

Alexandra Park Primary School

Bombay Road, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire SK3 9RF

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2019

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
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school is very well led and managed. Leaders have a strong vision for the school and ensure that all decisions are based on the findings of rigorous research.
- Staff at all levels have extensive opportunities to apply and extend their expertise and to work as a team to contribute to the leadership of the school. They enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so.
- Leaders take the welfare of staff and pupils very seriously. They are currently investing in additional resources to support this aspect of the school's work.
- The governors are committed and well informed and provide leaders with an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. They know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.
- Standards across the school are high. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make very rapid progress. Disadvantaged pupils make particularly impressive progress.
- The curriculum is very well thought through and ensures that pupils make good progress across a broad range of subjects. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.
- The pupils are very well behaved inside and outside classrooms. They treat each other, adults and visitors with politeness and respect.
- Teachers have very high aspirations for the pupils. They have very good subject knowledge, plan their work carefully and check on pupils' progress so that anyone falling behind can quickly be given additional help.
- There is a very strong sense of community in the school.
- Parents and carers hold the school in high regard.
- Early years provision is very well led, and staff are well qualified and experienced. Children make rapid progress during their time there.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the strategies to promote the mental health and well-being of staff and pupils are embedded so that the school's positive ethos and working relationships are maintained and further enhanced.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school has a very clearly articulated vision, based on the three principles of 'Care, Aspire, Achieve'. Everything that is done in the school stems from, and relates back to, these values. The focus on care provides a firm foundation for the warm, nurturing atmosphere in the school, where leaders show concern, not only for the welfare of pupils but also that of the staff. Aspiration is reflected in the consistently high expectations that staff have of pupils, as well as in the ambitions of the pupils themselves. Through frequent exposure to highly successful people in society, the pupils are determined to go far in their own lives, regardless of their backgrounds. Achievement is a central element in the school and this leads to the impressive rates of progress that pupils of all abilities make during their time at the school.
- The recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a very clear sense of direction for the school. They also ensure that all staff contribute to the leadership and improvement of the school, and there is a strong sense that the school is run by a team of very talented people.
- Continuing professional development is a central element in the school. Staff are supported to extend their expertise through gaining a wide range of qualifications. They are also actively encouraged to share their expertise, both within the school and through leading training locally and regionally. A refreshing element of the school is the way that decisions about teaching and learning are firmly based on research findings. A member of the senior leadership team has specific responsibility for this. The wealth of expertise in the school is marshalled successfully for the good of the pupils.
- The leadership of mathematics and English is very strong. Its impact is reflected in the high performance of pupils in these subjects. Over the last year, the focus has been on ensuring that teaching and learning are equally strong across all the other areas of the curriculum. Every subject has a leader who helps colleagues plan work in the subject in a way that ensures continuity and development in pupils' learning as they move through the school. Staff work together to conduct regular checks on what has been covered and how well pupils are learning in each subject. The school then celebrates and shares the most successful work done, not only by the pupils but also by the teachers. This approach further fosters the close teamwork within the school.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. As part of their study of world religions, pupils visit the places of worship of a wide range of faiths in Greater Manchester. This widens their understanding of life in modern Britain, as do the visits to the school by people from a variety of cultures. Through the consistent application of the behaviour code, pupils learn the difference between right and wrong. They are also given the opportunity to discuss a range of issues related to equality. There are numerous opportunities for the pupils to exercise initiative and contribute to the leadership of the school, for example through the school council and eco committee. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to attend and take part in arts events, both within and outside school. They also have close relationships with the local community and often visit older people or play bowls with them. As a result, the pupils develop a respect for people of all ages and cultures.

