

East Park Primary School

Hollington Road, Wolverhampton WV1 2DS

Inspection dates	9–10 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Academic standards at this school have been too low for too long. Year after year, many pupils have left Year 6 ill-prepared for learning at secondary school.
- Leaders have done very little to check on the quality of teaching and learning, so ineffective practice has been allowed to continue.
- Across the school, teaching and assessment are weak. Staff have been left to their own devices and different teachers have found different ways to check on progress. Consequently, there is little reliable information about how well pupils are doing.
- In lessons, work is not matched to pupils' different learning needs. The most-able pupils get work that is too easy for them and the least able are often reliant on adult help.
- Over time, staff appointed to leadership positions have not been given guidance or training. Some of these leaders have had too much to do and some have done too little. Their work has not resulted in any lasting school improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour in the dining hall is disorderly.
- In some classes, pupils are inattentive. They do not look at the teachers when they are talking, or they quietly ignore the instructions they are given.
- Pupils and staff report that the school's behaviour policy is not used consistently. Some staff are overly strict and others are too lenient.
- Members of staff are anxious about recent changes at the school and this is affecting their work. Many show willingness to improve their teaching but are confused by the different messages they have been given by different people. Morale is low.
- Newly qualified teachers working at the school have not been given proper support. This has been unfair to them.
- The early years provision is inadequate. Leadership is lacking and assessment information is unreliable. Classrooms are not set up to meet children's learning needs.
- Governors have not checked the limited information they have been given. They have taken too much on trust and have only just realised that the school is performing badly.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has formed an accurate view of the school's current performance and has ambitious plans.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching in order to eradicate underachievement and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - all staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time
 - effective practice is noticed and shared, and weak teaching is challenged and supported
 - there is good communication in the school so that teaching staff know what is happening and why
 - all staff are given clear guidance and access to good-quality training so that they understand what is expected from them and have the chance to prove what they can do
 - there is a reliable system for tracking pupils' progress so that staff have accurate information about pupils' achievement and use it to plan purposeful lessons that meet pupils' different learning needs
 - pupils with different abilities get work that is set at the right level
 - pupils who complete work in lessons or manage tasks easily have plenty of ready opportunities to push on further in their learning.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by making sure that:
 - the school's behaviour policy is used with consistency across the school
 - inattentiveness and rudeness in lessons is challenged and stopped
 - levels of supervision in the dining hall are increased
 - pupils do not run in the corridors or fight on the playground
 - pupils show a greater awareness of other pupils' needs, particularly those of pupils who are deaf.
 - pupils who find it hard to manage their feelings at school get the specialist help they require
 - school leaders and parents work together to improve the punctuality of those pupils who turn up late for school without good reason
 - pupils get the support, guidance and help they need in order to learn how to exercise self-discipline and become inquisitive and motivated learners.
- Improve provision in the early years by making sure that:
 - there is well-informed leadership in the early years
 - the indoor and outdoor areas are reorganised so that children have access to good-quality learning environments
 - the curriculum meets children's learning needs
 - early years staff receive regular training, which is then followed up through leaders' checks on classroom practice
 - staff see effective practice in other settings
 - assessment is reliable and used to plan next steps in learning.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - senior leaders keep everyone informed about their vision for the school so that staff understand why changes are necessary
 - the leadership structure is reviewed so that roles, responsibilities and expectations are understood by everyone
 - teaching staff and middle leaders receive regular training and feedback about their work so that they can be held to account in a fair way

- leaders and the local authority ensure that newly qualified teachers currently working at the school get the support they are entitled to and are treated fairly
 - pupil premium funds are used to good effect
 - the governing body establishes routines for checking the quality of the school's work
 - governors undertake training to improve their strategic planning.
- The school should not make further appointments of newly qualified teachers.

