

# Park House

## Independent school standard inspection report

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Park House is a day special school registered for 14 pupils aged six to 19 years who have autistic spectrum disorders. There are currently 12 boys and one girl on roll aged between eight and 15 years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and all but one is funded by their local authority. Pupils' ability is very wide-ranging. Some have Asperger's syndrome while others have severe learning difficulties. They all experience difficulties associated with their disorder, such as problems with social interaction, communication and challenging behaviour.

The school is located in a large Victorian house in the village of Thorney, near Peterborough. It is set in its own grounds, adjacent to a park. The school opened in February 2005 and was last inspected in May 2008. Its main aim is to provide a warm, caring, structured multi-disciplinary environment in which 'each child feels safe and secure, is treated as an individual, and develops their skills to the fullest potential.'

## **Evaluation of the school**

Park House School provides good quality education and pupils make good academic progress. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and strongly supports their excellent spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development. Safeguarding arrangements are effective, and behaviour management is excellent. The curriculum is satisfactory because it does not represent all that it provides in suitable written plans and schemes of work and some required elements are not included. Teaching is good, and the wide-ranging assessment of pupils' academic progress and personal development by the multi-disciplinary staff team is outstanding. The school has addressed the small number of weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, and meets all but three of the regulations.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Each pupil has a personalised curriculum selected to meet their particular needs, aptitudes and interests. Consequently, pupils experience appropriate and relevant experiences in the required curriculum subjects and areas of learning. The curriculum is supported strongly by the school's therapeutic, multi-disciplinary approach to planning. However, not all subjects are fully outlined in

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

suitable plans and schemes of work as required by the regulations for independent schools and the requirements of the National Curriculum, as indicated by pupils' statements of special educational needs. For example, although pupils throughout the school regularly take part in a range of sporting and physical activities, this is not identified in a scheme of work for physical education. Similar examples include the school's response to providing a modern foreign language and careers guidance at Key Stage 3, and music and art at Key Stage 2. While there is a curriculum policy and subject policies for all subjects, these do not always reflect the curriculum as provided.

Nevertheless, the curriculum has many strengths. It is focused on supporting pupils' prime difficulties as a result of their autistic spectrum disorder, for example, by emphasising communication and deeper-level understanding. Each pupil's curriculum is underpinned by a detailed, high quality individual educational plan. These are developed by the multi-disciplinary staff team together with the pupil, and parents and carers. The plans provide numerous targets for curriculum subjects and areas of the pupils' development and contribute significantly to their progress and well-being.

Much of the curriculum for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 has been developed in the last year, as the age group is relatively new to the school. Most subjects are very well planned with clear, well-written, long and medium term plans. The Key Stage 2 curriculum is provided through some clearly defined, well-planned subject areas such as English, mathematics and science, and 'topics' which have a different focus each term, such as history or geography. Regular activities such as 'snack' and 'walk' are effectively underpinned by each pupil's multi-disciplinary targets. However, curriculum links between the two departments are not yet fully developed. This means that planning does not build easily on what has been taught at an earlier stage. The school has recently been granted permission to extend its age-range to 19 years. It has made a satisfactory start on developing a distinct curriculum that will equip the students for fulfilled adult lives.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Pupils each have a key worker who delivers most of their curriculum, overseen by the department heads and part-time subject specialists. Lessons involve a good mix of activities, including discussion, research and written work. Notable strengths of teaching include high expectations of pupils' achievement, behaviour and communication. For example, a 12 year old pupil gained a grade C GCSE in mathematics last year. Staff check pupils' work and understanding all through the lesson which supports continuous learning, and work is tailored well to meet each pupil's needs. Consequently, pupils have very positive attitudes and a clear enjoyment of learning, and many show the ability to work independently with self-motivation. Occasionally, a few weaknesses in teaching are evident in lessons. These isolated weaknesses include a slow pace of learning, a 'flat' uninteresting delivery and an occasional lack in the key worker's subject knowledge.

Assessment is a strength of the school. Extensive, detailed multi-disciplinary records are kept of all aspects of pupils' learning and development, including their behaviour, communication, physical development and general daily demeanour. Pupils' academic progress is regularly assessed and tracked, although the wealth of detailed information is not always easy to interpret. The information is reviewed regularly and

underpins the multi-disciplinary target-setting process, curriculum and teaching plans, and detailed progress reports.

Pupils learn well and pupils of all abilities make good academic progress. They make particularly good progress in mathematics, and least progress in English, due to their particular difficulties with communication and interpretation. However, improving progress in English and communication is a constant focus of the education and therapy staff. Progress in personal development is outstanding. Overall, pupils are well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils say directly, and unanimously through the inspection questionnaires, that they enjoy school. They attend happily and regularly despite several having refused to go school in their previous placements. On entry, pupils generally have low confidence and self-esteem. The outstanding relationships with staff and positive school ethos help pupils to develop self-esteem, and often personal insight and the ability to reflect. Their self-confidence and attitude to learning improves considerably as they become happier and more settled. This is demonstrated in their enthusiasm for work, and, for the majority, their independence and motivation to succeed.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. It improves rapidly due to the school's excellent, well-understood behaviour management strategies and reward and sanction systems. Strong support helps pupils understand right from wrong. They learn that all actions have consequences, both positive and negative. Pupils are taught how to speak to others appropriately. One pupil, for example, has a 'meter' with a pointer which staff move between 'rude' and 'polite' to reinforce suitable conversational tones. Another pupil welcomed the company of the inspector in his search for magnetic surfaces in the grounds, and talked enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the task. The curriculum supports pupils' understanding of moral values, such as not stealing. Higher ability pupils are encouraged to explore social and moral issues, and give their views and opinions.

