

Knowsley Park Centre for Learning - Serving Prescot, Whiston and the Wider Community (Community)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135477
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	360723
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Austin HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Rimmer
Headteacher	Ms Marion Farrell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Forty lessons taught by 40 teachers were observed. In addition, inspectors visited an assembly, five registration sessions and parts of seven form tutor sessions. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the National Challenge Adviser for the centre. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation including its plans for improvement, data regarding students' progress, policies and procedures for safeguarding students, monitoring reports and minutes of the governing body's meetings. The responses in 60 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 151 completed by students and 33 from members of staff, were taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the centre's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether students achieve well enough given their starting points
- how effective teaching and the use of assessment are in raising students' attainment and eradicating underachievement
- the extent to which the centre promotes equal opportunities
- how well the curriculum supports students' achievement
- how successful the centre is in promoting community cohesion.

Information about the school

Knowsley Park Centre for Learning opened in September 2009, bringing together the students and staff of two local secondary schools in a new building. A new headteacher was appointed to lead the centre from the outset. It is larger than most secondary schools with an above average percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals. Almost all students are White British and speak English as their first language. There are small numbers from a range of minority ethnic groups including four students who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average. The centre has gained specialist language college status and achieved the International Schools award.

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

Knowsley Park Centre for Learning provides a satisfactory education for its students. It has been successful in welding two communities together, with the house system and vertical tutor groups playing a significant part in realising this. After experiencing some initial difficulties, such as those linked to the building and site, the centre's development has accelerated and improvements are evident.

The attainment of Year 11 students who left in 2010 was low and their achievement was inadequate. However, the centre's monitoring records and inspection evidence indicate that students' progress is improving. It is satisfactory overall, and in an increasing proportion of lessons students' learning is good so that they are beginning to make up for previous underachievement and coming closer to attaining the standards they should reach, given their starting points. For instance, following early entries almost half of current Year 11 students have gained a GCSE pass in English at grade C or above. The centre's data show that progress in English is increasing in all year groups. However, whilst there are improvements in students' progress in mathematics, these are less rapid and secure.

Teaching and the use of assessment to support learning are satisfactory. With the support of the local authority, a range of coherent strategies are in operation focusing specifically on the areas of classroom practice in need of development. During the inspection it was evident that these are reaping benefits, albeit unevenly. The centre recognises that its increasingly accurate assessment data are not being used consistently to plan lessons targeted sharply on students' individual needs. In the main, activities are better matched to the requirements of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities than to providing appropriate levels of challenge for the more-able. The centre's policy for feedback and marking is succinct and suitable but its implementation is variable, so students do not always know what they need to do next to make progress towards their targets.

Overall, students' behaviour is satisfactory. However their attendance, although improving, remains low. The centre has put in place a wide range of robust strategies to tackle this issue and these are having a positive impact. Students appreciate the rewards they can choose in return for 'vivo miles', gained for a range of successes including good attendance.

The centre's aspirations for its students are articulated clearly and senior leaders have established a number of key systems to help realise these. Regular analysis of assessment information, combined with an effective quality assurance system for evaluating the work of departments, are enabling leaders to target underachievement and weaker areas of provision more acutely and successfully. Leaders are drawing effectively on evaluations to

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deliver targeted training, coaching and support to improve teaching and learning. Effective methods are in place, such as the deployment of advanced skills teachers and lead learners in subjects, to develop and disseminate good classroom practice and to ensure that staff benefit from the high-quality external support available. The embedding of these processes has been instrumental in strengthening the skills and contribution of middle leaders. The positive impact of these systems, which are being used with increasing coherence, demonstrates the centre's satisfactory capacity to improve.

Following a period of temporary governance, a permanent governing body has been instituted recently. Suitable systems are in place to enable governors to meet their responsibilities. The Chair of the Governing Body plays a key role in working with the local authority to monitor the Centre's progress.

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?

- Improve students' achievement by raising attainment overall and particularly in mathematics.
- Increase the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - - using assessment information fully to plan challenging and relevant lessons
 - - ensuring that activities are closely matched to students' learning needs, including those of the more-able
 - - applying the Centre's policy for marking and feedback consistently.
- Raise attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students join the centre with attainment that is slightly below the national average. Although attainment was low and achievement inadequate for Year 11 students who left at the end of the centre's first year of operation, a more promising picture is emerging. The centre has set appropriate targets aimed at ensuring that students' achievement is satisfactory. Assessment information shows that this is increasingly the case, including for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective use of realistic assessment information is enabling the centre to target a wide range of interventions on the needs of those who are underachieving so that all groups are closing the gaps in their learning. Progress is improving for students in all year groups, in part because a positive climate for learning with appropriate expectations has been established, and students' behaviour is satisfactory.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Their cultural development is stronger as a consequence of opportunities provided which are linked to the centre's specialism and the International Schools award. Students' spiritual development is comparatively weaker as opportunities to foster this are missed. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the centre in a range of ways including as prefects, peer mentors, learning champions, and members of the student council. They