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 is inadequate

- Leadership arrangements at the school have been ineffective for some time. Since the previous inspection, staff have not been given any clear guidance about what they need to do to improve teaching, raise standards or manage pupils' behaviour. Senior leaders have not acknowledged the school's poor performance and middle leaders have been confused about their roles. Over the past year, staff have been given conflicting messages about the quality of their work and are understandably worried and upset.
- Over time, the school has employed many middle leaders, but has not given them any direction or training. Consequently, they have not known what to do, so have done what they think best. This lack of strategic direction from senior leaders has meant that their efforts have had no lasting impact on raising standards. On top of this, leaders have not checked on the quality of teaching. Consequently, ineffective teaching and poor pupil behaviour has gone unnoticed and unchallenged.
- Newly qualified teachers in particular have not been treated fairly. They have not received any organised support from school leaders and have been left to 'get on with it'. In addition, they have had to deal with some very bad behaviour from pupils without any advice or assistance from school leaders. Until recently, they have not been given sufficient release time from class. The local authority is liaising with these teachers and school leaders in order to provide helpful guidance about this situation.
- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher started in January 2016 and have ambitious plans, which they have started to drive through with remarkable speed and efficiency. This is a good thing because well-organised school improvement is long overdue and it is clear that strong, capable leadership is needed. However, while many staff are keen for change to happen, they are also concerned because they do not feel informed about why certain changes have been made. This is making them anxious; staff morale, which has been low for a while, is at rock bottom. This is affecting their work and senior leaders could do more to make sure that staff understand improvement plans and how they can help.
- The curriculum has provided pupils with many memorable experiences. There has been a heavy emphasis on the performing arts and pupils from the school have taken part in productions at local theatres. Around the school, several displays record pupils' achievements and experiences in drama and music. There is no doubt that a lot of effort has gone into the organisation of such activities. Nevertheless, this heavy weighting on the arts has taken time from other subjects. Many pupils have not been taught basic numeracy and literacy skills. This hinders their progress at primary school and when they move up to secondary school.
- The school receives a significant amount of pupil premium money, which should be used to help disadvantaged pupils to achieve at school. Governors and school leaders are unable to explain how this money has been spent or the impact it has had. A statement on the school's website describes some uses of the funds, such as the employment of extra staff and purchase of classroom resources. While well intentioned, these actions have not been suitably focused on the different learning needs of disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, this group has continued to underachieve at East Park Primary School.
- The primary school sports funding has been used more successfully and has brought some identifiable benefits. The school employs two sports teachers who, during this inspection, were seen to be doing a good job teaching pupils specific skills and also managing their behaviour in a firm yet fair way. Pupils do get the chance to take part in competitive sport and they speak positively about these experiences.
- The work of the school council has introduced pupils to the principle of democracy and pupils of all ages understand the difference between right and wrong. Indeed, during this inspection, some of the older pupils explained to inspectors how different school policies promoted worthy qualities such as forgiveness, redemption and perseverance.
- **Governance of the school**
 - Governance of the school is ineffective. Over recent years, governors have received most of their information from the headteacher and have accepted all they were told without question. They were told the school was doing well and they believed this information. They have not asked questions about the poor progress and low attainment data, and have not kept a careful check on how money was being spent. Governors have now realised that significant improvements are needed and, during this inspection, they were realistic about the scale of the school improvement needed.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All the required checks on staff and visitors are carried out in line with safeguarding requirements, and records are organised and up to date. The school site is well maintained and secure. Staff have received appropriate training and know what to do if they have a concern about a child's safety or welfare. The designated safeguarding lead has a good understanding of the school's responsibilities and she ensures that records are kept correctly. Having said this, risk assessments for school activities, on and off the school site, have only just been tightened up. Inspectors' checks on lunchtime arrangements found that the level of staff supervision in one of the dining halls was just adequate.
- Leaders take steps to check that pupils attending the alternative provision are kept safe.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors expressed confidence in the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have done very little to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers have not received regular or constructive feedback about their work and have been left to work as they choose. This has resulted in some effective practice that has not been shared and some ineffective practice that has gone unnoticed.
- Assessment is poor. There is no whole-school approach, so different teachers have found different ways to check on pupils' progress. This has led to confusion, work not being matched to pupils' learning needs and slow progress going undetected until it is too late.
- In several classes, pupils plod through tasks with little interest. They rely on teachers' or teaching assistants' instructions and are not encouraged to show any initiative. In one lesson, for example, pupils were using words on prompt sheets to help them inject adjectives into their writing. Pupils of all abilities showed no inclination to use a dictionary or thesaurus to check words or add variety to their writing. Staff did not prompt them to do so. Indeed, around the school there are many pristine resources that have hardly been used.
- In too many cases, pupils of different abilities are given work at the same level. In an upper Key Stage 2 lesson about division, for example, pupils who could divide a four-digit number by a single-digit number were simply given larger numbers to divide. The operation was exactly the same and these pupils did not develop or deepen their understanding in any way. Similarly, when tackling written tasks, pupils and staff were seen to be measuring success by the number of sentences written rather than the quality or skills demonstrated. Inspectors' checks on books found that this approach is not uncommon.
- A slow pace or low expectations from some teachers causes pupils to lose interest. Pupils in some classes have to wait for others to complete a task before they are allowed to get on with any more work. These pupils soon lose interest and switch off. On other occasions, pupils were seen slurping from water bottles, swinging on chairs, turning their backs to the teacher, or simply doing nothing when they should have been getting on with work or responding to teachers' instructions.
- Nevertheless, there are pockets of effective practice and authoritative teaching. In upper Key Stage 2, pupils were captivated by a topical video clip of astronaut Tim Peake's rocket launch, which was being used to generate ideas for writing. Elsewhere, some experienced and newly qualified teachers demonstrated an ability to hold pupils' attention and get the best from them.
- Some improvements have begun this term. A new marking policy has been introduced and this is being used with consistency across the school. A new behaviour management policy has also been introduced with the aim of lifting expectations and ensuring good order in classrooms. Already, this is bringing benefits, but it is used more successfully in some classes than in others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils who have struggled to cope with school life or have had violent outbursts have not been given the support they need. Staff have been left to cope with some very difficult behaviour and, until this term, have sometimes resorted to shutting a distressed pupil in a small room to calm them down. Staff have been trained in the use of physical restraint and such incidents have been recorded properly. However, it is clear that this was a desperate measure used in the absence of proper support for these pupils'

