

Inspection of a good school: Parkwood Academy

Melbourne Avenue, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2DX

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone looks after each other in this friendly school. Pupils are kind. For instance, pupils will check that their friend is OK when they fall over in the playground. The youngest children also play well together, inviting friends to play hopscotch and taking it in turns to share equipment. Pupils are safe and say they feel safe at school. They trust adults to deal with any concerns they have, including bullying.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations that staff have of them. They enjoy their lessons and are of the view that they are 'fun'. They like learning and are proud to show off what they know, such as their times tables. Older pupils read often. Pupils who are learning to read sometimes find this difficult to do as the delivery of the phonics programme has some weaknesses.

Pupils have access to a wide range of activities that broaden their horizons. They benefit from joining in with local projects, such as the light parade with the local museum. Parents are supportive of the school. However, they would like clubs to run continuously rather than on a rota. Leaders are seeking the funding to enable this to happen.

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

Leaders are strengthening the curriculum. They have thought carefully about the order in which pupils should learn key knowledge, step by step, so they build understanding. In most subjects, teachers and pupils follow these plans. However, implementation of the new mathematics curriculum is incomplete. While pupils regularly practise arithmetic, this is not the case with their solving of problems. This aspect of mathematical learning is infrequent.

Several new leaders are in post. Checks on how well the curriculum is being implemented are in the early stages. Some leaders have not been trained to identify where more support is needed for teachers and pupils. In a few curriculum areas, pupils are not able to recall the key knowledge that leaders want them to remember. Leaders have not determined why this is. For example, they have not considered how pupils record key scientific information in their books and therefore have not checked their levels of understanding.

The school's chosen phonics programme is not delivered consistently. On occasion, staff teach sounds inaccurately or do not pick up on pupils' errors. When staff listen to pupils read, too often pictures are used for clues or guessing words. This does not help pupils to practise their decoding strategies. Consequently, younger pupils are having mixed success with learning to read. Older pupils who can read enjoy doing so. They appreciate the many rewards for their efforts as well as the variety of authors on offer in the school's reading programme. They talk knowledgeably about the books they have read.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have the same curriculum experience as their peers. Nevertheless, across the curriculum, teachers adapt their teaching in line with pupils' individual support plans and their education, health and care plans. This means that pupils who need more guided support, such as sensory breaks, can re-engage in lessons. Staff manage pupils' complex needs well. A close focus on communication, speech and language means that staff readily identify support for children in early years.

Across the school, pastoral care is strong and pupils behave well. Pupils speak highly of staff. Positive, warm relationships start in early years. Staff introduce Nursery children into a family-type setting, where they learn the routines of conversation and social manners. Children delight in the observations they make, such as seeing a scale become heavier with a greater number of objects. They like to show their friends what they discover during outdoor play. This continues through the school, where older pupils will happily support those who are younger at playtimes.

Pupils enjoy a variety of experiences beyond the classroom. These include playing in a school band and singing in the local church. They undertake trips, such as to the Science Museum in London. Pupils understand the importance of respecting people from different faiths and cultures. They learn about the school's values and fundamental British values through the curriculum. Pupils strive to be elected as school councillors and are proud of their roles in school life.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the efforts leaders make to ease staff's workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of risks, including when online. Young children learn quickly how to safely use play equipment.

Staff know pupils well. They are well trained in their safeguarding role. They spot when a pupil is 'out of sorts' or when there are changes in their behaviour. They readily report concerns when they arise. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies and families to get pupils the support they need. Leaders complete appropriate checks on adults working or volunteering in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is not an agreed, consistent approach for the effective delivery of the phonics programme. This includes when adults listen to pupils read. This hinders some pupils in becoming confident readers as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that they are clear in their expectations, and that staff receive the training and support they need to deliver the phonics curriculum well so that pupils become fluent readers.
- While the mathematics curriculum develops pupils' skills in problem-solving, these aspects are not taught as often as they ought. This means that some pupils are ill-prepared to undertake this aspect of mathematics when they go to secondary school. Leaders should review the frequency with which problem-solving skills are taught. This is so that pupils have regular opportunities to practise this important element of the mathematics curriculum.
- Some subject leaders have not had sufficient training to enable them to check how well the curriculum is delivered. This means that they have failed to identify where aspects of their subject are not taught successfully, or if they are taught at all. Subject leaders should receive the training and support they need so that they can fulfil their roles effectively, ensuring that the curriculum is taught to a consistently high standard.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

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	141355
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255223
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julie Mulcahy
Headteacher	Lisa Cracknell
Website	www.parkwood-academy.org
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- The multi-academy trust recently introduced an academy committee. This will undertake some delegated responsibilities, such as monitoring provision for safeguarding.
- The school has nursery provision for three-year-olds.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the chair of South Essex Academy Trust, several representatives from the board of trustees and the new academy committee.
- The inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.

- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. The inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, considered pupils' work and talked to pupils and teachers. The inspector also listened to pupils from different age groups read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. She considered pupils' views about behaviour in school. She also spoke with staff about pupils' behaviour, and about staff's workload and well-being.
- The inspector looked at safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. She talked to staff about the training they have received and considered how effective leaders' responses were to concerns raised about pupils' welfare and safety.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. She considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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