

Inspection of Park Hall Infant Academy

Park Hall Road, Walsall, West Midlands WS5 3HF

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement

Ofsted has not previously inspected Park Hall Infant Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' vision is for all pupils to be successful, confident, enthusiastic, caring and happy. This vision is a reality. Key stage 1 pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well in most subjects. They attain consistently strong outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.

The youngest children in the early years seek out conversation. However, staff do not plan for, and seize enough, opportunities to promote and develop children's language.

Pupils enjoy school. They are proud of the roles they hold, such as school councillors. Pupils know that their peers voted for them and that this is a fair system. Pupils understand that with roles come responsibilities. They are keen to do the job well and make a difference to their school.

Pupils behave well and are safe. They know that bullying is not acceptable and that there are different types of bullying. Bullying is not tolerated, but if it does happen, pupils trust that an adult will sort it out. Pupils understand that 'people who bully need help and may be sad too'. Pupils show the school values through their words and actions.

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

Trustees have managed the recent changes of trust membership and school leadership well. Staff are proud to work at the school and enjoy their job. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Parents and carers also value the way recent changes in leadership have been handled. They appreciate the communication from, and visibility of, the executive headteacher.

Trustees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. In a short space of time, they have got to grips with the strengths and next steps for the school.

Recently appointed senior leaders are united in their ambition to deepen and strengthen the curriculum across all subjects. This includes reinstating visits to complement the curriculum. Their evaluation of what is working well and what needs to improve is accurate. They have a sensible plan in place to support the new leadership of SEND. This is making sure that the current effective identification and support for pupils with SEND continue uninterrupted.

Leaders have set out an overview of what pupils should learn in all subjects and how teachers will check whether pupils have been successful. They have defined how pupils will apply what they know. However, not all subject leaders have given enough thought to the small building blocks of knowledge that need to be in place from Nursery through to Year 2. This varies from subject to subject.

Where the curriculum is well thought out, including in mathematics, science and design and technology, pupils achieve well because they remember their learning and can talk about it. Where the intended content is less clear, teachers struggle to hone in on the key things to teach or the best way to teach something. This leads to varying practice that limits pupils' ability to securely remember their learning.

Staff in the early years are caring and nurturing. They promote reading well, and read stories with enthusiasm and expression. Children are kind to each other. They listen to adults and follow instructions. Leaders and staff plan activities that link to a theme. However, staff do not organise the learning environment and routines in a way that promotes children's sustained interaction and conversation. Although children behave well and complete the activities, they do not show high levels of curiosity. Nor do children develop and use their language well enough across all areas of the curriculum.

Varying practice has crept into the teaching of phonics, too. Everyone is following the school's phonics scheme. However, there are inconsistencies across the taught phonics sessions that are hindering lower-attaining pupils the most. Many pupils learn to read well and successfully. But for the few who need a little extra support, this is not the case. Pupils, including the less confident, enjoy reading. The lunchtime 'Starbooks' is a firm favourite. One pupil told an inspector, 'I love Starbooks. You can enjoy your book in peace and quiet.' Similar views were echoed by many.

Pupils understand and contribute to the wider world around them. They fondly recall singing to older people in a home and have a clear recollection of topics that they vote on over time. Pupils also enjoy 'dancing around the world'. To see young pupils playing a range of instruments, including keyboards, drums and electric guitars almost as big as they are, was a joy for inspectors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make the right checks to ensure staff are safe to work with children. Leaders have a rigorous training programme for themselves and staff. This includes weekly scenarios to consider and respond to. Staff value this. Records show that staff have the right knowledge to notice and report all concerns.

Leaders convey a strong sense of diligence in making sure that everyone knows what to do if a concern arises. They maintain an 'it can happen here' attitude.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They know about road, water and online safety as well as how to be a good friend.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching, in a few subjects, does not enable pupils to remember important curriculum content as well as they need to. As a result, in these subjects, pupils do not develop a greater depth of understanding. Subject leaders need to identify the key building blocks of knowledge from Nursery to Year 2 so that teachers can deliver the intended curriculum in a structured, well-sequenced and consistent manner.
- The teaching of phonics is not enabling some lower-attaining pupils to progress as well as they should. As a result, pupils who struggle to learn to read are not reaching fluency quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that the teaching of phonics is effective and supports all pupils to read with good fluency.
- Staff do not deliver the curriculum in the early years well enough. This means that pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their attitudes and behaviours through the characteristics of effective learning. Leaders need to ensure that staff deliver the curriculum in a way that successfully engages and challenges children and develops their vocabulary across the seven areas of the curriculum.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	136303
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10228659
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	322
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dawn Hendon
Headteacher	Gerry Healy (Executive Headteacher)
Website	http://www.parkhall-inf.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Park Hall Infant Academy joined The Loriners Multi-Academy Trust on 1 October 2022. Prior to this, it had been Park Hall Infant Academy since February 2012.
- A new executive headteacher and head of school have been in post since September 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and the special educational needs coordinator.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects, including computing, music, geography, art and design and technology.
- The lead inspector spoke with three trustees.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff about pupils' safety.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's evaluation and improvement plans, the scheme of delegation and information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Emma Titchener	His Majesty's Inspector
Darren Bishop	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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