

Parkwood Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135934
Local authority	Not Applicable
Inspection number	381963
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2012
Lead inspector	Sara Morrissey HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non -maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	728
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Stephen Hopkins
Headteacher	Mr Mike Westerdale
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Thirty-three lessons were observed and thirty-one teachers seen; meetings were held with the principal and other nominated staff, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the academy's sponsor. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line (Parent View) survey in planning the inspection, observed the academy's work, and looked at information about students' progress, records of lesson observations, procedures and policies for safeguarding students and data relating to attendance and behaviour. Responses from 15 parental and carers' questionnaires and those from 96 students and 41 staff were also taken into account.

Information about the school

Parkwood Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, serving a community of diverse ethnicity. About half of students are of White British heritage; other significant groups represented are from Black or Black British African and Pakistani backgrounds. Student mobility is well-above average and the number of students who are newly arrived in the country has increased, in particular those of Romany Slovakian origin. Almost one third of students speak English as an additional language and an increasing number are new to the English language. The proportion of students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is high, as is the proportion supported by School Action Plus. However, the proportion of students with a statement to support their specific learning needs is below that seen nationally. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average.

The academy, sponsored by E-ACT and opened in September 2009 in the buildings of its predecessor school, moved into new purpose-built accommodation in April 2012. Outdoor space remains restricted as the building programme is not complete. The academy experienced a change in leadership with the appointment of a new principal from September 2010. There have been further significant changes to staffing, particularly within English and mathematics, including the recruitment of new leaders to those subject areas from September 2011. The academy has subject specialisms in sport and modern foreign languages. It does not currently meet the minimum floor standards expected by the government.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory academy. It is not yet good, owing to some inconsistencies in the quality and impact of teaching on learning and because some initiatives, implemented to raise attainment, are too recent to demonstrate sustained improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.
- Significant progress has been made in overcoming barriers to progress due to the very effective leadership provided by the principal. Consequently, a cohesive learning community has been established and students' aspirations about what they can achieve have been raised.
- Students' attainment is rising securely from low levels because of a combination of improvements in teaching and very well targeted support to close gaps in their prior learning. However, achievement is satisfactory overall because of variations in the progress made by different groups of students and between subjects including English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory but improving securely because of a tailored programme of continuing professional development that is linked to performance management. While much teaching is good, its impact on learning is variable. This is because assessment information is not used consistently to tailor activities to meet students' individual needs, particularly those who are new to the English language.
- Where teaching is most effective, students grow in confidence and make more rapid progress because relevant and engaging activities extend their knowledge and skills. However, too often, students are not challenged sufficiently and opportunities are missed to increase their independence as learners.
- Behaviour is satisfactory and students' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Attendance has improved because of robust management strategies that are, in the main, applied consistently. Students feel safe and are confident that adults will deal with any concerns.

- Accurate self-evaluation by senior and middle leaders has ensured that key priorities are tackled rigorously. Consequently, the academy has established a secure trend of improvement and is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of teaching on learning to raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - using assessment information consistently to tailor activities so that they meet the needs of different groups of students within individual lessons
 - ensuring that activities are relevant and provide sufficient challenge to inject pace and extend learning
 - increasing opportunities for students to learn independently
 - providing a wider range of opportunities to improve students' oracy and develop their skills in extended writing
 - developing strategies to ensure that the needs of students who are new to the English language are met.

Main Report

Achievement of students

Academy leaders have been successful in removing barriers to achievement, for example through curriculum changes, improvements in teaching and in the management of behaviour. Consequently, students are making more rapid progress and overall attainment is rising from low levels on entry to the academy. Results from early entries to examinations, taken by current Year 11 students in subjects including English and mathematics, provide a clear indication that the academy will exceed the government's minimum floor standard in summer 2012. This reflects the accelerated progress made by many groups of students across the academy and is, in part, a result of intensive support to close significant gaps in prior learning. Effective support for disabled students and those with special educational needs ensures that they achieve as well as their peers. The small proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were confident that their child is making good progress at the academy.

Learning proceeds briskly in lessons where activities are engaging and encourage active participation. In the best lessons observed by inspectors, assessment was used skilfully to tailor activities to ensure that students were challenged and supported to achieve their best. For example, in a Year 8 physical education lesson, students made outstanding progress in improving their performance and leadership skills during group activities that challenged them to assess and evaluate their work and that of their peers. Activities promoted the use of subject-specific terminology and animated group discussion strengthened their oracy skills. Learning is more uneven where activities do not ignite students' interest and curiosity or where tasks lack challenge and pace. In these instances, students lose interest and become passive.

Regular attention is paid by most teachers to developing students' literacy skills through the use of key terms and increasing opportunities for reading and extended writing. The positive impact of this work is evident, for example, in the improvements to students' outcomes in science. However, students' oracy skills are not developed with the same consistency which

reduces the impact of other strategies in place to improve standards in literacy. Leaders have identified as an urgent priority that, for a small number of students, a limited understanding of the English language remains a barrier to learning.

Quality of teaching

A purposeful learning environment has been established within the academy that is promoted by warm and supportive relationships between adults and students. Consequently, a culture of achievement is developing, which is, in turn, supporting improvement in teaching.

