

Queen's Park Academy

Chestnut Avenue, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK40 4HA

Inspection dates

2–3 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors are not using what they know about pupils' learning well enough in planning ahead for continuous improvement.
- The governing body's work has been dominated by resolving complex finance and personnel issues. Setting priorities to improve teaching, pupils' progress and attainment has not had enough emphasis.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good across year groups and subjects.
- Some teachers' expectations are not high enough for pupils to write at length for sustained periods of time and apply their knowledge of phonics and grammar in their writing.
- Pupils' attendance is below average, especially in the younger age ranges.
- Provision in the early years is not developing children's early reading and writing skills well enough. Teaching of phonics is weak.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership team is clearly focused on improving pupils' academic achievement. Targets set for this year to raise pupils' attainment are challenging. Achievement is rising steadily as a result, especially in mathematics where teaching is stronger.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They show consistently positive attitudes and are keen to do well.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe. This lends confidence to their learning.
- The school provides good quality care, guidance and support for all pupils, especially vulnerable pupils and those with complex learning or physical needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a clear strategy for continuous school improvement by:
 - pulling together and evaluating the wide range of information that leaders are gathering about pupils' achievement
 - deciding what the priorities are, which actions should be taken and in what order
 - setting clear success criteria for each action with a measurable target against which progress can be judged
 - agreeing milestones against which leaders and governors can check progress at regular intervals.
- Address variations in the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils' achievement across the full range of subjects.
- Improve pupils' attainment in writing by:
 - developing children's writing skills in the early years with more encouragement and opportunity for them to make marks, draw symbols and write words
 - implementing an effective and systematic approach for teaching phonics so that pupils apply their knowledge and understanding of phonics in their writing
 - ensuring that all pupils write at length and often.
- Ensure that more pupils attend school regularly by:
 - continuing to monitor individual pupils' attendance diligently
 - working closely with parents, especially those in the early years and key stage 1 classes to raise their awareness that irregular attendance has a negative impact on their children's achievement.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Last year, the headteacher and governing body devoted their efforts almost exclusively to resolving a significant financial crisis and complex personnel issues. This has had a detrimental effect on maintaining a clear focus on school improvement work to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- The headteacher takes on too many administrative tasks in addition to responsibilities for the education of all pupils, management of staff, and for school policymaking. As a consequence, some of the work is not completed effectively, such as ensuring that policies and the school's website are updated on time.
- Plans for future improvement lack sufficient rigour. They resemble a list of 'jobs to do' rather than a robust strategy with clear priorities based on the predicted impact that planned actions will have on pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders are, rightly, gathering a wide range of evidence about teaching and its impact on learning. Even so, this information has not been evaluated well enough to help the school to decide what the most pressing issues are and in what order they should be tackled.
- The level of satisfaction among parents and staff is mixed and typical of a school that is recovering from a significant period of turbulence. Of the 503 pupils attending the school, 32 parents responded to Parent View. Of these, half would recommend the school to another parent and half not. Similarly, two thirds of the 24 staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire have confidence in the school's leadership and a third do not.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are ambitious for pupils to achieve well academically and in their personal development. They are resilient and uncompromising in holding staff accountable for the progress that pupils make, for example by introducing a suitable appraisal system. The majority of staff realise the benefit of this approach in raising pupils' achievement. The proportion of those that are resistant is diminishing.
- Leadership of teaching is improving strongly. Valuable work is under way to establish an effective system for assessing accurately and tracking how well pupils are performing academically. An assistant headteacher oversees assessment practice across the school. This ensures that leaders have broad understanding of pupils' learning.
- Regular meetings between leaders and teaching staff in all classes are used effectively to discuss the progress that pupils are making. This enables them to identify any pupils that are falling behind so that they can take action to provide extra tuition or support to help them to catch up.
- Subject leaders know how to lead their subjects properly. They gather information about how well pupils are learning through sampling their work. They know what is working well, where teaching needs to improve and provide training for staff to

address weaknesses. They ensure that pupils are learning all that they should in their subjects.

- Leaders and staff do a fine job in promoting strong values that encourage pupils to behave well. The broad, balanced and enriched curriculum and extra-curricular activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They prepare pupils positively for life in modern Britain. The school's approach is inclusive and, in particular, ensures strong care, guidance and support for its vulnerable pupils and pupils with complex physical and learning needs.
- Use of pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils' learning is increasingly effectively used, as seen in the improvement disadvantaged pupils are currently making in their learning. Sports premium funding is also used well to increase the proportion of pupils participating in sporting activities including competitive sports. Training for staff to improve their confidence and skills in teaching physical education is also funded through the sports premium.
- Leaders have developed strong links with agencies, education and health professionals and other local schools to strengthen provision. Governors fund an external consultant to evaluate the school's work to ensure that the school's judgements are accurate.

