

# Heron Park Primary Academy

Dallington Road, Hampden Park, Eastbourne BN22 9EE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school.
- Too many pupils are working below the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not reliably consider what pupils can already do when planning activities. As a result, the work they set is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers do not reliably respond to pupils' misunderstandings or help them to correct mistakes they make in a timely way.
- Few pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave key stage 1 and key stage 2 because work is not challenging enough, especially for the most-able pupils in mathematics.
- Middle leaders are yet to impact fully on school improvement because many initiatives are too new to show that they are making a difference.

### The school has the following strengths

- School leaders know what needs to be done to improve the school. They have high expectations of teachers and pupils, and have brought about some improvements to teaching; consequently, pupils' progress is improving, particularly in reading and writing.
- Pupils behave well, are polite and have good attitudes towards learning. Older pupils are good role models.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values well.
- The curriculum is exciting and has been adapted well to meet the needs of pupils.
- Attendance has improved to be in line with national expectations.
- Safeguarding practice is strong. It is underpinned by strong relationships and an ethos of nurture and care.
- Children in the early years are provided with a good start to their education.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better, by:
  - ensuring that teachers make good use of information about pupils' performance to set work that builds on what pupils already know
  - making certain that teaching consistently challenges the most-able pupils so that a higher proportion can reach the highest levels of attainment
  - making sure that pupils' misunderstandings, particularly in mathematics, are quickly recognised and effectively addressed
  - providing middle leaders with continued opportunities to positively affect the quality of teaching and learning in the areas they are responsible for.
  
- Increase the proportion of pupils working at the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
  - increasing the numbers of pupils who make more than expected progress
  - systematically analysing pupils' performance information in order to precisely identify pupils who need to make the most progress to catch up with their peers nationally
  - carefully identifying interventions that have the greatest impact on securing strong progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- There is a shared vision across the school of high expectations, which are communicated and understood by all staff. A member of staff captured this by saying, 'There is no accepting second best and we are consistently challenged to provide the very best for our pupils.' Pupils also know that they are expected to work hard. Staff share a hunger to improve the school for the pupils in their care. They say that leaders welcome ideas from all staff, which makes them feel valued. There is a true sense of equality among staff, who have bonded as a united team behind further school improvement. This is having a positive impact on raising standards and improving teaching.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have been steadfast in their determination to engage effective staff to facilitate school improvement since the time of the last inspection. They have taken necessary action to strengthen the quality of teaching and have not tolerated underperformance. Consequently, until this academic year, the number of teachers who have left and joined the school has been high. Since September 2015, staffing has stabilised and improvements have been tangible as a result.
- Leaders have worked hard to create a holistic approach to pupils' development. One member of staff commented on this by saying, 'The atmosphere within the school is very positive, with staff all working together to educate the whole child, academically and socially.' Staff often go beyond what is expected to help pupils in their care, especially those who are most vulnerable. Some parents say that they too have been helped in times of difficulty. Due to the diligence of leaders and support from all staff, pupils are cloaked in care.
- Leaders are able to verbalise the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are clear about what needs to be done. School leaders have taken action to strengthen pupils' outcomes. For example, the Nursery provision has recently been incorporated into the school. This provides continuous early years provision which has raised the children's achievement on entry to the school. All children who transfer to the Reception class from the Nursery are school ready. This has had a positive impact on outcomes in early years.
- The academy trust provides effective training to leaders at all levels, including middle leaders who are responsible for phases and subjects and are beginning to help senior leaders improve the quality of teaching. Many middle leaders are new to the school and because of this have not fully begun to contribute to school improvement and the strategic direction of the school. Nonetheless, they are supported to comprehend quickly the school's priorities and encouraged to investigate new ways to support the school's aims. At the moment, there is insufficient evidence to measure the impact of the new initiatives they have introduced.
- Leaders use a wealth of information to evaluate the quality of teaching throughout the school. They have acted decisively to eradicate inadequate teaching. Staff value the feedback, training and support they receive from school leaders and use it to improve their own performance. All staff feel encouraged and motivated because leaders notice their achievements, which are celebrated and shared. The quality of teaching has improved but still requires improvement because some inconsistencies remain. This is because pupils' performance information is not used consistently well to make sure that learning is well matched to the needs of pupils across the school, and in particular the most-able pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are now clearly focused on raising the achievement of pupils in the school because expectations are communicated effectively.
- Leaders have introduced a new system to track and analyse the performance of pupils against the expectations of the new curriculum. Leaders and teachers use this information well to identify pupils at risk of falling behind and target support to help pupils improve. This analysis would be enhanced further by ensuring that individuals or groups of pupils are specifically targeted to make more than expected progress, in order to quickly eradicate gaps that have resulted from poor teaching in the past.
- The additional support funded by the pupil premium and received by disadvantaged pupils is making a difference. The school allocates additional government funds to support disadvantaged pupils appropriately. The needs of disadvantaged pupils are met more effectively than in the past and their progress has improved. Most interventions are highly effective in helping all pupils to make at least expected progress. All interventions enable pupils to make progress. Leaders track the impact of interventions closely but do not always make certain that the most effective interventions are given priority and therefore have a greater impact across the school.