- 'We leave no stone unturned where disadvantaged pupils are concerned,' a senior leader said. This is clearly borne out in the school's practice. Pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used wisely. Leaders have developed a strategy which focuses not only on raising standards but also on ensuring that the pastoral needs of pupils are met. The effectiveness of the actions taken is reviewed regularly and spending is redirected where necessary. The positive impact of this approach is clearly reflected in the very strong performance of disadvantaged pupils when compared with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils with SEND progress well. Leaders use funding effectively to provide high-quality support and additional help for these pupils. The members of the learning and pastoral support team are led by an experienced and well-qualified coordinator. Together with the rest of the staff, they ensure that pupils with SEND are fully integrated into the life of the school. Staff receive effective training to enable them to identify barriers to learning and to help pupils overcome them.
- Leaders also use the primary school physical education and sport funding effectively. The school's strategy places a strong focus on: overcoming the reluctance of some pupils to participate in sport; encouraging pupils who may be obese to participate in a range of activities; encouraging pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles; and providing training for staff so that the sports provision is embedded and sustained in the school. A recent, detailed review of its impact has resulted in plans to extend the provision for pupils after school. The revised approach is designed to increase the range of opportunities available and to make it easier for more pupils to take advantage of them.
- In addition to sporting activities, the school invests heavily in a range of provision to help pupils develop their self-esteem, confidence and resilience. Leaders are careful to ensure that any programme run in the school relates directly to its three values. Therefore, such provision is an integral part of the curriculum and not just an addition to it.
- Leaders take great care over the well-being of staff and check very carefully to ensure that they have a proper work-life balance. They are currently in the process of extending provision to support the welfare and mental health of staff.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Of the large number who responded to Parent View, the great majority would recommend the school to others. Their highly positive responses reflected the views of the parents who spoke to inspectors.
- Staff also have a very high opinion of the school. All those who completed the online survey said that they are proud to work at the school and enjoy doing so. They all feel well supported, trusted and respected. Like the parents, they said that the school is well led and managed.

Governance of the school

- Through frequent visits, discussions with pupils and staff, observations of lessons and examination of books, governors keep themselves well informed about developments in the school. Their understanding is further extended through regular reports from the headteacher and briefings from subject leaders.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. They are firmly committed to the school's values and to ensuring that all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, make good progress and reach high standards. Governors ensure that the school has the right resources to achieve its aims. They provide senior leaders with an appropriate balance of challenge and support.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The parents who spoke to the inspectors were confident that pupils are safe at the school. All the staff and almost all the parents who completed the online questionnaires agreed with this. They also agreed that the school deals effectively with bullying.
- The pupils who met with the lead inspector said that they feel safe in school and on the way to and from school. They said that there is some name-calling among pupils but this is quickly sorted. The school has trained a number of pupils to act as 'restorative ambassadors' so that they can help resolve any disputes that might occur in the playground. Through regular practices, pupils learn what to do and where to go in the case of a fire. They all learn to swim so that they can keep themselves safe in and near water. They are also taught about road safety. Pupils know which staff to go to if they have any worries or concerns and are confident that they will receive appropriate help if needed. The school has effective systems for ensuring the safety of pupils when using the internet and social media, and pupils know what to do if they encounter any unsuitable material.
- The school has appropriate systems for checking on the suitability of adults to work with children. All visitors to the school are carefully vetted. The school grounds are secure and access to the building is carefully controlled.
- All staff and governors have received the required training in safeguarding. All the staff who were questioned by inspectors knew how to identify possible signs of abuse and what they should do if they have any concerns about the welfare of a child.
- The school works very effectively with a range of relevant agencies to provide appropriate support for any families who need additional help. Leaders place considerable focus on ensuring the mental well-being of pupils and on building their resilience. Pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils are carefully monitored and supported to ensure their safety and well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- One of the key principles of the school is consistency. This is very evident where teaching is concerned. A rigorous and wide-ranging programme of professional development ensures that teachers have very firm and broadly based subject knowledge. They are therefore able to teach with conviction and authority. They plan carefully to ensure that pupils consolidate their existing knowledge, apply it to a range of situations and further build on and extend it. Teachers also ensure that pupils use the technical language appropriate to each subject so that they develop confidence and facility in applying it in their questions and discussions. This further helps pupils

develop their understanding of the key concepts in a subject.