Governance of the school

- Most members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair are new. They are currently in the process of developing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as governors of an academy.
- Not enough time has been devoted to communicating the school's strategic direction and establishing its priorities. That said, during the inspection the governing body met to re-establish its vision for the school and its aims going forward. This meeting was planned prior to the inspection and went ahead regardless of it, which reflects governors' determination to improve governance.
- As seen in minutes of the governing body meetings over the previous 12 months, not enough time has been spent on discussing how well pupils are learning. Clerking of meetings has not ensured sufficient detail of discussions. This has been addressed through the appointment of a new clerk.
- Governors are committed to improving accountability and are offering a higher level of challenge to school leaders about the school's performance.
- Governors are aware that they have not ensured that they have been in receipt of sufficient and accurate information about pupils' learning to place them in a strong position to hold leaders to account effectively. They do not use data well enough to compare Queen's Park pupils' achievement to all pupils nationally.
- The governing body has successfully resolved the school's financial crisis by appointing an effective business manager and changing arrangements for auditing. A huge deficit has been reduced significantly by thrifty budgeting. The school's accounts are in sound order as a result.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed an ethos where staff share responsibility for safeguarding and are confident to raise any concerns. Procedures are working well. Records are detailed and completed diligently. Confidential records on staff and pupils are kept securely.
- Leaders ensure that staff are trained in the 'Prevent' duty to keep pupils safe from risk of radicalisation and extremism. Staff are alert to signs that pupils could be at risk and report them. These are followed up by the appropriate agencies and authorities.
- Staff receive regular training to keep them abreast of any updates in statutory guidance.
- Staff and all adults who come into regular contact with children are vetted carefully prior to appointment. All of the statutory checks are made to ensure their suitability to work with children. Staff files have been checked thoroughly to ensure that all of the required information is stored centrally.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff are confident in raising concerns and recording them properly. The designated lead professionals for safeguarding follow them up quickly and refer them on to the local authority's designated officer and/or children's services if need be.
- Documentation, including individual pupil's case files, is detailed and kept in good chronological order to provide a thorough record of incidents over time. Checks are made regularly to ensure that follow-up actions on open cases are timely and that no pupils slip through the net.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but it is not consistently good.
- The quality of teaching is variable across year groups and subjects. It is strongest in Nursery, Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 and requires improvement in the other year groups. Teaching of reading and writing is not as effective as it is in mathematics. Teaching of early writing skills in the early years classes is not good enough.
- The teaching of phonics is not systematic. The school is not using an effective scheme that ensures progression in learning. As a consequence, some pupils, especially those of low and middle abilities do not make the progress they are capable of in reading and writing. They do not have sufficient phonic knowledge to help them to blend sounds together to spell words.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations for pupils to write longer pieces that require them to sustain and develop their ideas. In some classes, teachers do not plan enough variety to ensure that pupils experience different forms of fiction and non-fiction writing.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged, including those who are most able.
- Teachers are quick to identify when pupils have misunderstood a mathematical idea

and adjust the learning in response to what they see. They use technical language well in their teaching and insist that pupils do the same. Good practice in assessment has enabled teachers to find out where there are gaps in pupils' prior learning and they are allocating time to address these in their planning.

- Teaching promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills well. This helps all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, to build up a good stock of words and to talk about their learning clearly and confidently.
- Teaching assistants support the pupils they are deployed to work with effectively. They encourage independence to reduce over-reliance on adult help. Strong support matched to the needs and abilities of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to achieve well at their level and make progress over time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants expect pupils to behave well, and they do. This means that no learning time is lost through low-level disruption and that pupils work productively in class.
- Classrooms are inviting and interesting spaces for learning with plenty of prompts and reminders to support pupils in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have consistently positive attitudes towards their work. They enjoy learning and get on with it in class. Pupils do not lose heart when they find work difficult or challenging because they are well supported.
- Pupils are polite, thoughtful and respectful towards adults and each other. They mix well and share celebrations of different festivals and religions readily.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are important to staff and this rubs off on the pupils who are kind and inclusive in their attitudes towards each other.
- Pupils are well informed about all forms of bullying, e-safety and potential dangers in using the internet or social networking. They know what to do if they come across anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because attendance rates are too low despite the school's relentlessness in tackling absenteeism by referrals to the local authority, fixed penalty notices and contracts with individual families. That said, it is pupils in the younger age groups who rely on adults to bring them to school where attendance is lowest.
- The older pupils do value their education and most ensure that they come to school regularly. Some classes' attendance is above the national average. Pupils are keen to win the school's weekly best attendance award.
- Pupils' conduct is consistently good around the school, in class and in the playground.

They are courteous, respectful and self-disciplined. Pupils told inspectors that any poor behaviour, of which there is little, is dealt with effectively by staff.