- Effective use of the physical education (PE) and sport funding for primary schools has increased the range of sports available to pupils, enabled pupils to access sport after school and improved the ability of staff to deliver high-quality physical education lessons.
- The inclusion team support inclusive practice across the school. They provide valuable support and intervention for individuals and groups and work with parents and families. They engage with external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Most pupils make good progress as a result of effective interventions. However, not all interventions are as effective as others in facilitating good progress. Systematic and detailed analysis of the impact of interventions would help leaders to identify the most effective strategies and support programmes that the school provides to ensure that pupils' progress is maximised.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils extremely well. A large amount of the pupils' work on 'space' evidences the high quality of work generated from focus weeks that happen sporadically throughout the year. The school offers a range of interesting activities that help pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their lives. For example, Year 4 and Year 5 pupils undertake an enterprise project starting with £1 to raise money for charity. Not only does this help pupils to develop a social conscience, but also raises their own aspirations.
- Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is supported through the curriculum and is embedded within the ethos of the school. School leaders have been highly proactive in promoting British values and, as a result, these have a high profile throughout the school. A recent 'British values week' has helped pupils to develop a deep understanding of tolerance and the rule of law. Vivid displays of pupils' work evidence the strength of the school's work in this area.
- The vast majority of parents and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the impact that leaders have made on improving the school. One parent captured this by saying this is 'a school moving in the right direction with a positive approach to welcoming pupils, parents and visitors'. The parent added that the school was strongly led with supportive teaching staff with a very approachable headteacher.
- The academy trust has supported the school and held leaders to account. The group of schools within the trust have worked together to make certain that the school's judgement on how well pupils are doing is accurate. The school also works in partnership with a group of local schools, known as the Eastbourne Improvement Partnership, in which staff share good practice to strengthen school improvement.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance has been strengthened since the previous inspection. Governors are extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of the school and have gone out and sought training to help them improve their own skills. New members have added expertise and experience that has improved challenge and ensured that leaders are held to account for school improvement.
  - Governors are available and visible to staff, parents and pupils. They discharge their statutory duties well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective in ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff have received appropriate training to help them protect pupils from harm. The culture in the school is one of diligence and safeguarding is given a high priority among the whole school community. The school has effective arrangements for identifying, sharing and tracking concerns over time. These systems are monitored by leaders who are responsible for safeguarding. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and ensure that safeguarding is discussed at each meeting. The trust undertakes unannounced safeguarding checks to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff who work with other agencies record their work meticulously and are not afraid to pursue information from others if it does not come through in a timely manner. Pupils feel safe at school and nearly all parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## requires improvement

- Over time, the quality of teaching has not been good enough. As a result, pupils' core skills in reading, writing and mathematics have not been developed in a logical way. Consequently, too many pupils are working below the expected standards for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school, although there are pleasing signs of improvement. Until recently, improvements have been hampered by high staff turnover and difficulty in recruiting teachers. However, leaders are meticulous in their approach to improving the quality of teaching, and, importantly, teachers are thirsty to learn and improve their own practice.
- Teachers are now working together more effectively to share information about how well pupils are achieving, especially at key points of transition, such as when children move from early years to key stage

1. This is helping teachers to gain a greater understanding of pupils' starting points as a basis for planning for learning.

- Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils and are ambitious for the progress they make. Adults are instilling consistently good habits for learning, including effective listening. As a result, most pupils are committed and resilient. They are learning how to improve their work.
- This academic year, leaders have launched a suitable assessment system that tracks progress across all subjects in the new curriculum. Teachers assess pupils' progress and achievement conscientiously. They work in partnership with other schools to make sure that the judgements they make about how well pupils are doing are correct. However, teachers do not consistently use this information well enough to plan for pupils' next steps in learning and build upon what pupils already know. The more-able pupils are not constantly challenged to make sure that they make good progress and less-able pupils are sometimes confused because work is too difficult for them and they do not have the basic skills they need to draw upon.
- Aides-memoire and resources are available to pupils to help them work on their own. Occasionally, pupils become distracted or frustrated because the work they are set does not challenge them, or they are unable to start work on their own.
- There is evidence that the school's marking policy is closely followed by all staff and that pupils receive valuable information about how to improve their learning and make progress. Sometimes, verbal feedback in lessons is not as timely as it could be to have a high impact on all learners' progress within the lesson. Teachers do not systematically make certain that pupils' misunderstandings are quickly recognised and effectively addressed during lessons to help them consolidate their understanding and make the progress they could. Pupils' mistakes in their work are not consistently picked up on to make sure that mistakes are not repeated.
- Poor teaching in the past has resulted in gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding. Leaders have introduced an exciting new initiative, known as maths passports, which is quickly strengthening pupil's functional mathematical skills. Pupils are enthused by this innovative approach and there is clear evidence of pupils making good progress as a result. Although most teachers have a precise understanding of what skills they want pupils to learn in each lesson and use accurate mathematical vocabulary to help pupils learn, occasionally teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do to make sure that progress is swift enough. In addition, pupils do not consistently have opportunities to master mathematical skills, for example by applying them to solve mathematical problems.
- Where teaching is stronger, work is well matched to pupils' ability, including that of the most-able pupils. Teachers have high expectation of pupils' learning and behaviour. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and use of subject-specific language, and expect the same of pupils. Consequently, pupils make progress because they are encouraged to apply what they know and are equipped with the skills to do so.
- Teaching assistants support learning effectively in the classroom and say that teachers provide helpful and detailed guidance on how to support pupils. For example, in Reception, additional adults are given guidance about which children to support and what questions to ask to draw out what they know and understand. In this case, the guidance is very specific to different areas of learning. Teaching assistants engage in dialogue and ask questions that allow pupils to think and deepen their understanding.
- Pupils enjoy reading and most are listened to by an adult at home. Early reading skills are taught well and consequently pupils can break down words to help them read. Pupils in all years groups use phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to help them spell words accurately.
- Teachers provide pupils with writing frames that help them to capture their thoughts and to structure their writing. This is helping pupils to write for extended periods and ensure that they write for an audience. Pupils use increasingly diverse vocabulary and are beginning to extend the range of punctuation they use. Pupils' writing is developed across a range of subjects where they write persuasively or provide explanations. Good progress is particularly noticeable in Year 6, which is pleasing as pupils had the greatest amount of progress to make to catch up with their peers nationally.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to experience leadership roles and positions of responsibility, which they value. During this inspection, school council members spoke to inspectors about their experiences at

