

Inspection of Parkwood Academy

Melbourne Avenue, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2DX

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Cracknell. This school is part of South Essex Academy Trust (SEAT), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Catherine Stalham, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Julie Mulcahy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, confident and caring. They say that it is easy to make friends and that everyone is welcomed because 'everyone's opinion is valued'. Pupils report that 'adults are the best thing' in the school. They say that staff are kind and help them if they have any problems. They are confident that staff take care of them and will keep them safe.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and most play well together at breaks and lunchtimes. They take turns with the new equipment in the playground. Most pupils behave well. A small number of pupils who need extra help in managing their behaviour are very well supported.

Pupils benefit from the opportunities they receive through extra-curricular clubs, such as music-band, animals, dance, football and many more. They enjoy the increasing opportunities they are getting for roles and responsibilities, such as those of learning leaders, and for trips and visits.

Most pupils enjoy their lessons. In most subjects they work hard and enthusiastically. Consequently, they learn well. In a few subjects, and areas of learning in early years, they do not learn as well. Some pupils are not supported precisely to read and write as well as they could.

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

There has been significant staffing turbulence since the previous inspection. Several staff and leaders are new to their roles. The school, well supported by the new CEO and other school leaders within the trust, have brought in many well-considered changes. These are beginning to improve the quality of education. However, many changes are either new or not fully embedded. Consequently, they have not yet had the desired impact.

This year, the school has established its chosen phonics programme with rigour. Leaders have invested heavily in ensuring that pupils have access to appropriate books and resources. Adults are delivering the early reading programme far more effectively. However, pupils who have gaps in their knowledge and understanding, including those in older year groups, are not yet being identified swiftly enough. They do not always receive the support they need to catch up with their peers in both their reading and writing.

Pupils access a broad curriculum. In some areas of the curriculum, such as mathematics, curriculum planning is specific and detailed. Staff are well trained and know what, when and how to teach the curriculum. Pupils learn well. However, in a few subjects, staff do not have a secure understanding of the precise knowledge that pupils need. Therefore, teachers do not confidently teach or check how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. Leaders do not know enough about what pupils are learning in these subjects.

At the start of this year, the school identified concerns about the quality of provision for the youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has acted quickly to improve provision. For example, staff are better trained in supporting children's language and communication during planned and play activities. Children are generally very settled. However, the school does not yet identify children who need extra help quickly enough to ensure that they are ready for Year 1.

The school, this year, has worked diligently to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have worked closely and sought external professional specialist expertise, where needed. Pupils' needs are being increasingly identified and strategies are being implemented. However, they experience the same weaknesses in their learning as their classmates.

The school's approach to behaviour and attendance is thoughtful and well considered. The school works closely with vulnerable pupils and their families to support them as individuals. As a result, these pupils' attendance, and behaviour, this year have improved markedly.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about important values like democracy, and equality. They value the extra help they get through the school's WIN ('what I need') and nurture programmes. They value the kindness and care that staff and their classmates show them.

Most staff are very positive about the work of the school and the management of their well-being. A few raised some concerns about the rate of change this year and the quality of communication with them.

Over time, trustees and the academy committee have not been quick enough to address the decline in standards. There has been a strong focus on financial management but less so on holding leaders to account for the quality of education. There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for checking the effectiveness of some aspects of the school's work. However, new leaders are starting to address this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few pupils, including some in key stage 2, have gaps in their reading and writing knowledge. The school does not know enough about how well its work is helping pupils to catch up with their peers. The school needs to ensure that

provision is precisely implemented and closely monitored, so that all pupils learn to read and write as well as they should.

- In a few subjects, staff do not have a secure understanding of the precise knowledge that pupils need. Therefore, teachers do not confidently teach or check how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. Leaders do not know enough about what pupils are learning in these subjects. The school needs to ensure that planning, staff training and leaders' monitoring ensure that the curriculum is being delivered as leaders intend.
- Some children who need extra help in the Nursery and Reception classes are not identified quickly and supported well enough to catch up with their peers. These children are not always ready for Year 1. The school needs to ensure that the staff are adept at using their training and adapting their curriculum planning to identify and support these children across all areas of their learning so they are better prepared for the next steps in their education.
- There is sometimes a lack of clarity between trustees and the academy committee about what they do and when. Other aspects have been prioritised over the quality of education. They rely too much on the information provided by leaders and the CEO, and therefore do not hold leaders to account. Trustees should clarify the roles and responsibilities within arrangements for governance. They should ensure that all layers of governance have precise systems for monitoring, reviewing, challenging and supporting the effectiveness of leaders' work so that they are held appropriately to account.

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	141355
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10295072
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	224
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julie Mulcahy
Headteacher	Lisa Cracknell
Website	www.parkwood-academy.org
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers nursery provision for three-year-olds.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The CEO for South Essex Academy Trust began the role in September 2024.

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 conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the subject with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults teaching and/or supporting pupils, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. Inspectors

also heard a selection of pupils read with an adult. They also visited lessons and discussed the curriculum in other subjects.

- Inspectors held discussions with leaders, including the headteacher, CEO, and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met with several members of the trust, via an online meeting. The lead inspector also met with members of the academy committee, including the chair.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. To gather further evidence about pupils' experiences, inspectors observed them at different times during the school day, spoke to them during free times, and met with groups of pupils.
- The inspector also took account of 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including comments in the free-text facility.
- To gather the views of staff, the inspector took account of 22 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and spoke with staff during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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