- Most pupils look after their personal and school equipment properly and help to keep their working areas tidy. In Reception, children are less careful about putting toys and tools away before moving on to another activity.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is improving but it is not yet good.
- Most children start school at a lower level of development than is typical for their age.
- Outcomes in phonics are particularly weak. In the 2016 Year 1 phonics screening check a third of pupils did not reach the standard expected and a quarter moved into Year 3 without reaching the standard.
- Some disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress last year. The school's pupil premium strategy has improved. Current disadvantaged pupils are making more progress than non-disadvantaged pupils.
- Standards are rising steadily in key stage 1. In the 2016 national tests, the proportion of pupils reaching at least expected attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. Attainment was below average in science.
- This is the first year that Year 6 pupils have been taught at Queen's Park. Their attainment at the start of the school year was below where it should be. However, good teaching and high expectations are ensuring that they are making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics to help them to catch up.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers from their individual starting points because teaching and additional support meets their needs well.
- The school's strong focus on speaking and listening helps pupils who speak English as an additional language to gain fluency in speaking English rapidly so that they are able to make progress in other subjects.
- In science, pupils explore and investigate enthusiastically. Their ability to discuss and explain their findings is weaker and a target for improvement this year.
- In art and design, pupils' drawing skills and subject-related vocabulary is developing steadily.
- Pupils enjoy books. They use their well-stocked and beautifully kept library regularly to choose books for reading at home. Pupils who read to inspectors conveyed a strong passion for reading. The oldest and most-able pupils read fluently, with expression. They showed a good understanding of the author's writing style and what the author is trying to portray.
- The quality of presentation and handwriting in pupils' books varies widely. The best work seen was in mathematics books.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The quality of provision in Nursery is better than it is in Reception.
- In Nursery adults engage children in conversation readily. They model language well, introduce children to new words and follow the children's interests to hold their attention and develop their skills.
- In Reception, adults adopt a supervisory role with too little teaching to improve children's skills.
- Promotion of early writing skills in Nursery and Reception is underdeveloped. There are too few planned opportunities for children to practise writing. In Reception, adults do not ensure that children use capital and lower case letters properly and that they form each letter correctly.
- The teaching of phonics is weak because the programme that teachers are following does not ensure that children make rapid progress. The teaching of phonics does not cater for children's diverse needs and abilities. The most able children in particular are not sufficiently challenged.
- Across the early years classes a suitable breadth of provision ensures that children access all areas of learning, inside and outdoors, required for the early years curriculum. The environment for learning is stimulating and interesting. It is not always used effectively so that children learn as they play and make enough progress towards the early learning goals to be well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff ensure that children learn to manage their behaviour and self-control to make progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Relationships between staff and children are supportive and caring.
- Leadership in the early years is becoming more focused on how well children are learning. As a consequence, children are making better progress, especially disadvantaged children, but progress is more rapid in Nursery than in Reception.
- Over three years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception has doubled. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen year on year but remains below average. In 2016, fewer than half of the children had reached a good level of development.
- All of the statutory welfare requirements are met and children are kept safe. Staff actively encourage parents to engage with their children's learning and encourage them to ensure that their children attend regularly with mixed success.

School details

Unique reference number	136660
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10023494

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	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	504
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Quinnan Stone
Headteacher	Anna Thwaites
Telephone number	01234 352901
Website	www.queensparkacademy.co.uk
Email address	gpa@gpa.uk.net
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the pupil premium strategy and sports funding information, and the school's policies for complaints and charging and remissions.
- The ethnicity of most pupils is Asian or Asian British. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language and most are beginners when they start in the nursery.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The headteacher, two assistant headteachers, 11 teachers and the business manager have all been appointed over the past two years.
- The school operates on two sites. Early years and pupils in key stage 1 share the Marlborough Road site. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 are taught in the Chestnut Avenue site.

- Since the previous inspection, the school's status has changed from a lower school to a primary school. This school year is the first to include 11-year-olds, who move on to secondary school in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has the discretionary power to inspect any school in England under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection began as a one-day, short section 8 inspection undertaken by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). During the first day, HMI converted the inspection to a full section 5 inspection. The HMI were joined by two Ofsted inspectors on the second day to complete the inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes jointly with either the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- Pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 read to inspectors and talked about their books.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' written work in their English, mathematics and topic books and on display in classrooms and corridors. The school provided information about the progress that pupils are making currently. Published information about pupils' attainment in relation to all pupils nationally was considered.
- Pupils were observed having their lunch and at play during the lunch break. Inspectors spoke to pupils while they worked in class and more formally in groups.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the chair, vice-chair and seven other governors, leaders of subjects, and members of staff responsible for supporting vulnerable pupils and administration of attendance.
- The views of 32 parents who responded to Parent View and 24 members of staff who completed the staff questionnaire were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation including policies and record keeping for safeguarding. The single central record of statutory suitability vetting carried out on all staff, volunteers and governors was checked.
- The school's information about how well it is performing and its plans for future improvements was evaluated. Minutes of the governing body's meetings were examined.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Webb	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vicky Parsey	Ofsted Inspector
Lyn Beale	Ofsted Inspector

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