

Parkgate Junior School

Southwold Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 7DN

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She motivates staff and pupils to excel in all that they do.
- Leaders at all levels promote high expectations and this ensures that all staff take every opportunity to raise pupils' achievement.
- The school has a vision for a 'happy dynamic community where every child meets their full potential'. This is evident throughout all aspects of school life. Governors, leaders, staff and pupils all work exceptionally hard to create a culture which reflects this vision.
- Pupils' achievement is improving rapidly in all core subjects. Evidence in books demonstrates that most pupils are making exceptional progress this academic year.
- Teaching and learning are of a consistently high quality across the school. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly to challenge and meet the learning needs of all their pupils.
- Pupils understand how to improve their work because of the considerable and effective advice, guidance and support they receive from their teachers.
- Support staff are very well deployed and are involved in all aspects of planning. They help to monitor the progress of pupils and ensure that they understand the learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are outstanding. They try hard, persevere and enjoy their learning. Pupils work very well together and help each other to improve.
- The school is inclusive. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are nurtured, valued and supported.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's curriculum provides rich and vibrant experiences that develop pupils' scientific and modern foreign language skills in particular.
- The school engages well with parents and the local community. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and the care and support that their children receive.
- The governors are experienced and knowledgeable and have an excellent understanding of the school's performance. They are frequent visitors to the school and, consequently, are able to support and challenge school leaders effectively.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not as impressive as it is in other subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the relentless drive to improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that more pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points in writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspirational, high-quality leadership. She is ambitious for her school, and wholeheartedly champions the school vision. She does not tolerate complacency. All staff are continually focused on all aspects of school improvement.
- Senior and middle leaders are equally talented and dedicated. They are enabled, by the headteacher, to lead their different areas of responsibility. This has led to a culture where staff take collective responsibility for improving the school. They are not afraid to trial new ways of working but continually evaluate the results of their actions. Consequently, the school focuses on the right areas for improvement.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous. Plans are based on continuous reflection and are updated regularly throughout the year. They are designed to meet the needs of the pupils and to maintain high standards.
- Senior leaders carefully monitor teachers' performance within the context of the school improvement priorities and this links to the programme of staff training. For example, staff have received considerable training to improve pupils' writing and to enhance their understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs and problems.
- Staff support each other well, work as a team and are keen to share effective teaching and learning strategies. Responses to the staff questionnaire show that morale is very high and staff are proud to work in the school.
- Pupils' achievement is regularly tracked and monitored by school leaders and teaching staff. They check the curriculum standards and the learning activities to ensure that pupils make rapid progress across all subjects.
- The school works closely with the local authority and other local schools to check the accuracy of its judgements about pupils' learning and to share best practice.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used very effectively, for example to fund a learning and behaviour mentor and 'booster classes'. The school is inclusive. All staff have very high aspirations for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The school is making excellent use of the sports funding to pay for specialist coaches, training and additional resources. Pupils are developing very effective physical and sporting skills.
- The curriculum provision is broad, rich and stimulating. Pupils and parents are involved in curriculum planning. Learning activities are often inspiring in subjects such as Spanish and art. They are also well planned, particularly in science, where pupils develop highly effective investigative and analytical skills. Learning is deepened through a variety of visits, for example to farms and woodland areas. There are substantial links with other countries such as Spain.
- Pupils are prepared very well for life in modern Britain. British values are celebrated by studying themes such as election and the importance of democracy.

