

# Park Lane Learning Trust

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107561
<b>Local Authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	356181
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jan Bennett HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	500
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr George Pattison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Park Lane Exley, Halifax West Yorkshire HX3 9LG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01422 362215
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The team observed 25 lessons, taught by different teachers, and held meetings with groups of students, parents, members of the governing body and staff. The team observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, development plan and an analysis of achievement data. Inspectors also looked at the 193 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers plus questionnaire responses from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Students' progress and attainment across the school and whether any downward trends, particularly in mathematics, are being tackled effectively.
- The impact of strategies to improve attendance.
- The quality of teaching and whether it is accelerating students' learning and progress sufficiently.
- The effectiveness with which leaders and managers at all levels are driving improvement.

## Information about the school

Park Lane is a smaller than average size secondary school. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is around three times the national average. Most students are White British and speak English as their first language. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is falling. A high number of students have a statement of special educational needs and the proportion of students with special education needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Student mobility is high: a significant proportion of students do not join the school at the start of Year 7 and only half of the current Year 11 students were on roll in Year 7.

At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to require significant improvement in students' achievement and attendance and given a notice to improve. It became a National Challenge Trust School in June 2010 and was led by an executive headteacher and acting headteacher from its partner school, Brooksbank, for most of the last academic year. A new headteacher took up post in September 2010. He is the sixth headteacher at the school in the last five years.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The new headteacher has revitalised the school and galvanised the staff. He is very highly regarded by staff, students and parents and carers. As one parent said, 'Mr Taylor has breathed new life into the school.' The executive headteacher and acting headteacher did a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes in the last academic year. They introduced much needed systems and policies, tackled under-performance amongst staff and laid the foundations on which the new headteacher is building the reputation of the school. The new headteacher has a very clear vision for the school that is well understood by staff who say that his enthusiasm is infectious. There is a mood of optimism and increasing confidence in the school.

Attainment is still low but improving at a quickening pace. In the short term, interventions are being used well in order to compensate for a legacy of poor teaching. Longer term strategies, such as better use of data and improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching, ensure that the progress made by students across the school is satisfactory and accelerating quickly. Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school. Attendance has improved considerably and is average. Many students joining after the start of Year 7 benefit greatly from the high quality support that is available and the strong links with other specialist support services.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. There are pockets of very good practice but not enough good and outstanding teaching. In the best lessons, tasks are adapted to meet the differing needs of students in the group, enabling everyone to make good progress. However, most students are still spending too much time on whole group activities with the teacher doing most of the talking. Lesson observations are not focusing sufficiently on the quality of learning. Staff attendance has improved and the heavy dependency on supply teachers, a concern at the monitoring inspection visit last summer, has been reduced by more than a half.

Leaders and managers at all levels are improving. Much has been done to clarify roles and to provide training and support for new leaders. There are strengths within the senior and middle leadership but there is still too much variability. The governing body is relatively new but is strong with a wealth of experience and is already challenging senior leaders and making a valuable contribution to the life of the school. The governing body has a very good understanding of important issues and is very clear about the priorities for action. The positive impact of actions taken following the previous inspection shows a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
  - - increasing the amount of good and outstanding teaching
  - - sharing best practice more widely
  - - increasing the amount of active rather than passive learning in lessons
  - - tailoring activities to meet the full range of students' learning needs
  - - enriching and enlivening the curricular experiences.
- Improve the consistency of leadership and management by:
  - - enabling all leaders to follow the school's best practice in achieving a suitable balance between the strategic and operational elements of their roles, hence maximising the impact of these roles on outcomes for students.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Attainment is improving rapidly from a low baseline. In 2010, the proportion of Year 11 students achieving five high grade GCSE passes rose by 13 percentage points but mathematics results were disappointing. However, the downward trend in mathematics has already been reversed and 40% of Year 11 students have already achieved a high grade GCSE pass which is 10 percentage points more than at the end of last year. The latest GCSE English results also show a marked improvement. Students across the school make satisfactory or often better progress in lessons and the pace is quickening as the quality of teaching improves. Students participate well in question and answer sessions and most take a pride in their work and are keen to find out how to take it to the next level. School data show that students are reaching higher standards and making more rapid progress than at the same time last year. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress, reflecting the overall improvement in teaching and closer liaison between teachers and support assistants. Students with challenging behaviour and a history of poor attendance, including many of those who joined the school late, are making better progress as a result of successful initiatives to improve behaviour and reduce absence.

Behaviour has improved considerably and is good in and out of lessons. There is very little bullying and the few instances are dealt with very quickly. Students say that they feel safe in school. Attendance has improved and the number of persistent absentees has fallen substantially as a result of very close monitoring and strengthening links with parents and carers. Students know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and benefit from the increasing range of sporting activities available but prices and menus in the refectory are not encouraging them to make healthy choices. Students make an increasing contribution to the community. The school council is active and students show a lively interest in charitable fundraising and supporting school events.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

**How effective is the provision?**

The quality of teaching is improving. Inadequate teaching has been tackled robustly and almost all teaching is now satisfactory or better with an increasing amount that is good. Teachers break lessons down into a series of activities which helps maintain students' concentration and interest. These are interspersed with regular recaps and checks on learning. Most lessons move at a brisk pace, students apply themselves well to the tasks and show a pride in their work. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in lessons but a small minority of teachers waste time by asking students to cut out and stick information on paper when the use of ICT would be more efficient and beneficial. In weaker lessons, teachers talk for too long and students are passive. Support assistants are deployed well in some lessons but liaison between them and the teacher is weaker in others.

