

Alex Park Democratic School

Demesne Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8PH

Inspection dates

11 March 2020

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i)

- This standard was identified as unmet at the standard inspection in June 2019. This was because the proprietor had not made sure that curriculum plans and schemes of work (SoW) were adapted effectively to take account of the full range of pupils' prior attainment and capabilities. Nor had the plans and SoW taken account of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils made uneven progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the evaluation of the school's action plan in September 2019, it was found that the proposed timescales for leaders' planned actions to meet the standard were not realistic. This was because the planned actions did not stipulate clearly enough how they would use the SoW to improve the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the evaluation of the school's second action plan in December 2019, it was found that leaders had detailed many actions to improve the quality of education. However, the actions did not focus on pupils' acquisition of knowledge sharply. Leaders did not set out how the plans and SoW would enable pupils to make good progress.
- Leaders were devastated that the action plan was again deemed to be unacceptable. However, they responded swiftly.
- The new curriculum policy is logical and reflects the distinctive nature of the school. It covers all the requirements of the independent school standards. The policy is supported by SoW which support teachers in planning pupils' learning effectively. It reflects how the curriculum will be adapted to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils.
- Leaders thought carefully about what they wanted pupils to know by the time they left the school in reading, writing and mathematics, and set about reviewing the SoW. They worked methodically to knit together the subjects in the National Curriculum with the demands of the democratic curriculum. Each SoW for reading, writing and mathematics has end points in line with those expected in the National Curriculum for the different stages within the school. In this way, the SoW set out the increased expectations for pupils as they move through the school. The SoW are organised into three documents

which reflect the three age phases in the school: Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. Each SoW sets out learning in order so that pupils build knowledge in logical steps. Each document highlights how the planning will be adapted for pupils with SEND. Additionally, staff have reviewed pupils' individual education plans so that the objectives set support pupils' learning. Staff take these objectives into consideration when planning lessons.

- Class teachers use the SoW to map out the specific knowledge and skills pupils need to know, and use this information in weekly planning.
- Each SoW is accompanied by a tracking document which staff use to check pupils' progression through each subject. Staff use this, and summaries of pupils' learning over a six-week block, to report to parents and carers on how their children are doing.
- The sample of pupils' books I looked at show that pupils are writing more and over a range of genres. Mathematics books show a clearer progression of skills. This is a big improvement. Pupils used to complete worksheets which restricted their chance to practise their writing and calculation skills. Written feedback to pupils links to what they need to do next to improve. Pupils' work is much neater and tidier.
- A new library area is well stocked with a variety of new, high-quality books. Pupils are more enthusiastic about reading. Staff guide pupils to choose books which increase their vocabulary and challenge their thinking. Pupils are heard to read more regularly.
- Teachers are now using one programme to teach phonics, so pupils are learning sounds and new vocabulary systematically. Further training for staff in the teaching of phonics is planned.
- As a consequence of the actions taken by the headteacher and staff, pupils are doing much better in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have ensured that the standard in this part, checked in this inspection, is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- At the start of the inspection, the school's safeguarding policy was not showing on the website. However, leaders realised that this was due to a technical issue and it was resolved swiftly.
- The proprietors updated the school's safeguarding policy in September 2019 so that it reflects the latest government guidance. All staff were updated on the policy. It provides clear information for staff and others on what action to take should a safeguarding concern arise.
- Leaders share the regular updates received from the local authority to keep staff's knowledge fresh.
- The policy is now available for parents and others from the school's website.
- Leaders have ensured that the standard in this part, checked in this inspection, is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- This standard was identified as unmet during the June 2019 inspection because senior staff and proprietors had not ensured that all the independent school standards were consistently met.
- The school's action plan in September 2019 identified a range of actions which would establish appropriate oversight from leaders and the proprietors. However, it did not detail how any increased monitoring would impact on the pupils' quality of education.
- The evaluation of the school's second action plan in December 2019 found that there was insufficient detail about the planned completion of actions. This made it difficult to know when leaders expected the necessary changes to be fully in place.
- The proprietor, the headteacher and staff are steadfast in their resolve to make sure the school meets the independent school standards.
- Action to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is starting to make a difference.
- Appointing a new teacher for English has added to the subject expertise within the school. The new teacher has brought a wealth of experience gained in maintained schools. Expectations of pupils are higher. Pupils have more pride in their work.
- The headteacher sought advice from a headteacher of a local maintained primary school. Using this external support and guidance has had a positive impact on leadership and management. Vital processes are in place for checking the effectiveness of the school.
- A monitoring and evaluation timetable is in place so that leaders follow a systematic process of checking that the SoW and tracking system are having the intended impact in lessons. The headteacher has observed teachers in class, scrutinised pupils' workbooks and met with pupils to hear their views. She has used this information to review the action plan and to inform an evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
- The school does not have a governing body. However, the headteacher uses the expertise of the headteacher from a local school to provide challenge, as well as support. This is working well.
- Leaders have ensured that the standard in this part, checked in this inspection, is now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if -
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

School details

Unique reference number	146337
DfE registration number	352/6014
Inspection number	10145310

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietor	MPECC Limited
Headteacher	Susana Lopez Penedo
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,212 – £6,435
Telephone number	0161 226 8080
Website	www.alexandraparkclc.co.uk
Email address	Susanna.lopez@alexandraparkclc.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	18–20 June 2019

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new teacher has joined the school.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The previous standard inspection was carried out in June 2019. At that time, the school was judged to not comply with the independent school standards.
- The school was asked to prepare an action plan. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted in September 2019. This plan was not approved by the Department for Education (DfE).
- The school was asked to prepare a second action plan. This was evaluated in December 2019 and was not approved by the DfE.
- This inspection was conducted without notice to the school and was the first progress monitoring inspection.
- I met with the headteacher, who is a proprietor, and the other proprietor, and one class teacher. I met with the headteacher from a local maintained primary school who is working with the headteacher.
- I visited lessons and spoke with pupils.
- I looked at policies, schemes of work, weekly planning and examples of pupils' work.
- I examined the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Eileen Mulgrew, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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