

Inspection of Vernon Park Primary School

Peak Street, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 2NF

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since February 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Vernon Park Primary School. They enjoy being part of a welcoming, friendly and caring community. They have positive relationships with their peers and staff. Pupils, including children in the early years, behave well in class and around the school. Most pupils listen attentively and remain focused on tasks during lessons.

The quality and delivery of some subject curriculums, including in the early years, vary. This means that pupils do not consistently learn what the school intended. Therefore, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school provides high-quality pastoral support to pupils and their families. It ensures that pupils know how to stay safe and healthy and keep active. Pupils talk confidently about differences and how it is important to celebrate diversity.

Pupils take on meaningful leadership roles in the school. One example is the group known as the 'restorative champions'. These pupil representatives help others on the playground to sort out any difficulties. Pupils also benefit from a well-designed outdoor curriculum. They speak excitedly about 'whittling' and using the 'Kelly kettle'.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum structure. In some subjects, the school has logically ordered the knowledge that it wants pupils to gain. This helps pupils to build on prior learning and remember more. However, in other subjects, the curriculum content is not as clear. This means staff do not know the exact knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which this new content should be taught. This is also the case in the early years, where the school has not defined some of the important knowledge that children should learn in some areas. Pupils do not develop a solid body of knowledge.

In some areas of the curriculum, including the early years, where there is a lack of clarity about what pupils should learn, staff do not use their checks on pupils' learning sufficiently well. This prevents staff from identifying and addressing pupils' misconceptions effectively. In addition, some areas of the curriculum are not delivered as the school intends. As a result, pupils do not have secure foundations on which to build new learning.

Early reading is a priority. A suitable phonics programme is in place to support pupils in learning to decode and blend words. Pupils make secure progress through the programme. In Nursery, children explore rhyme and rhythm. This prepares them well for starting to sound and blend together simple words in the Reception class. The school works closely with parents, who play a key role in supporting their child's reading by attending the weekly 'read-together' mornings. Many pupils enjoy reading and are doing so with increased fluency. Pupils read books that are appropriately matched to the sounds they have learned.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where needed, staff work closely with wider agencies to secure personalised support for these pupils. Staff understand how to adapt their practice to help pupils with SEND access the curriculum. This includes for pupils within the special educational needs (SEN) unit who, after receiving effective support, are typically successfully reintegrated into their mainstream school.

The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. It has established clear rules and routines for behaviour. These are understood and followed by children in the early years and by older pupils. Pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour receive effective support. Pupils show care and consideration towards each other. They understand how to behave well and typically do.

The school's sharp focus on improving attendance is leading to some improvement. The school intervenes when a pupil's attendance begins to fall, ensuring tailored support is put in place. Leaders know that they need to continue this work so that the momentum of improvement continues.

Through curriculum subjects, pupils learn about different religions, cultures and the values of respect and tolerance. The school teaches pupils about staying mentally and physically healthy. For example, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when online. Through the school's work on poverty-proofing, all pupils can take part in clubs, trips and residential.

Staff are proud to work here. They feel that leaders are caring and consider their workload. In some aspects of their role, governors maintain effective oversight of the school, including safeguarding. However, the school's checks on how effectively the curriculum has been implemented, and the impact it is having on pupils progress, have not been sufficiently robust. As a result, the school's priorities for development have not been focused sharply on addressing the most significant areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, and aspects of the early years, the school has not made the essential knowledge that pupils must learn clear enough. This hinders how well pupils achieve. The school should develop its curriculum thinking across all subjects so that teachers know exactly what they are teaching pupils and when.
- Some areas of the curriculum are not being delivered as intended. As a result, pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge they need to achieve well in these areas. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum is implemented successfully so that pupils build their knowledge well.

- Staff do not use assessment strategies well enough to check on how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. This prevents staff from identifying and addressing the gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that staff are well equipped to use assessment strategies effectively to identify gaps in pupils' prior learning and adjust their teaching accordingly.
- The school does not have a sufficiently clear oversight of curriculum effectiveness. This means that it does not know if the curriculum is having the intended impact and what changes are needed to improve it. The school should ensure that it systematically checks that the curriculum is being implemented as it is designed and has the appropriate impact on pupils' achievement.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	106082
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10348008
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stephen Campbell
Headteacher	Claire Lee
Website	www.vernonpark.stockport.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 February 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection the school has appointed a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher.
- The school has a SEN unit for up to 10 pupils aged between three and five with speech and language difficulties. There are currently nine pupils who access this provision. Some of these pupils have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school runs a before- and after- school club for pupils.
- This school does not use alternative provision for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English including early reading, mathematics, geography and music. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body including the chair. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kelly Butler

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Mills

Ofsted Inspector

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