Pupils develop the personal skills necessary for living harmoniously in society. They learn to be tolerant and respectful of all people, regardless of gender, religion or ethnic origin. Pupils develop an understanding of their own and other cultures through curriculum activities such as art, music, literature and visits. They also learn about the modern-day cultural influences such as television and the internet.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example, by cooking lunch for the group and raising money for underprivileged children in the Solomon Islands. Curriculum subjects such as history and personal, social and health education, help pupils to gain an understanding of society's structures and institutions. According to pupils' age and ability, these range from local services such as the fire and police to more complex concepts such as democracy and the legal system. In all, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a very strong contribution to their academic progress and future well-being.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and has improved since the previous inspection. Policies and procedures are simple, clear and underpin practice. Child protection procedures are robust and supported by numerous additional policies such as 'whistleblowing', 'touch' and 'intimate care' which give staff very clear guidance on keeping pupils and themselves safe. The previous inspection found that some training had lapsed. This has been properly addressed. All required staff training, such as for child protection, fire safety and first aid is up to date and future renewal dates are now clearly identified. Suitable, regular checks and risk assessments are made in relation to health and safety. Recording of any incidents, accidents, or restraints are detailed and carefully monitored. The school has an appropriate disability access policy, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The staff show outstanding care and concern for the welfare and well-being of each pupil and are very vigilant to changes in their demeanour and behaviour. Pupils' well-being is strongly supported by outstanding relationships between pupils and staff, the seamless multi-disciplinary approach, and the 'family ethos' in which every pupil is cherished. Families, too, are offered considerable on-going support which they very much value. The rigorous, consistent application of the behaviour management policy supports the rapid reduction of pupils' challenging behaviour and development of outstanding behaviour. The school does much to promote healthy lifestyles, through physical activity and an emphasis on healthy eating. Consequently, pupils learn to be more purposefully active and to widen their diet. Overall, this high quality provision ensures that pupils thrive and enjoy school.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All the required checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults, including the proprietors, to work with children. They are recorded as required.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school's premises and accommodation meet all regulations. The safety and security of the premises are given high priority. There are sufficient classrooms to allocate flexibly to individuals or very small groups, according to their changing needs. Each pupil's teaching and learning area is personalised to their individual needs and interests. This familiar, safe and well-structured environment helps them to learn effectively. Pupils have the use of two kitchens to support learning in food technology and promote their developing independence skills. The grounds are used effectively for play and learning, for example, in science and the creative arts. Good use is made of the community to provide additional opportunities for learning and curriculum enrichment.

## Provision of information

The information provided for parents, carers and others is clear, accurate and up to date. All regulations are met. The prospectus is attractive and informative, and is complemented by the developing school website. Parents and carers are kept very well informed about their children's progress by regular meetings, in which they contribute fully to the formulation of new educational targets. Detailed education and therapy reports for parents, carers and local authorities include suitable wide-ranging information about pupils' attainment, progress and personal development.

## Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a suitable policy and procedures which meet regulations.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- set out a curriculum policy in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- ensure that where pupils have a statement of special educational needs, the education provided fulfils its requirements (paragraph 2(2)(e))
- ensure that provision is made for appropriate careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g)).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve curriculum links between the Key Stage 2 and the Key Stage 3 and 4 department so that planning builds well on what was taught an earlier stage
- present assessment data in way that makes for ease of interpretation.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made).

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	February 2005		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 to 19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 12	Girls: 1	Total: 13
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 12	Girls: 1	Total: 13
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£51,759 – £59,152		
<b>Address of school</b>	Wisbech Road, Thorney, Peterborough, PE6 0SA		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01733 271187		
<b>Email address</b>	Parkhouseschool4@hotmail.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Crossland		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Alan Crossland		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



16 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Park House, Peterborough, PE6 0SA**

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you, observing your lessons and practical activities, and seeing how well you are all doing. I am pleased to tell you that Park House provides you with good quality education. It has many impressive aspects. These include:

- your outstanding personal development and behaviour
- your good academic progress
- the outstanding care, guidance and support offered to you and your families
- the excellent work of the multi-disciplinary team
- the wide-ranging assessments that staff complete in order to plan your learning
- the way that individual education plans show clearly how and in what sessions you will work towards your targets
- the warm, family-like atmosphere that helps you feel safe and learn well.

I have asked the school to do a few things to become even better. These are to:

- improve the curriculum policies so that they outline realistically how the different subjects will be taught
- make sure that all the subjects and areas of learning have full plans and schemes of work
- make sure that your curriculum includes all the subjects and areas of learning required by your statements and the independent school regulations.

I wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth  
Lead inspector