emotional and behavioural needs. This practice has been stopped but proper support and help for these pupils is still not in place. In addition, the impact of such extreme behaviour on the well-being of other pupils and staff is unacceptable.

- Parents and pupils do not think bullying is a problem. Pupils are taught about it and know that it can happen at school, but are confident that staff would stop it. They do, however, report some insensitive behaviour at times and inspection evidence confirms that this does happen. For instance, some pupils do not understand why pupils who are deaf look at them closely to read their lips and they object to this, sometimes in an unkind way. Pupils also report that fights happen on the playground and that some pupils are rude or disrespectful to staff.
- Supervision arrangements in the dining hall area are only just adequate. Pupils are kept safe, but movement along the corridors and in the hall is disorderly. Pupils jostle and make a lot of noise and mess as they eat their meals.
- Pupils receive guidance about how to keep themselves safe in different situations, such as when using the internet. In conversation with inspectors, pupils talked about the risks they can face and what they can do to protect themselves.
- Routines for registering and supervising the children who attend the before- or after-school childcare give no cause for concern. Children behave sensibly and get along well with one another when they are there.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- In some classrooms, a significant minority of pupils are inattentive. They look away from their teacher or fiddle with drink bottles when they should be listening. Sometimes, this is because the teacher has misjudged the timing or difficulty of a task and pupils get bored. However, at other times pupils are just being rude and are allowed to get away with it. On occasions, pupils are quietly disobedient. They ignore teachers' requests or respond with disrespectful tardiness.
- A new behaviour policy has been introduced this term. In the main, this has been welcomed as a good thing by staff and pupils. This policy promotes a consistent whole-school approach and pupils think it is a fairer system than before because the practice of punishing a whole class for one pupil's bad behaviour has been stopped. Misbehaving pupils now are issued with 'instant rethinks' (with a note to parents) to draw immediate attention to misdemeanours and prompt them to reflect and redeem themselves through better behaviour in the future. Nevertheless, the policy is not wholly successful. Some staff are too strict and issue escalating warnings with unnecessary and counter-productive haste, while others are slow to challenge poor behaviour. In both cases, a sense of stress and anxiety from staff and pupils hangs in the air and distracts everyone's attention from learning.
- Pupils' attendance has been just below average in recent years but is improving. Unexplained absence is followed up swiftly and persistent absence is challenged. Poor punctuality is a problem. A lot of pupils arrive late in the morning with the excuse that they overslept. This is a poor excuse and a bad habit that will hamper their future prospects.
- In the past, exclusions have not been used. This term, for the first time in several years, there has been one fixed-term exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Many pupils do not reach the academic standards that they should. At the end of both key stages, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are some way below the national average. While some pupils do make good progress, many do not.
- For several years, pupils' progress across the school has been slow because of huge variations in the quality of teaching. In some classes, pupils do quite well, only to fall back in other classes. Within the same year group, some pupils make faster progress than others depending on the class they are in. Weaknesses in assessment and a lack of checks on teaching by leaders have allowed this situation to continue. No one has been keeping an informed eye on how well pupils are doing. Slow progress and low attainment have been too readily accepted as the norm in this school.
- In several classes, the most-able pupils complete much of their work with ease and do not achieve in line with their capabilities. In contrast, pupils who find aspects of learning difficult often struggle to keep up so they rely on adult help or copy from prompt sheets or other pupils.