school. They communicated confidently with inspectors and expressed their opinions thoughtfully. Year 6 prefects undertake a rigorous process of selection before they are awarded the privilege of being a role model to others. As part of this process they organise a charitable fund-raising event, and then present what they have achieved to their peers. Only then do pupils decide on who they want to be their pupil leaders.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They know that adults will help them if they have any concerns. Parents say that their children are helped to settle quickly and rapidly gain confidence as a result of the positive atmosphere and level of care provided by the school. One parent reflected the views of many when they described how much their child's confidence has grown since they have been at this school, and that they now have a wonderful balance of academic and social skills. The parent puts this down to the school praising them for their work and instilling confidence.
- Overall, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. They listen attentively, answer questions and respect each other's views. Very occasionally, pupils become frustrated or lose interest in their work because it is too easy or too difficult for them to understand and adults are too slow to intervene.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During this inspection pupils' conduct and behaviour was very good. Routines and expectations are well established, focusing on the development of the whole child, and this results in a calm and safe environment. No incidents of disruptive behaviour were observed, either in lessons or during breaktime and lunch.
- The school has a system for managing behaviour with appropriate rewards and sanctions in place, which staff consistently implement. The behaviour nurture specialist carefully analyses information about behaviour patterns and trends to target where her skills are best placed to support vulnerable pupils. As a result, there has been a significant fall in incidents of inappropriate behaviour this year. In addition, there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions for more serious breaches of behaviour.
- The number of pupils who require support to manage their behaviour has fallen this year. Where there is support by school staff and other professionals, it has a positive impact on pupils' ability to focus on their learning and to make progress.
- Records indicate that incidents of bullying and use of derogatory language are extremely rare. Pupils understand what bullying is and are adamant that it does not happen in their school. They trust adults to deal effectively with any incidents of poor behaviour.
- Attendance has improved over time and is now in line with the national average. Leaders have reduced persistent absence, and the vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time and are ready to learn. Leaders have been highly proactive in tackling poor attendance and this has meant that attendance for all groups has improved.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **require improvement**

- In 2015, the school failed to meet the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Attainment overall is below the national average. However, there are consistent signs of improvement in standards throughout all key stages, including key stage 2, where external moderation has validated teachers' judgements about how well pupils are doing. During this inspection, inspectors examined pupils' work to make sure that standards are rising.
- A higher than average number of pupils start school at different times of the school year. As a result, class groups change constantly. Therefore published information about how well pupils achieve does not always give an accurate picture of the progress pupils make. Leaders analyse the progress of pupils who are new to the school. They too are making at least expected progress from various starting points.
- Leaders are working hard to recover the effects on standards that have resulted from poor teaching in the past. They have taken the action necessary to secure more effective teaching. Despite this action and improvements in pupils' progress, the proportion of pupils working below age-related expectations is higher than that seen nationally.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and are aiming higher. So far this year, pupils are making progress that is at least expected in reading, writing



and mathematics and many are doing better than this, particularly in Year 1 and Year 6. Nearly all pupils in Year 6 have made more than expected progress in all subjects. However, progress is not consistently high across all year groups and across all subjects, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching. Where teaching is weaker, fewer pupils make more than expected progress to make the rapid gains needed to reach the expected standards for their age. Therefore, outcomes require improvement because despite recent upturns in pupils' progress, not enough pupils are attaining high enough standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Pupils enter the school with abilities that are generally below those typical for their age. The acquisition of the on-site Nursery has recently improved the proportion of children who are ready for school. Some pupils make good progress during early years and key stage 1 to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils are working at the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 2. The number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of early years has more than doubled over the past three years and is likely to be in line with the national average this year.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics is improving. The school's assessment and performance information indicates that outcomes for current Year 1 pupils are likely to improve further, but will remain below national average. Children in the Reception class know that a digraph is the name for two letters that make one sound. Phonics skills are built upon in pupils' writing, which is demonstrable through their good spelling strategies throughout the school. Pupils are able to use their phonics to break down unfamiliar words by segmenting and blending sounds. Older pupils read fluently, making good use of punctuation to read expressively for an audience.
- The most-able pupils throughout the school are not achieving as well as they should because tasks are not consistently challenging enough. As a result, too few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability are making at least expected progress given their starting points. This is because pupils are supported well and leaders know the needs of pupils.
- Some interventions for pupils who need extra support are highly effective and all pupils make at least expected progress. However, because leaders do not systematically check the impact of interventions, other interventions continue that have less impact on the progress that pupils make.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is comparable to other pupils in the school in the vast majority of subjects and year groups. Evidence in pupils' books and the school's own performance information show that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is improving in line with others.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Early years is well led. Leaders are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and have a clear understanding of what works well and where things could be even better. For example, work is underway to improve the outdoor learning environment for Nursery children so that it is as rich and stimulating as the indoor environment. Nursery numbers are increasing and the Reception class is now full because the quality of provision has improved as a result of effective leadership.
- Experienced Nursery staff are accomplished in developing children's early language and communication skills through effective dialogue with children. Adults ably adapt learning and activities that capture even the youngest children's interests. As a result, children are motivated and absorbed in activities that help them to make good progress. During this inspection, two- and three-year-olds were observed investigating how cars and boats travelled down a piece of gutter piping. Staff were reinforcing children's basic understanding of relevant vocabulary, such as 'faster' and 'down', but were also challenging the older pupils to think more deeply with open-ended questions, such as 'I wonder what would happen if...?'
- Nursery children are prepared well for the next phase in their education because their progress and achievement is good. The transition arrangements are effective because children in the Nursery and Reception have opportunities to play and learn together throughout the year. Consequently, children settle quickly when they move to the next class.
- Leaders have created a 'Foundation Village' that enables the youngest children to learn important early skills from older children through communication, play and exploration. In addition, staff are also able to share expertise and mentor each other to improve their own practice.
- Children are inquisitive and communicative. They are eager to share their work and demonstrate their skills. During this inspection, children flew kites they had made, read simple stories, recited rhyming words and showed inspectors their early writing skills. Children are extremely well mannered and polite because adults reinforce these important social skills. They commonly say, 'please' and 'thank you' as well

