

Inspection of Park Academy

200 Dorset Road, London SW19 3EF

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Rachael Atkinson. This school is part of STEP Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Glover, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ross Gardner. There is also an executive director of primary, John Halliwell, who is responsible for this school and others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Park Academy provides an exceptional education for its pupils. It is a happy and joyous school where pupils flourish. The school's 'key drivers' of mindfulness, challenge, creativity, communication and developing world citizens run through the curriculum. The school's work developing pupils' communication and language skills is exceptional.

Leaders and staff have the highest expectations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life and supported to achieve their very best.

Pupils really enjoy attending this school, where they are kept safe. They know they can speak to trusted adults if they are worried about anything. Pupils behave exceptionally well, both in class and around the school. They are kind to each other and polite and respectful to adults. Children in the early years learn to take turns, listen to their teacher and stay focused on what they are learning.

Leaders make sure that pupils develop a deep understanding of individual rights. The 'pupil parliament' recently led a project to reduce food waste across all trust schools. It is also organising a 'Human Rights Day' and leading on anti-racism initiatives.

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

Leaders have constructed an exceptional curriculum that is broad and ambitious. They have thought very carefully about the key knowledge and vocabulary that they want pupils to learn, how it should be learned and in what order. Staff, including support staff and teachers new to the profession, appreciate the high-quality training and the support for their workload and well-being. Trustees know the school well and support it effectively.

Leaders think carefully about how pupils can deepen their knowledge and skills. For example, in design and technology, pupils in Year 5 learned about the ethics of diamond mining. In history, pupils in Year 6 used their knowledge of World War II when discussing 'Zlata's Diary'. Staff in Reception encourage children to develop their early modern foreign language skills, for example answering the register in French.

All pupils learn very well. Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND quickly. They make sure that pupils receive excellent support to access the curriculum. Pupils develop an extensive vocabulary as they move through the school. The teaching of vocabulary is ambitious and systematic. Teachers introduce key words carefully and embed them in pupils' long-term memory. Pupils are given many opportunities to discuss their learning. For example, children in early years learned the word 'migrate' when learning about the natural world. In history, pupils in Year 3

examined social class aboard the Titanic ship using terms such as 'transatlantic' and 'opulence'.

Leaders prioritise reading as part of their wider focus on pupils' language development. Pupils develop their reading skills exceptionally well from the very start of Reception. Even those who struggle with reading develop strong phonics strategies that support them to improve over time. Assessment is systematic and regular to support pupils to keep up and catch up. All staff, including support staff, are experts in teaching early reading. Pupils clearly enjoy their phonics lessons and love reading.

The school has very clear and very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils talk passionately about the importance of learning. All pupils, including those with SEND, demonstrate persistence and resilience in their learning. Staff are kind and caring towards pupils. The school celebrates pupils' learning and behaviour regularly, such as through rewards in assembly.

Pupils' attendance was affected by the pandemic but is now improving rapidly. Leaders are very vigilant and tenacious in dealing with pupils' absence. They provide support to families and use effective strategies to limit absence. Leaders work closely with parents, who are very positive about the school's work with them.

The school develops pupils' character exceptionally well. Pupils can attend many clubs, such as cookery, computing and drama. Many pupils join the choir. They can also join the sports council or become class ambassadors. Trips are planned carefully to support pupils' wider interests and enrichment. Pupils regularly visit museums, galleries, theatres and places of worship. They can take part in a debating championship. In early years, staff support children to practise mindfulness.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 141027 |
| Local authority | Merton |
| Inspection number | 10290265 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 100 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Ross Gardner |
| CEO of the trust | Paul Glover |
| Executive headteacher | Rachael Atkinson |
| Website | park-academy.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 September 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for any of its pupils.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with trust leaders (including the chief executive officer), members of the school's senior leadership team, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, design and technology, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and through looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Christian Hicks, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Watford

Ofsted Inspector

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