

Inspection of an outstanding school: Parkgate Junior School

Southwold Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 7DN

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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 school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming and vibrant school. Pupils enjoy coming here. They are safe, cared for and valued. They benefit from senior leaders and staff who constantly work hard to improve the curriculum and pupils' wider experiences. Staff want pupils to succeed. Pupils appreciate that lessons are interesting and that support is there when needed. Their learning is aided by easy access to technology. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils like belonging to a diverse school and learning about each other's heritage and religion. Staff encourage pupils to debate and share their views. This helps foster mutual respect. As a result, pupils get on very well together. They make firm friendships. They are confident that adults will always help them with any worries. Pupils listen in lessons and behave very well, including at break times. They enjoy basketball, using the outdoor gym equipment and games with the sports coach.

Pupils regularly influence school decisions. Many have leadership roles, such as 'play leaders' and 'digital leaders'. Trips, swimming and a residential are popular. Pupils take part in international projects, enter for national eco-awards and work closely with local charities. This includes a joint art project with local senior citizens.

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

The school's main strength is that it is ambitious for every pupil, including for pupils with SEND. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure expectations remain high and that it meets the needs of current pupils, many for whom English is not their first language. There has been a recent re-evaluation, for example, of the mathematics curriculum. As a result, leaders have improved the way pupils learn how to use calculation methods.

The school ensures that, in all subjects, teachers are clear on what to teach and when. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils revisit prior learning before learning something new. Teachers frequently check that pupils have retained key knowledge. They then support pupils fill any gaps in knowledge. This is most effective in reading and mathematics. However, on some occasions, the feedback given to pupils in writing and in other subjects is less clear. This means pupils are not always provided the guidance they need to deepen their knowledge in these areas in the way leaders intend.

Pupils enjoy reading. Teachers ensure that pupils access a rich diet of high-quality texts in all subjects. This assists all pupils, including those for whom English is not their first language, gain a wider understanding of vocabulary and language structure. Pupils read, and are read to, often. They regularly access the well-resourced school library. They access non-fiction and poetry as well as fiction. Pupils who need extra help in reading quickly catch up.

The school has seen an increase in pupils with SEND since the previous inspection. Staff skilfully and quickly identify these pupils' needs. Suitable adaptations and adjustments are made so that these pupils can fully access the curriculum. All pupils with SEND have a bespoke learning plan that is regularly reviewed. However, for a few pupils, their targets are not sufficiently precise. This means their support is not as focused on their needs as it should be.

Pupils consistently follow school rules and routines. They show self-control. Adults aid pupils requiring additional emotional support to access their learning. The school works proactively with families so that pupils attend school regularly.

There is a well-considered personal development curriculum in place. Pupils know how to stay safe and be healthy. They enjoy learning languages, sharing international cuisine and learning about world religions. They are also aware of current affairs. This means they have an age-appropriate understanding of the world around them. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors know the school very well. Along with senior leaders, they show a high level of commitment to the school's drive to always be the best it can be. Governors hold leaders to account for how well standards are met. Staff's well-being is also prioritised and there is a manageable workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- For a few pupils with SEND, learning targets set are not sufficiently precise. This means that support for these pupils is not as effective as they require. The school must ensure that these pupils' targets are specifically aligned to address their exact learning needs.

Staff need to then identify the most appropriate actions needed to support pupils to quickly achieve these targets.

- The feedback given to pupils about how to deepen their knowledge in foundation subjects and in writing is not consistently precise enough. As a result, pupils are not securing knowledge in the level of depth and detail to meet the ambitious curriculum aims. The school needs to ensure that all staff consistently provide pupils with specific feedback on how to extend their knowledge in foundation subjects and in their writing. The school must check that this feedback is acted on so pupils gain that deeper understanding and achieve more highly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in June 2018.

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

Unique reference number	117162
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294964
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Co-chairs of governing body	Julie Rolls Harper/Ajit Bansal/Jo Pinchin
Headteacher	Sarah Pipe
Website	www.parkgatejm.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a two-form entry junior school.
- The school operates its own before- and after-school care.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator, subject leaders and teaching staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke to leaders, visited

lessons, spoke with pupils, look at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and support staff.

- The inspector also looked at a range of pupils' work from across the curriculum.
- The inspector spoke to all members of the governing body for the school, including the three co-chairs of the governing body.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's own self-evaluation, school improvement plan, governing body minutes and school improvement adviser visit notes.
- The inspector spoke with the school's improvement adviser from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, which included 89 free-text comments. The inspector also reviewed parent email correspondence addressed to the inspector. There were 13 responses to the staff survey. No pupils answered the pupil survey. However, the inspector spoke to several pupils from different year groups during the inspection, along with a range of staff.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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