Teaching makes a positive contribution to promoting students' social, moral and spiritual development. Where teaching promotes good or better learning, time is used effectively to engage students in a good variety of activities that are briskly paced, provide challenge and promote independence. Tasks are adapted well to meet the needs of students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. For example, in a Year 8 technology lesson, nominated 'Design Ambassadors' took responsibility for co-ordinating group work to ensure that a design brief was completed successfully within agreed deadlines. Teaching also deepens students' understanding where challenging questions are directed well to probe and resolve misconceptions. Where teaching was outstanding, for example, in a Year 10 English revision lesson, resources were used very effectively to enable students to reinforce and extend their subject knowledge. They deepened their understanding further through discussion and helpful feedback that followed regular progress checks by the teacher. However, elements of outstanding teaching are not always matched by similar levels of progress made by students. This is due, in part, to their lack of confidence and independence as learners.

Despite some notable strengths and improvements in the quality of teaching, its impact on learning is variable and results in uneven progress between lessons. This is especially the case where planning provides insufficient challenge or variety to engage students fully throughout the longer teaching periods introduced from September 2011. For example, in some mathematics lessons observed, opportunities were missed to make activities relevant to students' lives in order to generate interest. Consequently, the pace of learning slowed. Teachers do not always inject sufficient urgency into lessons, allowing too much time for activities to be completed. Conversely, there are instances where too little time is provided for students to reflect and consolidate their learning. Occasionally, teaching does not take into account the full range of students' needs and consequently, not all students are able to participate in the learning.

The quality of marking and feedback to students varies. Students are generally clear about their targets and feedback is often helpful in identifying what they need to do to improve. At times, however, points for improvement are not communicated clearly in language that students can understand. Responses from parental and carers' and student questionnaires were positive about the quality of teaching and its impact on their progress and skill development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' satisfactory behaviour is improving because of the high expectations communicated by academy leaders and a more consistent approach to behaviour management. Consequently, fixed-term exclusions have fallen and there are fewer referrals

from lessons for poor behaviour. Attendance has also improved from low levels since the academy opened and is broadly in line with the national average. Students spoke enthusiastically about their new accommodation and feel that it has already had a positive impact on attitudes and behaviour. Inspection evidence supports these views.

A strong emphasis is placed, throughout the academy, on promoting cohesion and improving understanding of students' differences. Those interviewed spoke positively about the impact of 'vertical tutor groups' which has brought students from different year groups together and, in the words of one student, 'improved the community spirit'. Responses to student questionnaires indicate that most students feel safe. A very small minority of parents and carers and students were less favourable in their questionnaire responses about the way in which the academy deals with bullying. However, inspectors found that clear procedures for dealing with prejudice-related bullying and other incidents ensure that any type of bullying, brought to the attention of staff, is generally dealt with promptly and effectively.

Staff know students well; individual support plans help to settle students who join the academy during the year and personalised programmes are effective in helping those students with special educational needs or whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders are very alert to the challenges presented by the complex needs of specific groups of students, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Tailored provision, both at the academy and off site is helping to improve the most challenging behaviour and increase students' engagement in learning.

Leadership and management

The principal's highly-effective leadership and strong commitment to delivering an ambitious vision for the academy is demonstrated in the significant improvements that have been secured since his appointment. With the very good support of the two vice-principals, he has ensured that discrimination is not an issue by establishing a community that has united children effectively from a diverse range of backgrounds. In the words of one Year 11 student leader 'when you join Parkwood, you join a family'. This reflects the positive steps taken to promote and embed students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development throughout the academy.

The curriculum has been restructured to increase students' expectations about what they can achieve and to promote greater equality of opportunity for all learners. For example, more appropriate curriculum pathways for higher-attaining students have accelerated their progress and raised their aspirations for the future. Equally, specific support groups nurture those students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable so that they can overcome barriers to learning. Consequently, the proportion of students who are not in education, training or employment has fallen and is below that seen in other schools in the local area.

The principal has raised expectations of leaders at all levels and staff teams demonstrate high levels of commitment to securing further improvement. A reliable and comprehensive system to track students' progress, combined with a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation has enabled senior leaders to tackle underperformance, particularly in English and mathematics, and secure a strong improving trend. The contribution of middle leaders has grown as lines of accountability have strengthened, particularly in the last twelve months. Consequently, the consistency with which policies are applied to drive improvement has improved and priorities for improvement are clearly understood by staff at all levels.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and has empowered other governors to take responsibility for certain aspects of the academy's work and holding leaders to account for the academy's performance. Safeguarding procedures are secure and meet requirements. The academy's sponsor also provides effective challenge and has brokered additional support, where required, to ensure that the momentum of improvement is sustained.

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 up 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.



28 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Parkwood Academy, Sheffield S5 8UL

Thank you for your welcome when we inspected your academy recently. It was good to see how quickly you have settled into your new building and we were pleased to hear your very positive views about the difference it has already made to your academy experience. We judged that Parkwood provides you with a satisfactory education and that the good leadership provided by Mr Westerdale and other leaders is helping the academy to improve at an increasing pace.

We identified a number of strengths within the academy that are helping you to achieve better outcomes by the time you leave. These include:

- a positive learning environment based on good relationships between students and between adults and students – we agreed with those of you who told us that there was a very good 'team spirit' within the academy
- examples of good and better teaching where interesting and challenging activities develop your subject knowledge and learning skills
- helpful support for those of you who find learning difficult
- improvement in attendance which is now broadly in line with the national average.

In order to raise your achievement further, particularly in mathematics, we have agreed with academy leaders that improvements to teaching in all lessons can be made by ensuring that:

- activities are matched to meet your individual needs consistently, especially for those of you who are at the early stages of learning English
- briskly-paced activities that are relevant and interesting inspire you in your learning so that you achieve as well as you can in the time available
- more opportunities are provided for you to discuss your learning and become more independent as learners.

You have an important role to play by continuing to attend regularly and being prepared to participate fully in your learning so that you can achieve your best.

Yours sincerely,
Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector

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