

Park House School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136755
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	397476
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Hill

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1090
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Marson
Headteacher	Derek Peaple
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2008
School address	Andover Road Newbury RG14 6NQ
Telephone number	01635 573911
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Hill	Additional inspector
Allan Barfoot	Additional inspector
Jim McVeigh	Additional inspector
Carole Worthington	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 43 lessons taught by 43 teachers, four of which were joint observations with the school's senior leaders. Meetings were held with the school's senior and middle leaders, six groups of students and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at current data on students' performance, planning documents and students' work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding, attendance and behaviour records. They analysed the 252 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

Information about the school

Park House is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The majority of students are of White British heritage. A much smaller-than-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Compared to the national average, a very small minority of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students entering and leaving the school at other than the conventional times is higher than seen nationally.

The school meets the current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. Park House has specialist status in sports and is one of a small number of schools whose teams of students have been selected as Olympics and Paralympics Games Makers for the summer 2012 games. The school holds a number of awards, including the International School Award, and has National Healthy Schools status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school which has improved since its last inspection. The sixth form is good. The school strongly fosters students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the Olympic and Paralympic values are a central focus throughout the curriculum. The school is not outstanding because a small proportion of satisfactory teaching remains and the assessment of students' work is uneven.
- Students' achievement is good; this includes disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Students' progress in English, mathematics and science has improved significantly and is good. Progress in the sixth form is good, having risen markedly since the last inspection. The progress of middle-ability students is not as strong as that of other groups. The proportion of students achieving five higher-grade GCSEs including English and mathematics is average.
- Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, the pace is fast. Teachers' planning meets students' varied learning needs. The leadership of teaching is effective and ensures that its quality is improving. In a few lessons, teachers do not sufficiently focus their questioning to check how well all students understand. There are inconsistencies in how often students' work is marked and how precisely it informs students how to improve.
- Students' behaviour is good and they apply themselves well in lessons. They have good attitudes to learning and are polite and considerate. They cooperate well during break-times and when moving around the school. Students feel very safe.
- The school is well led and managed. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of most students well. The governing body and the headteacher know the school's strengths and weaknesses comprehensively. They manage staff performance effectively and realistically develop their skills and knowledge.

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However, the many examples of good practice are not shared systematically and leaders at all levels do not monitor progress against national benchmarks for groups of students consistently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Encourage students to consolidate and reflect on their learning by using existing good practice to ensure that all teachers:
 - use extended questioning to assess and deepen students' understanding in order to accelerate students' progress
 - plan lessons that encourage greater independence and develop students' thinking.

- Increase the proportion of students achieving five higher-grade GCSEs including English and mathematics to above the national average by the summer of 2013 by ensuring that:
 - all teachers mark students' work regularly and provide precise, written feedback so that all students know how well they are doing and how to meet their targets
 - leaders at all levels monitor teaching against the progress that students make and robustly evaluate the work of their teams against national benchmarks.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with skills and abilities that are average. The subsequent progress of higher-attaining students, those known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are particularly strong. Ninety-five per cent of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire said that their children were making good progress and inspectors endorse this view. Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average in English, mathematics and science. Similarly, it is above average for disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals.

Sixth-form students make good progress in lessons and in their courses and their attainment is well above the national average. The proportion of students who progress from Year 12 to Year 13 is much higher than seen nationally. They are very positive about the progress that they make in lessons and over their time in the school.

Students' achievement in lessons is good overall. Students make better progress in the sixth form and in Key Stage 4 than they do in Key Stage 3. For example, in a

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Year 10 science lesson, students made good progress because of the teacher's high expectations and because detailed lesson planning met their individual needs well. While students completed the investigation into reaction rates independently, the teacher circulated, enhancing students' progress with well-timed questions. Work seen during the inspection showed good progress over time for most students. The recently implemented, whole-school literacy policy is having a positive impact during lessons. Students communicate clearly, articulate their thoughts in a coherent manner and respond confidently.

The school's effective range of intervention programmes, including the Study Plus approach, is narrowing the gaps between the progress of different groups. However, the progress of middle-ability students at Key Stage 4 remains a focus for the school. The standard of students' reading, particularly for those who join the school with lower than expected levels, is rising with the implementation of the Better Reading Partnership scheme across Key Stage 3.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall and supports students to make good progress. Parents and carers consider their children are well taught. Many lessons promote students' spiritual, moral and social development and their cultural understanding. The school's extensive local, national and international links are sensibly integrated into lessons across the curriculum.

In the most effective lessons, teachers check students' understanding frequently and challenge them to think deeply. Students apply their knowledge and skills to the planned activities with confidence. Teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures that well-defined learning objectives are shared with students. For example, in an A-level drama lesson, the teacher engaged students immediately in practical tasks which challenged them to explore the physicality of comedy. As the teacher circulated the class, her clear and precise probing stimulated students to reflect more deeply on the examination criteria. They worked collaboratively and applied their knowledge and skills to this unfamiliar setting confidently.