- In science, for example, pupils study the function of the human skeleton. The learning is part of a carefully planned sequence which enables the pupils to progress from naming of the bones to understanding their function. In the process, they develop increasing confidence in the use of new vocabulary such as 'function', 'protection' and 'mobility'. Similarly, in mathematics, pupils learn about progressively more complicated relationships between numbers so that they can approach calculations and investigations from a variety of standpoints. As a result, they develop flexibility and inventiveness in their thinking.
- The teachers have high expectations of pupils, whatever their age or ability, and they set challenging work for them to do. At the same time, pupils know that there is no shame in making mistakes and that they can learn from them. The system of rewards encourages effort and perseverance and pupils respond well to it. The great majority clearly enjoy their work and concentrate hard. They are proud to show visitors the progress they are making and the positive feedback they have received from their teachers.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils also relate well to each other. They work very successfully in pairs and in groups, as well as on their own.
- Staff use a range of assessment systems to follow pupils' progress. Teachers use carefully worded questions to check on pupils' understanding and adapt their approaches in the light of the responses they receive. They make judicious use of data and other information to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to provide timely additional support to those who are falling behind with their work. The focus of assessment is very clearly on checking progress from individual starting points. Therefore, although pupils might be achieving at the level expected for their age, this is not regarded as good enough if they exceeded expectations at earlier points in their school career. This approach has clearly contributed to the continuing increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of performance.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, staff have worked together to develop a simple, manageable system to check pupils' progress towards clearly defined goals. As a result, leaders have a detailed knowledge of the progress that pupils are making across all areas of the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The pastoral system is very strong. Staff are sensitive to the issues outside the school and at home that may be a barrier to pupils' progress. Staff work successfully together and with external agencies to provide appropriate support to those who need additional help.
- Pupils respond well to the caring atmosphere in the school. They relate well to each other, to staff and to any visitors to the school. They are confident and articulate when talking to adults. As well as answering questions, they show an interest in the people they are talking to and know how to conduct an interesting conversation. The pupils

who attended the meeting with the lead inspector listened carefully and politely to each other, even when they did not necessarily agree with what was being said. This was also evident when pupils worked in pairs or small groups in the classroom.

- Pupils develop self-sufficiency and independence and can be relied on to get on with their work, even when not being directly overseen by a member of staff. They are ambitious to succeed and have confidence in their own powers to do so.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has revised its behaviour policy. The new approach focuses on establishing positive relationships between staff and pupils, while maintaining clear boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable. This system is now operating very efficiently. Staff, parents and pupils are positive about it.
- The standard of behaviour in classrooms is very high. Pupils work with concentration and enthusiasm. Even the youngest pupils move with the minimum of fuss from one activity to another so that no time is wasted. An impressive aspect of the school is the natural, unforced politeness that pupils show towards each other. For example, without any prompting from the teachers, they check that fellow pupils have whatever materials they need, and they thank each other for any help they receive.
- Behaviour in the playground and in the school corridors is very good. Pupils ensure that no one who wishes to take part in a game is excluded. They play safely and treat their surroundings and all equipment with respect.
- Attendance in the past has not always been as high as it should be. The school has worked closely with families to improve the situation. As a result, attendance overall is now in line with the national average and that of disadvantaged pupils is close to it. Persistent absence has also been drastically reduced since the school was last inspected. Pupils arrive on time at school. In lessons, they immediately get down to their work and use the time well.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Over the last five years, standards have risen across the school. The results in the phonics screening check last year were well above the national average. Results in the national tests for seven-year-olds were also impressive. In reading, writing and mathematics, the proportions of pupils reaching not only the expected levels but also the higher standards were above or well above average. The results for disadvantaged pupils have also improved considerably, especially in writing and mathematics. Last year, they were above average for the expected and the higher standards in both of these subjects.
- Results for 11-year-olds are also strong. For the last two years, they have been above average in reading, writing and mathematics and the proportions reaching the higher standards have been average or better.
- Pupils' progress has been particularly impressive. For the last three years, it has been average or better in reading. In writing, it has been above or well above average. In

mathematics, it has been consistently well above average.

- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. In 2017, they were in the top 10% of schools nationally in reading and writing. In mathematics, they have been in the top 10% for the last three years.
- The school's assessments of current pupils show that the high standards are being maintained. For example, pupils in Years 1, 3 and 6, including disadvantaged pupils, are performing at least as well as their counterparts at this time last year. Case studies show that pupils with SEND are making good progress from their individual starting points.
- The work examined during the inspection supported the school's judgements. Pupils read with fluency, accuracy and expression. They have clear strategies for applying their phonics skills to deciphering unfamiliar or complicated words. They clearly enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically about the books they read at home, in the library and at school. They rise to the challenge of reading a wide variety of books in a range of styles.
- A notable feature of the school is the focus placed on speaking and communicating clearly. When asking or answering questions, pupils of all ages make sure that everyone can hear them. They present their ideas in full, well-formed sentences and make appropriate use of technical language to clarify their thinking and convey their ideas.
- The work in books shows that pupils of all abilities are making good progress across subjects. Pupils' writing reflects an increasing ability to produce vivid descriptions and accounts, using increasingly complex sentences and a widening vocabulary. Pupils have opportunities to write for a range of purposes across the full range of subjects and to adapt their style accordingly. Thus, for example, history books include imaginative reconstructions of events from the past, while geography and science books show how pupils can present concise explanations for what they have observed. In English, pupils of all abilities show a growing confidence in identifying a range of grammatical devices and using them to improve their writing. Pupils in key stage 1 take care to produce well-presented handwriting and to check their spelling and punctuation.
- Mathematics is a considerable strength of the school and workbooks reflect pupils' increasing command of a range of concepts. Pupils in key stage 2 can manipulate number and the relationships between numbers very effectively. They can also identify a variety of ways of solving a problem and of checking the accuracy of their own work. They present their reasons clearly, making accurate use of appropriate mathematical terminology.
- Leaders' focus on ensuring that pupils achieve high standards across all subjects is clearly reflected in the work seen during the inspection.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The leader of the early years provision is well qualified and experienced. Through regular participation in training and working with a range of schools, she has gained a firm understanding of what constitutes outstanding practice. She uses this knowledge and experience to provide excellent leadership and support for her colleagues. The

leader's evaluation of the quality of provision in the early years is accurate and matches what was seen during the inspection.

- The early years staff have high aspirations for the children in their care. Most children enter Reception with knowledge and skills which are below those typical for their age. This is particularly the case where their personal, social and emotional development and speech, language and communication skills are concerned. The children make rapid progress during their time in Reception and the majority reach a good level of development.
- These high standards are being maintained. Children currently in the early years can recognise numbers and count out numbers to at least 10. The most able children can write simple number sentences, such as $8+2=10$. Children have a growing awareness of letters and the sounds they make and make plausible attempts at spelling words. The teachers provide the children with open-ended challenges so that they can develop early problem-solving skills. They react very positively to these opportunities, as they do to creative activities involving, for example, making a Chinese dragon or preparing a banquet to celebrate Chinese New Year.
- Staff have created a welcoming environment which engages and enthuses the children. Planned activities are guided by the children's interests. Staff put considerable emphasis on encouraging children's independence. As a result, the children's fine motor skills are well developed, enabling them to cut, stick and colour in effectively, without help from others.
- The environment outside is not as attractive as that indoors. However, the school has recognised this and a major refurbishment is planned to take place over Easter.
- Staff have effective strategies for ensuring a smooth transition into education. They visit children's homes before they enter the early years so that they can get to know the children and identify, and begin to put in place, any additional support they might need. Similarly, Year 1 and early years teachers work together to help children before and after they move into the main school.
- Communication with parents is regular and promotes learning at home. Parents receive very regular information on their children's progress. In turn, they are able to contribute evidence of their child's progress at home to ensure that the profile of development is rounded.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. Staff are well trained to ensure children's safety. The levels of supervision are appropriate and children are encouraged to take risks. For example, they have opportunities to climb and to play on a busy playground with older pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	135746
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10057982

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

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	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Trafford
Headteacher	Phil Brooke
Telephone number	0161 480 5557
Website	www.alexandrapark-pri.stockport.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@alexandrapark-pri.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	April 2018

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out observations of learning in all year groups. Some of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning; assessment information; attendance information; and records connected with the safeguarding of children.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, other members of staff, the chair, vice-chair and other members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and examined pupils' work in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors evaluated 254 responses to Parent View, 27 responses to the online staff survey and one response to the online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Aelwyn Pugh, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector
David Deane OBE	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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