

Inspection of a good school: Parkgate Primary School

Brooklands Road, Parkgate, Neston, Cheshire CH64 6SW

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 March 2024

Outcome

Parkgate Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are a credit to themselves, to their families and to the school. Their considerate behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and genuine regard for others make Parkgate a warm and welcoming place to be. Pupils talked about their school as a family, a caring community and a place where teachers love and respect everyone. While Year 6 pupils spoke excitedly about the upcoming move to secondary school, they shared their bittersweet feelings at leaving behind a school that they are proud to attend.

Children enter the early years ready to learn. The school capitalises on this strong start. It expects pupils to be ready for the next stage in their education. Teachers and pupils alike rise to this challenge. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

As well as enjoying academic success, pupils also develop into mature and empathetic individuals who understand the world beyond their school gates. Well-crafted subject curriculums and an array of educational visits ensure that pupils are more than ready to take their place in society.

Pupils make a positive contribution to their school community through acting in various leadership roles. For example, older pupils sit with children in the Reception class at lunchtime, modelling positive behaviour and showing a real, caring interest in the children's chatter. Such selfless behaviour typifies the trusting relationships that permeate the school.

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

Despite the interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Areas of relative weakness have been tackled successfully. The partnerships between staff and leaders at all levels are positive and productive. This means that change is managed effectively and does not add to staff's workload. Members of the governing body have a deep insight into the work of the

school. They offer appropriate support and challenge to help the school to develop even further.

The curriculum is effective. The school deliberately exploits all that is on offer in the local area and beyond to enhance pupils' learning across a wide range of subjects. Subject content is considered carefully to help pupils make links with what they already know. Pupils' knowledge deepens as a result. They achieve well. In 2023, almost all of the Year 6 cohort met the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Teachers know what they should teach. They follow the school's guidance closely so that pupils progress well through the curriculum. Teachers explain new learning clearly and make sure that pupils have access to suitable resources. Pupils' misconceptions are spotted quickly and dealt with effectively. However, in some subjects, it is unclear what knowledge is particularly important for teachers to emphasise, recap and check. This makes it difficult for the school to be certain that pupils have a secure grasp of the key concepts that underpin future learning.

Early reading and mathematics sit at the heart of the early years curriculum. Children are ready for Year 1. In turn, key stage 1 teachers understand the importance of securing pupils' basic skills in reading, spelling and number by the end of Year 2. This sets pupils up for success as they begin the key stage 2 curriculum. However, this is not replicated in terms of early writing. Some pupils fall into bad habits in relation to their pencil grip and letter formation. These weaknesses linger as they grow older. This hinders the quality of some pupils' written communication.

The school's approach to reading is carefully structured and successful. Staff are well trained to introduce sounds and letters in the Reception Year and to help pupils in key stage 1 to read fluently and accurately. Pupils at risk of not keeping up with the phonics programme are supported well. Older pupils enjoy reading a broad range of texts. They are able to discuss poetry just as well as they can discuss the plot of a fiction book.

Teachers know the needs of the pupils in their class very well. This helps teachers to adapt the design and delivery of lessons to help pupils succeed. Even so, the overarching systems for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) lack clarity. This means that the school is not as aware as it should be of the main barriers that hinder some pupils' learning. At times, this makes it difficult for the school to be sure that pupils receive the help, including external support, that they need.

Pupils behave very well. They show real consideration for others in their work and play. They have a zest for learning and a desire to do well. Lessons are unhindered by any type of disruption. The school's work to improve pupils' rates of attendance is very successful. Absence rates are below the national average and the proportion of pupils who miss more than one tenth of their time at school is reducing.

Pupils gain the confidence, skills and knowledge that they need to make informed choices about how to live their lives and how to treat others. They appreciate and respect the many differences between people in society. They have a deep understanding of fundamental British values and what it means to be a British citizen. A wide range of

extra-curricular clubs, music opportunities and a residential visit each year help pupils to discover and nurture their talents. Pupils flourish as reflective, measured and articulate youngsters.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's expectations for pupils' early writing are not high enough. This means that some pupils have not mastered legible and accurate letter formation by the time they leave Year 2. This hinders their writing fluency and communication as they move through the key stage 2 curriculum. The school should ensure that there is an increased emphasis on pupils' writing skills from the start of their time in the early years.
- The systems used to identify pupils with SEND lack clarity. This means that the school is not as aware as it should be of some pupils' learning needs. It also means that the school cannot be fully assured that these pupils are receiving the additional support that they need. The school should review its current approach to identifying pupils' needs so that there is a clearer understanding of which pupils require extra help, including from external agencies.
- In some subjects, the key concepts that pupils should know are not clear enough. This makes it difficult for teachers to know what to emphasise, recap and check to make sure that pupils have secure building blocks for the next stage of their learning. The school should review these subject curriculums to ensure that there is greater clarity about the essential knowledge that should be taught and assessed.

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 December 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	111126
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10313986
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Holly Clark
Headteacher	Andrew Hutchings
Website	www.parkgateprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There is before- and after-school provision at the school, which is run by a private provider.
- The school shares its site with a private pre-school.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and talked with some pupils

about their learning. The inspector also looked at samples of pupils' work and observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read with a familiar adult.

- The inspector considered some other curriculum areas by talking to leaders and reviewing pupils' work.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders, a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner. She also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke to pupils to gather their views of behaviour, safety and learning. She also visited the playground and dining hall to observe pupils' behaviour outside of the classroom. The inspector took account of the findings from Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also spoke to some parents and carers as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector considered the views of staff shared through discussions and Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspector considered a wide range of documentation, including the self-evaluation document, minutes from governing body meetings and the subject improvement plans.
- 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.

Inspection team

Jo Olsson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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