In the lessons where the teaching is best they are characterised by a fast pace with a sharp focus on learning. In a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher persistently required students to deepen their thinking about poetic style. She encouraged articulate responses through the use of highly focused 'explain, how, why, what' questions. After getting them to write down their thoughts, the teacher made sure everyone made a contribution during a discussion.

On the few occasions where the teaching observed was no better than satisfactory, students had insufficient opportunities to develop their thinking, and expectations were set too low. Teachers accepted limited responses without probing students' understanding in order to reshape tasks to meet their needs.

The relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students spoke

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highly about the approachability of their teachers and the academic support they receive. Teaching assistants help disabled students and those who have special educational needs to make good progress in most lessons, although in a few lessons teachers do not deploy teaching assistants effectively during whole-class activities.

In lessons, students were observed reading aloud accurately and with confidence. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher persistently challenged students to think for themselves, prompting them to record their selected quotes. In other subjects, teachers reinforced key words and emphasised subject-specific vocabulary. The most effective marking is frequent and informs students precisely how to improve their work. However, this good practice is not universally evident.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' well-being and safety are at the heart of the school. Students engage enthusiastically in the school's promotion of the Olympic and Paralympic values showing respect, friendship and a pursuit of excellence. Students display a good understanding of how to keep safe. A recent Values Day based on the Paralympic value of equality, heightened students' awareness of bullying and challenged their attitudes to people's differences. Students have regular input alerting them to potential risks. For example, the Beach Aware organisation led the Year 11 students' assembly to raise awareness of associated dangers prior to the forthcoming summer break.

Students confirmed that incidents of bullying, including physical, cyber and emotional bullying, are rare. Students keenly informed inspectors that they were confident of getting help from a range of staff if bullying did occur and that it is dealt with effectively. Students were emphatic that they feel safe. This was endorsed by almost every response from their parents and carers.

Students' behaviour is typically good and often exemplary. They respond maturely in lessons when given the chance to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Students are very proud and supportive of their school. An impressive range of students take advantage of extensive school-based, national and international opportunities. They participate in high-profile activities, including Olympic Games Makers and the British Council's Connecting Classrooms project.

A minority of parental responses stated that low-level disruption affected their children's learning in lessons. Inspectors observed consistently good behaviour in almost all classes. Students worked within well-established routines. Where teaching was only satisfactory, some students became restless or distracted, but students said that low-level disruption is rare and that teachers deal with it quickly.

Students' attendance has been steadily rising and is now above average. Students are punctual to school and their lessons. The school works diligently with other agencies supporting the very low proportion of students who are persistently

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absent. Attendance in the sixth form is good.

Leadership and management

The governing body and senior leaders have focused successfully on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Staff professional development is matched carefully to individuals' performance to support their improvement. The quality of teaching has improved and levels of attainment in the sixth form and at Key Stage 4 have risen. Re-focused support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has successfully accelerated their rates of progress, the gaps in the progress between higher- and middle-ability students are narrowing and the school shows good capacity for further improvement.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. The large majority consider that communications are good. One parent commented, 'I feel Park House is an exceptional school. My children are happy and safe here and staff are extremely supportive. My children are flourishing and making very good progress.' This is representative of many written responses. Inspectors found that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place that meet current statutory requirements.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides effective progression. It meets the needs of most students well. The Year 6 transition programme ensures that less-able students have an enhanced start to Key Stage 3 while the most-able Year 11 students have an enrichment programme. Sixth-form courses include applied and traditional A-level courses.

The school's commitment to recognising each student's success is evident in all aspects of school life. Students are directly involved in a range of collaborative projects, including those with local primary school pupils, schools internationally and local, community-based projects such as Gardening for the Games. These rich and memorable experiences promote students' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

A values-centred ambition for students inspired by the headteacher and the governing body drives the school's effective improvement and its planning. Nonetheless, the evaluation of teaching quality by school leaders is overgenerous and rigorous monitoring involving national benchmarks for students' achievement is not consistently robust. Governors' strong working relationship with the school's leaders ensures that discrimination is tackled and equal opportunities promoted effectively. The governing body are well informed and firmly hold the school to account.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



14 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Park House School and Sports College, Newbury RG14 6NQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, listening to your views and being part of your lessons.

We judged your school to be good. Your examination results at the end of Year 11 are in line with those of most students nationally. Almost all of you make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Those of you in the sixth form make good progress. You told us that you thought the teaching in the school is usually good and we agree with you.

We were very impressed with how many of you take part in all the activities on offer, and with the links you have with schools internationally and with the Olympics and Paralympics. Your behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. You told us that you feel very safe. We agree with you that your school provides you with a friendly, cohesive and safe environment.

Your headteacher and other leaders are continuously improving the school for you and effectively supporting you all to do well. As a result, standards are rising. We have asked the headteacher and governors to make sure that:

- teachers support you to progress at as fast a rate as possible by checking your understanding during lessons
- your work is marked frequently and in detail so that it is clear to you what you need to do to improve
- teaching in school is made even better, for example by providing plenty of opportunities for you to learn independently.

You can help your teachers by using their feedback to improve the quality of your work. On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hill
Lead inspector

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