

The Park School

Onslow Crescent, Woking, Surrey GU22 7AT

Inspection dates

5 and 7 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding arrangements are not effective. Leaders and governors responsible for safeguarding have not ensured that statutory requirements are met.
- The oversight of safeguarding procedures by senior leaders and designated safeguarding leads has been weak. There were six different issues identified during the inspection that could have put pupils at risk of harm.
- Governance is ineffective. Over time, governors have not challenged leaders. As a result, governors were not aware of the many safeguarding issues identified during the inspection.
- Governors have not ensured a coherent strategy for the use of pupil premium funding. They have not closely monitored the impact of this spending or of the use of other additional funding on pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders are complacent. Their attention has not been fully focused on leading the school well. They do not welcome challenge and scrutiny.
- The school's use of part-time timetables, flexi-school arrangements and home-education agreements is unsatisfactory. Arrangements in place are a form of unofficial exclusion because they remove pupils' right to a full-time education.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is good. Pupils enjoy learning in a wide range of lessons. Adults foster positive relationships with pupils and get to know them well as individuals.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects.
- Most pupils move on successfully to sustain worthwhile placements in further education.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are kind, polite and respectful of each other.
- The key stage 4 curriculum is well planned and prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education.
- Across the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Immediately take action to protect pupils from the risk of harm by:
 - ensuring that all statutory recruitment checks on new staff are completed
 - carrying out thorough checks and risk assessments before placing pupils in alternative provision
 - following the correct procedures to report pupils who are missing from education, including only taking pupils off roll when guidelines are met
 - evaluating the use of physical intervention and improving the recording and monitoring of such incidents
 - eliminating the inappropriate use of part-time timetables, flexi-school agreements and home-education agreements so that all pupils receive the full-time education to which they are entitled
 - ensuring that those responsible for governance discuss and approve policies relating to safeguarding, checking that they are fit for purpose.
- Improve the impact of leadership and governance by:
 - checking that governors with responsibility for safeguarding and whistleblowing are impartial and aware of their roles and responsibilities
 - ensuring that senior leaders focus purposefully on their role in leading education, including through strengthening the quality of school improvement planning
 - ensuring that the governing body has impartial members who can challenge leaders about all aspects of the school's work
 - making sure that governors are not overly reliant on what school leaders tell them, for example through making good use of visits to the school
 - ensuring that leaders and governors develop an appropriate pupil premium strategy, and that governors closely monitor and evaluate its success and the success of any other strategies funded through additional resources.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and governors have failed in their responsibilities to safeguard pupils from the risk of harm. Leaders have not followed statutory guidance. Too many weak and flawed processes were uncovered during this inspection. Senior leaders either did not know what was happening in their school or they condoned or instigated weak practice.
- Senior leaders have not fully focused on leading the school well. They have not maintained the outstanding quality of teaching and learning. Plans for improvement are not clear about who will monitor actions or how leaders and governors will know if improvements have been made.
- Leaders' response to the changing needs of pupils joining the school, for example in Year 7, has been too slow. This has led to difficulties with staffing. The school does not do enough to get to know pupils before they join the school.
- Opportunities for staff training and professional development are not strongly focused on the needs of pupils. New staff, for example, have yet to receive effective training in the teaching of reading, and staff training in phonics has not been given a suitable priority.
- The pupil premium strategy has not been approved by governors and is not well developed. Furthermore, senior leaders and governors have not evaluated the impact of the smaller teaching groups established using additional funding.
- The curriculum, particularly at key stage 4, is a strength of the school. Leaders have analysed the attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding that The Park's pupils need to make a successful transition to further education. They have used this information to reconfigure the curriculum, so pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain.
- There are well-planned opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and these contribute well to pupils' personal development. Pupils are aware of and tolerant of each other's differences.
- Staff enjoy working at The Park School. They say that leaders ensure that they have a good work-life balance. However, during the inspection leaders required teachers to produce additional planning which is not required by Ofsted.
- Parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire Parent View would all recommend the school to other parents. However, parents were less positive about individual aspects of the school's work, such as the information that they receive about their child's progress.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has not provided impartial support or challenge to school leaders. Governors do not challenge leaders about standards, teaching or behaviour. They take information at face value rather than assuring themselves of its validity.
- Governors did not discuss or approve the latest safeguarding policy, nor did they

scrutinise the pupil premium strategy before it was published.

- The governing body has not ensured that the school complies with statutory regulations, for example by ensuring that the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) is a qualified teacher.
- Governors are unable to set the vision and strategic direction of the school because they do not have the opportunity to discuss, shape or review policies. Instead they are informed by leaders when policies are available to be read.
- Governors have been effective at managing the school finances and in leadership succession planning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Inspectors found shortcomings in six areas of safeguarding practice. As a result, pupils could have been placed at risk of harm. The areas of concern are:
 - recruitment checks are not carried out in line with the requirements in the latest statutory guidance (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018) before staff start work
 - correct procedures are not followed when taking pupils off roll when they could potentially be a child missing education
 - insufficient checks and risk assessments of alternative provision providers before placing pupils there and then not checking the attendance of pupils at alternative providers every day
 - the safeguarding policy is out of date, does not identify the designated leaders for safeguarding correctly and contains inadequate arrangements for whistleblowing
 - poor recording of physical interventions, which does not include any kind of debrief for the staff member or pupil
 - the use of unofficial exclusion through flexible attendance at school, home-education agreements and part-time timetables that potentially put pupils at additional risk of harm when they are not in the school.
- There are clear deficiencies in the oversight of safeguarding by the designated lead. During the inspection, leaders took appropriate steps to put right where possible the issues identified on day 1 of the inspection. However, further issues of concern were identified later in the inspection.
- Governors are unaware of, or had been given the wrong information about, many of these issues. Due to weaknesses in governance, they had not checked things for themselves or challenged leaders about their decisions.
- There are some strengths to safeguarding practice in the school. These include:
 - records for the most vulnerable pupils are detailed, with a clear chronology showing effective partnerships with other professionals
 - risk assessments for trips and visits are in place to keep pupils safe when out of the school