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have some influence on school life, for instance, in the choice of charities and the organisation of fund-raising. Arranging these activities, as well as other aspects of the house system, provide relevant contexts in which students apply useful enterprise skills. In addition, students develop appropriate skills needed for adult life through gaining qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT), the good range of sport-related opportunities to exercise leadership skills, and lessons in financial capability. They demonstrate appropriate collaborative skills in paired and group work in lessons. Students articulate a secure understanding of the facets of a healthy lifestyle.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ 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 centre's records, as well as inspection evidence, show that the drive in recent months to improve the quality of teaching is paying dividends and there is some good practice on which to build further. The better lessons observed were planned well to meet the needs of students, with learning staged in sequential steps so that understanding could develop on secure foundations. Probing questions helped to consolidate and extend students' thinking as well as unearth misconceptions. Opportunities to assess their own work and that of their classmates, helped students grasp the criteria for success: these were linked to examination requirements where appropriate. Where lessons were comparatively less successful, teachers' expositions were too long and explanations lacked clarity. As a

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consequence, students were reluctant to take responsibility for their learning and too dependent on adult support. Assessment information was not taken into account sufficiently so tasks were not well enough matched to students' learning needs, especially those of the more-able, who did not then make the progress of which they were capable.

The broad curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is thoughtfully planned, particularly in meeting the needs of Key Stage 4 students who can choose from a range of relevant pathways. The current Year 10 is the first to benefit fully from this provision. As a consequence of the centre's specialism, there are good opportunities to follow courses in modern languages. Appropriate provision is made for students whose circumstances mean they are vulnerable. There are sound plans to rebalance some areas of the curriculum which no longer require as much emphasis as was appropriate when the centre first opened. The development of cross-curricular provision, for instance to promote skills in literacy, is at an early stage. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory with a range of opportunities available for additional study as well as for activities linked to sport, the arts and languages.

The centre successfully brought together two distinct school communities. A house system with vertical tutor groups helped students to overcome barriers and now provides a sense of belonging and a focus for friendly competition. Students are clear that previous divisions have evaporated. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is targeted effectively, enabling them to make at least the same satisfactory progress as their peers and in some cases better than this. In partnership with a range of external agencies, good care is provided for those students with high levels of need. Arrangements at transition points are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Following an initial year of operation in which students' progress was not as rapid as it should have been, the centre was spurred into a much more urgent, concerted and coherent approach to improvement. In this, it is being supported to a significant degree by the local authority. There is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels and a greater degree of consistency in holding staff to account. Systems for analysing assessment data, quality assuring the work of departments, and improving classroom practice are all working more effectively, and leaders are drawing together the information available from these actions. This work provides a firm basis both for the centre's largely accurate self-evaluation and its improvement planning. Middle leaders are

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gaining an increasing range of pertinent skills that are enabling them to contribute effectively to the centre's improvement.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Procedures to safeguard students are satisfactory. The centre analyses the performance of groups of students to ensure satisfactory equality of opportunity and takes a clear stand against discrimination. A range of suitable methods, including some rapid electronic means, are used to communicate with parents and carers. Their views are gathered at appropriate occasions and taken into account. For example, the frequency of reporting on students' progress has been increased in response to requests from parents and carers.

The promotion of community cohesion is good, notably in the way in which the two predecessor schools have successfully come together. The centre has conducted a thorough audit of its situation and has plans to tackle shortfalls and consolidate strengths. As well as in its immediate community, there are strengths in the centre's international links although work to engage students with the diversity of modern Britain is less developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires is much lower than average. The responses to almost all questions were much less positive than the norm. In particular, parents and carers expressed concerns about the degree to which the Centre takes their views into account and the help available to enable them to support their children's learning. Inspectors found that the Centre is at the early stages of

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establishing a focus group for parents and carers and will shortly start to offer courses on parenting skills.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Knowsley Park Centre for Learning - Serving Prescot, Whiston and the Wider Community (Community) 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1132 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	12	44	73	5	8	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	9	15	40	67	8	13	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	17	38	63	9	15	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	17	34	57	10	17	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	9	15	32	53	11	18	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	15	29	48	14	23	3	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	13	35	58	11	18	2	3
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)	9	15	33	55	7	12	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	13	34	57	10	17	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	17	32	53	10	17	5	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	13	28	47	17	28	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	7	12	33	55	11	18	4	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	20	29	48	7	12	5	8

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).

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



31 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Knowsley Park Centre for Learning - Serving Prescott, Whiston and the Wider Community (Community), Liverpool, L34 3NB

I would like to thank those of you who gave up some time to tell us your views on the centre. Along with your responses to the questionnaires, this helped us reach our judgements. After some initial teething problems, notably with the building, the work of the centre has recently gained momentum so that it is providing you with a satisfactory education. In particular, the centre has been successful in forming a new community. The house system and vertical tutor groups have helped to bring you all together. The centre is a well-ordered place to learn and your behaviour is satisfactory overall.

The Centre's 2010 GCSE results were not good enough and, overall, that group of Year 11 students did not do as well as they should have. We found that lessons have improved so that more of you are making at least satisfactory progress and beginning to catch up on learning you missed previously. It is good to see that almost half of the current Year 11 students have already gained a GCSE pass in English at grade C or above. However, more needs to be done to raise attainment overall, and particularly in mathematics. We have identified further improvements that can be made to teaching so that you all do better, including those of you who find learning easy. However good the teaching is, it is of no benefit if you are not present. Too many of you have too much time off and attendance is low.

We have asked the headteacher and senior leaders to ensure that teaching improves so that you get better results. You can help by working as hard as possible and making sure you are absent only when it is absolutely necessary.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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