- Without prompting, one pupil defined democracy as a system where 'people decide what happens in a vote instead of one specific person who has rule over everyone else'. The local Member of Parliament has visited the school on a number of occasions and pupils have visited the Houses of Parliament.
- Pupils are also taught to appreciate a breadth of religious beliefs and cultures. A pupil emphasised the importance of 'learning what others go through so you don't disrespect others' faiths'. Food festivals are organised so that pupils can experience the national dishes of different countries. The school has received an award from the British Council for e-twinning projects with Spain. Pupils visit different places of worship locally and participate in musical events in London in the Albert Hall and the O2 Arena. Pupils regularly organise events to collect for local charitable and national organisations.
- The school engages well with parents, carers and the local community. One parent commented in the online questionnaire that: 'The school has a nurturing and inclusive environment which is endorsed by staff. It is well run and provides a safe and happy environment.' Parents are welcomed to participate in the life of the school, for example through the picnic on sports day.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is highly effective and experienced. Two governors have educational experience which enables them to provide a high level of challenge and support. Other governors have a wide range of expertise; they are well informed about all aspects of the school and carry out their statutory duties exceptionally well.
- Governors and leaders organise a joint annual 'visioning day' which helps to develop their strategic thinking and collective planning within the context of the school.
- Governors work alongside the leadership in the school and make regular visits to monitor achievement and safeguarding and observe progress in learning. They rigorously hold leaders to account and have very high aspirations for the school.
- Governors have a clear and informed strategy for the effective use of pupil premium and any other additional funding to meet the needs of the pupils.
- Governors are very well trained and informed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors are well trained. This includes training on the government's 'Prevent' duty to support pupils who are vulnerable to extremism or radicalisation. Staff and governors receive regular updates on safeguarding from senior leaders.
- Designated staff identify concerns promptly and work well with external organisations. Their safeguarding records are kept meticulously and timely action is taken when concerns arise. School leaders undertake risk assessments for

behavioural issues, when necessary, and these are personalised to the needs of individual pupils.

- Almost all pupils say that they feel very safe at the school. They receive regular and useful information about how to keep themselves safe from 'stranger danger' when using the internet and other social media.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The consistently high quality of teaching is evident from the recent improvements in achievement the outstanding progress observed in pupils' books. Teachers are particularly focused on improving the quality of pupils' writing because outstanding progress is not as consistent in this area.
- Teachers have high expectations and insist that pupils always do their best. They have a thorough understanding of the needs and abilities of their pupils and use this to plan vibrant learning activities that are creative, interesting and varied.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They understand how to engage each pupil in their learning. Teachers use questioning exceptionally well to motivate, determine pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. Same-day interventions are arranged for pupils who do not understand the learning or fail to complete their learning targets. This has been very effective as a strategy to prevent pupils from falling behind.
- All teachers use information on pupils' attainment and progress very effectively in their lesson planning. Pupils are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through self-assessment and opportunities for self-reflection.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very warm and supportive. Teachers frequently use humour to engage their pupils and give them confidence.
- The teaching of English is very effective. Writing skills are taught across the curriculum and pupils are encouraged to share ideas and work cooperatively. The use of accurate spelling and grammar is emphasised. Teachers provide effective resources to stimulate pupils' imagination and encourage them to write more complex and interesting sentences. Pupils are encouraged in a variety of ways to develop a love of reading.
- Mathematics is taught very effectively. Teachers plan activities that enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills to real-life situations. They are regularly encouraged to solve 'word problems' which require considerable reflection and deepen their mathematical understanding.
- Teachers cater well for the needs of vulnerable pupils. Teaching assistants also play a vital role. They work in partnership with teachers to plan appropriate learning activities for this group and they make an essential contribution to pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers use new technologies effectively in their planning and delivery. Resources are stimulating and the display of pupils' work in every classroom is high quality and adds to the richness of the learning environment.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident and display very positive attitudes to learning. This is because they are encouraged to take risks and are not afraid to get things wrong. They understand and appreciate that hard work is required to bring about success.
- Pupils show respect for each other. They collaborate well and help each other to improve. For example, in a mathematics lesson, learning was particularly effective as pupils discussed their work together and challenged each other over the word problems.
- Pupils are provided with a number of opportunities to take responsibility. Older pupils can become 'reading buddies' to support younger pupils. They can join the school council to champion pupils' rights and discuss issues raised through class discussion. The school council attends a governing body meeting each year to brief governors and provide feedback on their work.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of their education. They attend a 'world of work' day when they accompany parents to their workplaces. Parents are invited to the school to talk about career options, for example in advertising, engineering and medicine.
- The school provides a wealth of opportunities for promoting pupils' physical health. After-school clubs are run for pupils to take part in football, basketball, netball and cricket and the school has introduced the 'daily mile' scheme and weekly swimming lessons. The school has achieved the 'Healthy School Enhanced Award'.
- Almost all pupils feel safe at school. They understand the many forms of bullying and know who to go to if there is an issue. The school runs an annual 'anti-bullying week' and keeps detailed records of bullying incidents. Pupils say that there are adults who will provide immediate and effective support if there is a bullying incident.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils usually conduct themselves in an exemplary manner both inside and outside the classroom. The school has clear codes of conduct to ensure that behaviour is exemplary and teachers meticulously record incidents of poor behaviour. A pupil said that 'behaviour is brilliant here because teachers always sort things out'.
- Incidents of disruption are rare and the school has an excellent track record of supporting pupils who have social and emotional difficulties.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well during play and lunchtimes. The smaller-than-average outdoor space is used very well.
- Attendance is usually well above the national average. School leaders work swiftly to resolve any attendance issues by working closely with parents. They work hard to

