

Ditton Park Academy

Wellington Street, Slough, Berkshire SL1 1YG

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have established an ethos of high aspiration across all areas of the school. The principal and his dynamic leadership team do whatever it takes to provide a well-rounded education for the pupils in this school.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development very well. They use assessment information effectively to identify and focus on any areas that need improvement.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers ask challenging questions and use a range of exciting resources. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to do their best.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make particularly impressive progress.
- The curriculum provides a good range of choices for pupils' options in Year 9. However, some practical subjects have either not been offered or numbers have been capped because there are not enough specialist facilities.
- Leaders and governors ensure that additional funding is targeting the pupils who need it most. There is emerging evidence that disadvantaged pupils are rapidly catching up.
- Pupils behave well within lessons and around the school. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers and peers.
- Leaders ensure that pupils know about a wide range of topics including staying safe, keeping healthy and current affairs.
- Teachers offer pupils a wide range of extra-curricular activities to broaden their experiences. Pupils enjoy learning about life in modern Britain. The school makes a strong contribution to the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Governors give strong support and appropriate challenge to the principal and other leaders to ensure that all pupils aim for the highest expectations possible.
- The trust provides an extensive network of highly experienced local school leaders. Their expertise adds greatly to the school's capacity to strive for excellence in all things.
- Leaders are not complacent. They are keen to provide lessons where all groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress across all subjects.
- Most pupils attend school regularly, although there is a small minority of pupils whose attendance needs to be improved.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Ensure that teachers plan learning to suit the needs of all pupils, especially the most able, so that opportunities for pupils to make rapid progress are maximised.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal's determined leadership and uncompromising ambition has ensured that this newly established school has flourished. This is despite some challenges, including temporary accommodation. The principal has built up a dynamic team of senior leaders and has increased capacity this year with the appointment of two additional assistant principals. The leadership team has maintained a strong focus on improving teaching and learning, and standards have continued to rise.
- Senior leaders seek excellence in all they do and have ambitious plans for the continued expansion of the school. They are very optimistic about the future and have engendered a real excitement among staff and pupils about the imminent move into the new school building.
- Staff speak warmly of the numerous experiences provided to extend and broaden their teaching skills. They are proud to work at the school. Leaders ensure that staff have regular chances to share good practice in addition to other training. They use a variety of opportunities to work with colleagues from beyond the school, in order to remain 'outward looking'. Leaders have ensured that the performance targets set for teachers are clearly linked to improving progress for pupils.
- Leaders use additional funding, including that for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, well. For example, the funding to support Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy is used effectively. Teachers provide high-quality support which means that these pupils' skills improve rapidly. Leaders published plans for using additional monies on the school website during the inspection.
- As the school grows, leaders make sure that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. In addition, pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities that enrich their development. For example, Year 8 pupils described learning about first aid, global warming, law and justice and 'mindfulness' to name but a few.
- The school's contribution to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is very strong. All age groups cooperate well together socially and mix happily at break times. Religious studies is integrated into personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and other subjects. Pupils have rich opportunities to explore deeply the diversity of religious experiences. Careers provision is delivered both through academic mentoring sessions and during PSHE lessons. It is effective in preparing pupils for life beyond school.
- Transition into the school in Year 7 is carefully planned, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, work closely with other local schools. This supports pupils to make a smooth transition into the school in Year 7.

- A number of the middle leaders joined the school in September and there is emerging leadership at this level. The pastoral team is very effective. Heads of house now oversee pupils' academic progress as well as their behaviour and attendance. As the school expands, some of the wider middle leadership team who are relatively new in post are developing in their roles.
- Staff enjoy working in the school and feel that the leaders run the school with the best of intentions. However, a small minority of staff felt that in this small school there are too many roles for some individuals, which stretches goodwill.