- record-keeping for the administration of medication is robust
- accident and incident recording is appropriate, with required notifications made to the local authority when needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff know pupils and their individual needs well. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. This gives pupils the confidence to 'give it a go' when it comes to new challenges and harder tasks.
- Activities are well resourced and well planned. As a result, very little learning time is wasted. For example, in a music lesson, Year 9 pupils were required to listen to and evaluate 'O Fortuna' by Carl Orff and provide an artistic and written response. Pupils then went on to understand and perform on keyboards how chords and repeating motifs can be used together to build tension. All the while, adults helped pupils to develop their spoken language skills. This learning experience exemplifies some of the best practice in the school.
- Adults, including teaching assistants, model language very well. Sometimes, teachers purposefully choose easier practical activities so that the focus of the lesson is on developing pupils' language and a rich vocabulary. For example, Year 7 pupils were designing and colouring their own historic heraldic shields using rich and varied vocabulary in their discussions about life in medieval Britain.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. As a result, they can interest, and at times enthuse, pupils. This is demonstrated by pupils' positive behaviour for learning and the high levels of enjoyment they exude.
- There has been a strong focus on the development of pupils' reading skills. Every pupil reads frequently. Visits by authors help to develop pupils' interest in a range of fiction. While reading skills are promoted well throughout the curriculum, the work to apply pupils' writing skills, especially in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuation, is less successful.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- This is because safeguarding arrangements are not effective, which may put pupils at risk of harm. The welfare of pupils has not been of paramount priority in some of the actions taken by leaders.
- The unmonitored use of physical intervention and the use of part-time timetables without a clear plan for the pupil to return to full-time education do not promote pupils' personal development or welfare well.
- Pupils receive useful and impartial careers advice and are taught skills that will be helpful in further education and in the world of work.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to express their views, including through the

school council. Older pupils mentor their younger peers, providing them with additional help, especially when they are having a tough time.

- Displays showing pupils 'how to make The Park School epic' are displayed around the school, making pupils part of the school's work to improve.
- Opportunities for residential visits, including, for example, a ski trip with other Surrey special schools, help pupils to develop their social skills effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- This good behaviour results in a calm and focused learning environment, where pupils are positively engaged in their work. Pupils show respect for each other and listen to each other during lessons. Pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem, due to good relationships with staff.
- Most pupils move around the school sensibly at breaktimes, showing that they take responsibility for themselves. The key stage 4 café gives older pupils a dedicated informal place to socialise.
- There are clear common approaches to the management of behaviour across the school. Pupils understand the consistent language used and the school's three-step process. As a result, low-level behaviour issues are dealt with quickly.
- Recently there has been an increase in the use of fixed-term exclusion, caused in part by the curriculum not meeting the needs of younger pupils as well as it had previously.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the school. Most pupils attend school very regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The vast majority of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They successfully transfer to further education colleges or school-based sixth-form provision and sustain their placements.
- There is a clear focus on pupils achieving meaningful qualifications, including GCSE accreditation in English, mathematics and art. Attainment in mathematics and art is high when compared to other subjects. Leaders regularly reflect on the qualifications available, thinking carefully about what pupils will need in order to succeed at college.
- Academically, pupils make less progress in English than in other subjects, because of lower expectations about what pupils can achieve. Pupils have too few opportunities to apply technically accurate written English in other subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school. However, despite effective teaching, leaders' lack of precision in targeting additional funding is limiting further gains in these pupils' progress.
- Pupils make strong progress from often low starting points in developing their self-confidence, self-esteem and use of language.

School details

Unique reference number	125461
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10082145

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Brown
Headteacher	Karen Eastwood and Paul Walsh (Co-headteachers)
Telephone number	01483 772057
Website	www.thepark.surey.sch.uk
Email address	head@thepark.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan for their learning difficulties and additional needs.
- A growing number of pupils also have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder and a few have severe learning difficulties and/or social, emotional and behaviour difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The nearby Brooklands College provides off-site training in vocational education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 for half a day each week.
- The school uses one alternative provider 'Steps to 16' in Woking.
- The school is led by two co-headteachers who share the role. One is due to retire at Easter 2019, at which time the other is due to become the full-time headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began on 5 March as a short inspection of an outstanding special school. The lead inspector evaluated that the school may have declined to require improvement and/or safeguarding may be ineffective. As a result, a follow-on Section 5 inspection took place within 48 hours on 7 March led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- Meetings were held with the co-headteachers throughout the inspection. Inspectors also met with other leaders, including the assistant headteachers and the SENCo. An inspector also met with a representative group of staff.
- Inspectors observed learning across the school, making visits to classrooms with the co-headteachers. During these classroom visits, inspectors also spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at examples of their work.
- An inspector met with pupils who belong to the school council. All inspectors talked to pupils informally around the school.
- Inspectors held two meetings with members of the governing body. They held telephone conversations with the school's improvement adviser and with the local authority inclusion team.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance.
- Inspectors considered 20 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, including 16 free-text comments. Inspectors also reviewed 39 responses to the confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Yates	Ofsted Inspector
Janis Rogers, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Phillips	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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