also ensure that pupils' books are well matched to the sounds that they are learning. These actions will help to ensure that pupils who find reading difficult receive the support that they need to become confident and competent readers.
- Governors have a limited understanding of the school's curriculum in most subjects. They have not checked to make sure that pupils, especially pupils with SEND, achieve as well as they should. Consequently, governors are not able to challenge leaders' actions effectively. Governors should ensure that they maintain closer oversight of the curriculum. This will help them to understand what pupils know and remember in all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 2 February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

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.

School details

Unique reference number	106328
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10194013
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Shelly Quintin-Hulme
Headteacher	Deborah Vrlec
Website	www.victoriaparkinfant.org
Date of previous inspection	2 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the time of the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents relating to safeguarding, including: the school central record of staff and visitors; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and science. They talked with leaders of these subject areas. They also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.

- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the 73 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 72 free-text responses from parents, to find out parents' views of the school. They also considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lenford White

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