Assessment is used well to enhance learning in some departments such as English. In other areas it is beginning to inform lesson planning but the needs of individual students are not always given enough attention. Students are clear about their targets and the 'value-added game' is focusing their attention on how quickly they are making progress. Students are increasingly able to self assess objectively and peer assessment is developing. Books are marked with helpful comments but there is still inconsistency of practice in the use of targets, grades and levels between and within departments.

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Effective links with trust partners are enhancing the currently satisfactory curriculum. For example, Pennine Housing delivers ICT courses to Year 9 students. Improving literacy skills has an increasingly high profile across the curriculum with emphasis being placed on key words, speaking and reading skills and the use of full sentences in response to questions. There is an increasing range of clubs on offer at lunchtime and after school, including sports, circus skills and performing arts, that are much appreciated by students. Special events and activities, such as 'solutions for the planet' and the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' production, enliven learning in some areas of the curriculum but are not used sufficiently in others. In Key Stage 4 the curriculum is broadly balanced but there is a restricted choice for some students. Strong links with local colleges provide a range of vocational and alternative provision. In Key Stage 3 the STAR programme provides good alternative provision for students unable to cope in mainstream classes. The curriculum is still evolving rapidly in response to the needs and size of different cohorts and has yet to be consolidated.

The pastoral team work well with other agencies to ensure that students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are well supported and cared for. The tutorial system has been strengthened; tutors and their managers have been trained well and tutorial time is used very effectively. Transition arrangements are good and strengthening. Students receive good advice about the range of options available at the end of both key stages. Attendance is very closely monitored and data are used well to highlight potential issues early so that swift and effective action can be taken. Links with parents and carers are strengthening and the parent support worker is giving good support to families of the most vulnerable students.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher provides very strong, inspirational and dynamic leadership. Members of the senior leadership team have clearer roles and are working more closely as a team than at the last inspection. Middle leaders have more responsibility. A number of very promising senior and middle leaders are emerging who think strategically and look for innovative solutions. They have introduced effective initiatives that have already improved outcomes for students. Other leaders are taking much longer to grow into their roles and are too focused on operational details. Demanding targets for both students and staff are driving improvement. The quality of teaching is being monitored closely but there is not enough focus on the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress. Engaging parents and carers is a priority for the headteacher and he has made an excellent start through regular coffee mornings, consultation evenings, and other events such as the Family Learning

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Festival. Parents are very positive about their rapidly improving relationships with the school. Partnerships in the community, such as those with primary schools and support agencies are increasingly strong. There is very little racist behaviour in school and no incidents have been reported since the last inspection. The performance data of different cohorts of students are analysed well by managers and the governing body. The number of exclusions is high but reducing; however, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are over-represented. The reasons are being carefully analysed in order to pinpoint and deal with issues before exclusion becomes necessary. The school's site is safe, safeguarding is managed effectively and procedures are well established. The community cohesion audit and action plan is complete and the plan is being implemented, with more work to be done nationally and internationally. The school deploys staff and resources well and is providing satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and they were very positive. A very large majority were happy with their child's experience at the school and almost all agreed that the school keeps their child safe. A very large majority say that teaching is good, they are kept informed about their child's progress and they are happy with the leadership of the school. A number of parents took the trouble to write additional comments in praise of the new headteacher.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Park Lane Learning Trust to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 193 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 500 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	29	110	57	23	12	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	71	37	115	60	6	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	84	44	89	46	19	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	31	111	58	16	8	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	65	34	115	60	8	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	30	109	56	20	10	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	26	117	61	19	10	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	55	28	115	60	8	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	30	116	60	15	8	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	73	38	93	48	21	11	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	27	112	58	21	11	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	75	39	99	51	10	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	79	41	99	51	10	5	3	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**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.**



21 January 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Park Lane Learning Trust, Halifax, HX3 9LG**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. Following the last inspection in November 2009, when the school was given a notice to improve, leaders were asked to make a number of important improvements. We are delighted to tell you that, as a result of the changes that have been made, Park Lane now provides you with a satisfactory education and is continuing to improve.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Examination results are still below average but are improving and we were pleased to see the big improvement in the recent GCSE English and mathematics results. All year groups are making increasingly better progress.
- Your behaviour is good and attendance is much improved and is now average.
- Teaching is improving but there is still not enough good or better teaching.
- Leadership and management are getting stronger and governance is good.

In order to improve further we have asked the school to:

- raise attainment by improving teaching and the use of assessment and introducing more excitement into the curriculum
- strengthen middle and senior leadership.

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and has made an excellent start. He is working extremely well and knows just what to do to improve the school further. We hope that you give him your full support and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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