as 'excuse me' and phrases such as 'would you mind?'

- Disadvantaged two-year-olds do well. The school works closely with other agencies, such as health visitors and speech and language therapists to make sure that those children who require additional support catch up quickly.
- Historically, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of early years has been lower than the national average. However, this is rapidly improving. Assessment is accurate and leaders have a clear understanding of where gaps are closing and where there is still more to do. As a result this upward path is likely to continue this year and outcomes are likely to be in line with the national average.
- Vulnerable children are supported well. Leaders have worked hard to make sure that all the systems and processes that are effective in the school are also used in the Nursery. Staff receive appropriate training and support from the trust's Director of Nurseries to ensure they meet and understand the early years welfare requirements. There is a culture of care which ensures that safeguarding practices are effective.
- Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the education and care that their children receive in early years. Parents come and read with their children once a week and the school is providing more opportunities to help parents learn even more about how to help their children learn at home. Leaders are committed to increasing parental engagement. For instance, the school provides additional drop-in sessions during the summer holidays to support children who are making the important transition to Reception.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138390
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012324

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	415 (including 46 Nursery-aged children)
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karen Rolfe
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Greenwood (executive headteacher) Raja Ali (head of school)
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 502 525
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.heronparkprimaryacademy.org">www.heronparkprimaryacademy.org</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8–9 May 2014

## Information about this school

- Heron Park Primary Academy is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Children can start at the Heron Park Nursery once they are two years of age. The nursery, which is on the same site, has been incorporated into the school since the last inspection.
- The academy opened in September 2012 and is sponsored by, and is part of, the Aurora Academies Trust. The trust operates four academies in East Sussex. The executive headteacher of the school has been responsible for three of the academies since April 2013. In addition, the head of school has been in post since February 2014, but held an interim position at the time of the last inspection.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for nearly half of all pupils, which is well above the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability supported by the school is well above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan is twice the national average.
- The school did not meet the government floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- A higher than average number of pupils start school at different times of the school year. As a result class groups change constantly.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes except Year 6 who were undertaking key stage 2 statutory assessment tests.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders as well as the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of the Aurora Academies Trust.
- Inspectors met with the school council, observed lunchtime and spoke to pupils during breaktime and lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to parents before and after the school day and took into account the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and an additional 28 comments that parents made, also online.
- Inspectors gathered the views of staff during a formal meeting and through the 16 responses to the online staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents were examined, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan, records pertaining to governance, leaders' analysis of pupils' progress, and records of leaders' checks on teaching.
- Checks were made of arrangements for keeping pupils safe, and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

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