- About half the pupils in the school are identified as disadvantaged. These pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers in school are all underachieving. In 2015, both these groups left primary school with low standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. The disadvantaged pupils were over a year behind others nationally in reading and writing, and even further behind in mathematics. Results for previous years show a similar picture.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or a disability receive targeted support, with some specialist input which is useful. The lack of assessment information, however, is a huge problem. Staff do not know how well these pupils are doing and, on a day-to-day basis, many classroom activities are not well matched to their needs.
- Historically, pupils who are deaf, including those who are profoundly deaf, have been fully included in all lessons. Their specific needs have been attended to by specialist staff using sign language within the main class. Consequently, like other pupils, their progress has been erratic as it has been driven by the quality of teaching in whichever class they happen to have been in.
- The results from the phonics (letters and sounds) screening check in Year 1 presents some encouraging data. In 2015, the results were better than the previous year and not far below the national figure. This is an upward step.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- The provision in the early years is not set up to meet children's learning needs. There is a lack of leadership and staff working in the Nursery and Reception classes are making the most of the poorly organised resources available. Children are kept safe but are not making the progress that they should.
- There is plenty of evidence to confirm that the majority of children start school with levels of knowledge and skill below those typical for their age. School records show that the proportions of children reaching a good level of development have increased each year for the past three years, which presents a picture of improving outcomes. Having said this, the school's information about children's progress across early years presents a confusing picture. Records for some children do not appear to be well informed by what the children can actually do, and the most recent assessment information contains some anomalies that leaders are unable to explain. In other instances, there are no readily understandable explanations why some children are recorded as having very poor performance in some areas of learning, yet much better performance in other areas. This raises questions about the way information about children's progress is gathered and recorded. When viewed within the context of weak assessment across the rest of the school and the standards seen in early years and in Year 1, inspectors found it difficult to have confidence in the assessment procedures in this part of the school.
- As in the rest of the school, the quality of teaching is variable; there is some effective practice and some weak practice. The range of learning experiences provided is rather narrow and, currently, the outdoor area is out of use, which limits provision even more. The shortcomings in assessment mean that teaching is not informed by children's learning needs, so planned activities often serve to occupy children rather than move them on in their learning. On a more positive note, in all classes, there are good relationships between adults and children. Well-understood routines, such as tidy-up time, help children to develop good habits and responsible attitudes.
- Children's behaviour presents no obvious cause for concern. Adults manage children well and have regular contact with parents. The key weaknesses across early years all stem from poor leadership. Staff have not had access to regular training and have not received constructive feedback about their work. Consequently, several key aspects of the provision are poorly organised and ineffective.

School details

Unique reference number	104308
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10002460

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	729
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Wedderburn
Headteacher	Hayley Guest
Telephone number	01902 558899
Website	www.eastparkprimary.net
Email address	eastparkprimary@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 October 2013

Information about this school

- East Park Primary School is considerably larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Approximately 60% of the pupils are White British and about 40% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is above the national average. The term 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support from pupil premium funding.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The unvalidated results for 2015 indicate that the school will meet the 2015 floor standards.
- The school offers morning or afternoon early years provision for Nursery-age children and full-time early years provision for Reception-age children.
- The school has specialist resource-based provision for who are deaf. Currently, 20 pupils attend this unit.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the Kingston Referral Unit and at a non-registered provider called Re-Entry.
- The school provides before- and after-school care on the school site. This was checked during this inspection.
- In January 2016, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher started at the school. Prior to this, the school had been led for one term by an acting headteacher (the previous deputy headteacher) following the retirement of the previous permanent headteacher in July 2015.
- The school is currently receiving support from a national leader in education who is the executive headteacher of Manor Primary School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classrooms. Some of these observations were carried out alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also attended a school assembly, examined pupils' work in books and on display, and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and break times, and when pupils were moving around the school site or attending the before-school childcare.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, senior and middle leaders, a local authority adviser and two governors.
- By the end of the inspection, there were six recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which were too few to generate a report. Instead, inspectors looked at the findings from the school's recent survey of parents' views, and talked to some parents at school. In addition, inspectors looked at responses to the school's own survey of staff views and considered 19 staff responses on Ofsted's paper questionnaire for school staff. Inspectors also talked with members of staff about what it is like to work at the school.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement and evaluations of the school's performance. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, behaviour, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

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Lynda Townsend	Ofsted Inspector

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