ensure that parents understand the need for their children to attend school. This is emphasised in school newsletters and pupils are rewarded for good attendance.

- The number of fixed-period exclusions has dropped significantly this year. There have been no permanent exclusions this year.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 rose significantly in 2017. Pupils' progress in mathematics, and particularly in reading and writing, was well above average. This was a noteworthy achievement, as over a third of these pupils spoke English as an additional language and a number started at the school with very low levels of English language development.
- The percentage of pupils achieving higher standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, also improved significantly in reading and mathematics, and was also above national averages.
- Standards evident in pupils' books show that current pupils, in all year groups, are making outstanding progress in English. The school has worked very hard to raise the number of pupils who make exceptional progress in writing. Consequently, the quality of pupils' writing has improved significantly this year because they are encouraged to write extensively in all areas of the curriculum. However, not as many pupils are making outstanding progress in writing as in reading and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, most students write in complex sentences using accurate punctuation and spelling and using a range of styles.
- Pupils have a deep love of reading; they read confidently and enjoy talking about books. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also read well and make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Outstanding progress is also evident in mathematics. Pupils respond well to a range of mathematical challenges. They are encouraged to solve mathematical problems, particularly word problems, and justify their approaches to calculation. They also enjoy applying their reasoning skills to real life situations.
- Pupils' exceptional achievement is evident in all other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils are regularly encouraged to explore, analyse, experiment and draw conclusions. Pupils learn Spanish, and by the end of Year 6 they are able to write complex sentences and make short presentations in this language.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are identified quickly and their needs are well met. The support that they receive is substantial and rigorous. This ensures that these pupils make good progress from their starting points in literacy and numeracy and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has also improved steadily. They are provided with timely and extra support when necessary and this has a very positive impact. For example, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and 5 in reading and writing is currently above that of their peers.
- Most-able pupils make outstanding progress. They are provided with a high level of challenge such as extra, or more complex, learning activities to develop their abilities.

These pupils are frequently encouraged to present their ideas or methods of calculation to the rest of the class.

- The school works very hard to instil a strong work ethic among all pupils. Pupils take pride in their work and, consequently, the quality of the work in their books consistently reflects their very best efforts.

School details

Unique reference number	117162
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10052628

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Griffiths
Headteacher	Sarah Pipe
Telephone number	01923 243905
Website	www.parkgatejm.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@parkgatejm.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018

Information about this school

- Parkgate Junior School is average in size.
- The majority of pupils are from ethnic minority families and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classes in each year group at least once, observing teaching and learning, talking to pupils and assessing the quality of the work in their books. The headteacher and deputy headteacher accompanied the inspectors on some of these classroom visits.
- Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons to observe the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' written work was examined across a wide range of subjects, particularly English and mathematics. Inspectors also looked at examples of work on display.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, support staff, pupils and governors. The lead inspector also met with the school's local authority improvement partner.
- Inspectors looked at documentation, including the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, information on pupils' achievement, records of behaviour and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour and life within the Parkgate Junior School community. They listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with parents who attended the activities during sports day. The 55 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, were scrutinised. Inspectors also considered the responses in the questionnaires completed by nine members of staff and 29 pupils.

Inspection team

Jane Ladner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stewart Caplen

Ofsted Inspector

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