Governance of the school

- Governors have considerable expertise and a wide range of skills to support the school. They are proactive in their backing and give generously of their time, visiting the school regularly. Consequently, they challenge leaders accurately to continue to move the school forward.
- Governors have ensured that there is a suitable performance management system in place which sets ambitious targets for staff to continue to improve the progress of pupils in their classrooms.
- Governors use external support well to review teaching and learning, and other areas of the school. This helps them to better support the continued expansion of the school. The school, which is part of the SASH Education Trust, will become part of a multi-academy trust from September.
- Governors ensure that leaders put pupil premium funding to good use. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress. However, leaders are not complacent and continue to encourage these pupils to strive for ever higher success in all aspects of their development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders work closely and effectively with parents and a wide range of agencies, including the local authority, to keep children safe. As a result, pupils feel very safe and know who they could go to if they had concerns.
- Leaders make sure that recruitment procedures are robust. They complete the required checks on all staff, including the large number joining the school in September, and keep careful records. Staff receive thorough training which is updated frequently.
- Pupils told inspectors that the school prepares them well for keeping themselves safe in a variety of ways, including online. Parents agree with these views. Pupils enjoy their PSHE lessons where they have an opportunity to debate and discuss a wide range of topical issues. This contributes to their welfare and confidence as active citizens.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good in the majority of subjects. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and many are passionate about organising learning for their pupils in stimulating and well-planned lessons.
- Teachers use questioning to provide appropriate challenge to pupils in lessons. They use this information to skilfully match activities to the needs of pupils. Where learning is most effective, teachers challenge pupils to think more deeply and extend their answers. For example, in English lessons pupils often work together to explore opinions and develop their answers. This helps them to broaden their arguments before coming to any conclusions.
- Pupils enjoy reading the texts presented to them in English lessons. Teachers are looking to explore how they can engage boys further to ensure that they make the same strong progress that girls make.
- Pupils and parents confirmed that homework is set regularly, with many activities available online to extend learning. Where pupils need extra support, teachers are very willing to spend time with them to ensure that they can complete their homework successfully.
- Leaders are keen to develop independence in their pupils. Some teachers are adept at planning activities to facilitate this. For example, a business lesson was observed where all the pupils were deeply engaged in finishing off a project about the Industrial Revolution. The majority of folders were immaculately presented, with great detail. Pupils had risen to the challenge and had enjoyed the range of choice that they had, showing how well they can take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers check pupils' progress throughout the year. They use this information to celebrate good progress and also pick up on those pupils who may be underperforming. Pupils benefit from ongoing feedback in many subjects which helps them to make good progress. However, not all teachers follow the school feedback policy consistently.
- Pupils' typically good progress is evident from their work in lessons and in their books. However, where misconceptions are not always addressed promptly, such as in mathematics, science and French lessons, pupils' progress is less rapid. Sometimes pupils lose interest in their learning and this affects their behaviour as well as their progress.
- Leaders recognise that activities in lessons do not consistently match the ability range of the pupils in a class, particularly the most able. Leaders are using training to support teachers to apply a wider range of strategies to ensure that pupils of all abilities are stretched to make the best possible progress.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very proud of the fact that they regularly raise money for local charities which are often at the heart of their community. Pupils speak freely and openly. They clearly feel confident about discussing topics of importance to them as a result of the school's drive to improve literacy.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying at school. They like the fact that a wide range of cultures and languages are encountered at the school. They said that the school is a tolerant community and they were not aware of any racist incidents. This is backed up by the school records.
- Pupils enjoy the good range of extra-curricular trips and clubs. During the inspection a large group had gathered to sit together outside after school for a drama enrichment session. They were receiving their scripts from the teacher and were highly engaged.
- Pupils feel that they have a strong voice in the school, with an effective student council in place. An example of its impact is that the school leaders have now invested in new equipment for use by the pupils at breaktime.
- Pupils say that the school takes a zero tolerance approach to dealing with any form of discrimination. They talk confidently about a recent assembly that helped them to understand about preventing extremism.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and take a pride in wearing their uniform correctly. The site is well supervised by staff at all times and pupils move around in an orderly fashion. There is very little evidence of litter and pupils use the bins provided. There is some boisterous behaviour at busy times but staff are quick to intervene.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically good. However, where teaching is not engaging some pupils can switch off and engage in low-level disruption.
- Pupils' attendance at school is usually good. Persistent absence for vulnerable pupils continues to be a challenge for school leaders. A number of pupils have medical conditions which prevent them from attending at certain times. The pastoral leaders maintain good contact with these pupils, and ensure that they are supported on their return to school.
- There have been two permanent exclusions this year for serious offences. Fixed-term exclusions have been higher than national averages but are reducing. This is partly because leaders have introduced an internal seclusion room which helps prevent pupils having to be sent home.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make steady progress from a range of different starting points in the majority of subjects. This school has no external historic data and inspectors looked at a wealth of evidence provided by leaders about pupils' progress to date, as well as observing their progress in lessons and by looking at their books.
- Current pupils demonstrate good progress across the three year groups and in most subjects. This is as a result of good teaching and a wide range of finely tuned extra help, both within lessons and via personalised one-to-one support where appropriate.
- Leaders' assessment information shows that pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make sustained progress from their starting points and are catching up with their peers. The special educational needs coordinator has developed good systems and robust procedures to track these pupils and put in extra support where needed. 'Pupil passports' provide staff with tested strategies which work with individual pupils. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books and found no discernible difference between the work of disadvantaged pupils and others in the majority of subjects.
- Although pupils typically make good progress and achieve increasingly well over time, there is some variation across subjects and for some key groups. Leaders identify that boys and the disadvantaged need to make more rapid progress in core subjects, so that they can achieve better in the future. Leaders are also working to make sure that the most able make more rapid progress from their starting points.
- Leaders analyse their assessment information at regular intervals. They have highlighted strengths in English and history but acknowledge that progress is not sufficiently rapid in geography, French and design technology.
- The school has a much higher percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language than nationally. These pupils make particularly impressive progress. The specialist support for new arrivals who are first stage language learners is well organised with a wide range of resources available to help them achieve well.

School details

Unique reference number	141009
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10032501

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	480
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Bill Alexander
Principal	Nick Caulfield
Telephone number	01753 537594
Website	www.dittonparkacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@dittonparkacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. Missing documentation was rectified during the inspection.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This is a free school which opened in September 2014. The school currently has pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. The school is presently in temporary accommodation and plans to move to the new building in September 2017. It is part of the SASH Education Trust and three of the trustees are local headteachers. From September the school will become part of a multi-academy trust.

- There is a much higher than average number of pupils in the school from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average. The average number of pupils who have support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average as is the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons across all three year groups and a variety of subjects.
- Inspectors also visited academic mentoring sessions and the seclusion room and the off-site provision for physical education.
- Pupils' views were taken into account in a variety of ways. Inspectors met three groups of pupils formally, as well as speaking with pupils in lessons and around the school. They listened to some readers in lessons. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, teachers and representatives of the governing body including some trustees. The lead inspector also telephoned the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of documentation, including the school's strategic planning documents, minutes of governors' meetings, the single record of recruitment checks, safeguarding information, reports of attendance and behaviour, and records relating to the academic progress and outcomes for pupils.

Inspection team

Beverley Murtagh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Storey	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Duke	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Pennington	Ofsted Inspector

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